Early College High School Principals as Democratic, Socially Just, Culturally Responsive Leaders

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EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
AS DEMOCRATIC, SOCIALLY JUST,
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERS

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Educational Leadership (P-12)

by
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August 2015

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative, multi-site, multi-case study was to examine how early college high school principals promote the success of the first generation, students of color and low-income students they serve. The study examined three early college high school principals in North Carolina through two lenses: the traditional role of principals and a conceptual framework of democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders. The study used semi-structured interview and focus groups as the primary data sources. Additional data sources included documents, state databases and observations. The research questions guiding the study were:

1. How do early college high school principals promote the success of the first generation, lower-income students and students of color?

2. How do early college high school principals demonstrate the qualities and characteristics of democratic, socially just and culturally responsive leaders?

Six broad themes and thirteen subthemes emerged from the data. The themes and subthemes that emerged were Access and Equity (target student population, application process and special education and ESL students); Academics (retention rate, standardized Tests, “The 5th year” and graduation rates/degrees Earned); Culture and Climate (safety/student discipline and school culture and climate; Managing the Organization (finances, staffing, instruction, and vision and mission); Relationships (outside the school and inside the school) and Identity.

The findings were interpreted and situated in the context of the extant literature and the democratic/socially just/culturally responsive leadership conceptual framework.
Implications for policy and practice, study limitations, recommendations for future study and the conclusion were also presented.

KEYWORDS: Early College High Schools, Principals, Democratic Leadership, Socially Just Leadership, Culturally Responsive Leadership
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my namesake and grandmother, the late Overseer Pastor Hattie Bell McMillian Hammonds. Every time I write my name or look in the mirror I see so much of you in me. I dedicate this work to you as a testimony to the hard work, sacrifice, love, leadership and guidance you provided our family during your sixty-nine years on this earth. I know that you are looking down watching over and rejoicing with me as I complete this final academic journey.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I give honor to God for allowing me to reach this milestone in my life. When I think about all I’ve been through to get to this point I know that He has brought me to this point so I can be a living testimony about His goodness, kindness, patience, love and plan for my life. I know that to whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more. I was given many talents and gifts, so I have known since I was a little girl that much would be required. I will continue to bless His name and His will until my last breath on this earth.

I am forever grateful to my advisor, mentor and chair, Dr. Robert (Rob) Knoeppel. Your guidance, love, patience, trust and friendship are what helped me reach this point. Thank you for believing I’d become Dr. Hammonds even before I realized this was possible.

To my committee members: Dr. Matthew Boyer, Dr. Corliss Brown-Thompson (with Northeastern University), Dr. Lagarrett King and Dr. Hans Klar. Thank you for your advice, guidance, support, and time as I completed this last step in my academic journey.

To my parents, Horace and Vickie Hammonds: Thank you for your love, guidance and support throughout my life and during this journey. My biggest goal in life was to make you both happy and serve as a positive representation of the work you both put into raising me. This journey would not have been possible without your humor, prayers and constant reminders to not give up and stay the course.
To my sisters, Carrol, Alice and Victoria: Thank you for your encouragement, love and support throughout this whole process. Your calls, texts, emails and visits helped sustain my sanity throughout this process. Carrol: I cannot wait to watch you complete your own doctoral process so there will be two Dr. Hammonds’ in the family!

To my nephew and niece, Kaleb and Aleshia: Although you are too young to read this, please know that your calls, giggles, first walks and FaceTime moments helped me remember that this journey was about more than myself. I love you both and cannot wait to see what God has in store for both your lives.

To the SREB State Doctoral Scholars Program, Dr. Ansley Abraham, Ms. Tammy Wright, Dr. Frankie Felder and Mr. Jerry Knighton: Thank you for your love, support, encouragement and guidance as I completed this journey. I would not have been able to stay at Clemson without the financial support I received from the program, and I am forever indebted to you all.

To Dr. Julie Edmunds at the UNCG Serve Center and Ms. Joyce Loveless at NC New Schools: Thank you both for your advice, support and guidance before, during and after my study.

To my friend, Dr. Lionel Kato: Thank you for your support, guidance and encouragement throughout this experience. Saying thank you does not seem like enough, but from the bottom of my heart I appreciate everything you’ve done to help me reach this point.
To my friends and colleagues Dr. Chinasa Elue, Dr. Edna Martinez and Dr. Cherese Fine: Thank you for showing me the way throughout this process we call the dissertation and for your support, encouragement and advice during my time at Clemson.

To my friends Angela Cox and Jarvis Lamb: Thank you for supporting and encouraging me throughout this journey. I cannot wait until you both reach this point so I can celebrate with you.

To my friends Robin Barbour and Karen Jones: You both came into my life while I was teaching and have been two of my biggest cheerleaders throughout this process. Thank you for your support, love and encouragement.

To my “other boss” Dr. Jenny Williams at Spartanburg Community College: Thank you for your encouragement, support and advice as I completed this task.

To the Class of 2012 from Whale Branch Early College High School (especially Vanessa Scott, LaDiamond Coleman, Nicole Fulton, Zakiah Fields, Matthew Everly and Maurkess Wright): You all are the reason I returned to finish what I started and I am forever grateful that God placed you all in my life. Thank you for your encouragement, support, laughs and texts as I completed this journey and I cannot wait to see how much you all will achieve in life.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTERS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER ONE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the Study</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER TWO</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief History of Education for Students of Color and Lower Income Students in U.S.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Its Impact</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit Thinking and Increased Scrutiny on Student Achievement</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Role of the Principal</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership that promotes success in diverse schools</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Leaders</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially just Leaders</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culturally Responsive Leaders</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early College High Schools – A School Reform Initiative</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Study Results</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. CHAPTER THREE .................................................................................... 42
   Background of the Study ....................................................................... 43
   Qualitative Research Overview ............................................................. 45
   Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design ............................ 47
   Case Study ............................................................................................ 49
   Participant Selection .............................................................................. 50
   Interview Protocols ................................................................................ 52
   Interviews ............................................................................................... 53
   Focus Groups .......................................................................................... 55
   Data Analysis .......................................................................................... 56
   Cross-case Analysis ............................................................................... 56
   Ethical Considerations ............................................................................ 57
   Limitations ............................................................................................. 57
   Role of the Researcher ........................................................................... 58
   Summary ................................................................................................ 60

IV. INTRODUCTION TO CASES ................................................................... 61
   Study Overview ..................................................................................... 61

V. CHAPTER FOUR: CASE 1: PRINCIPAL JOAN ROBINSON ..................... 63
   Research Context ................................................................................... 63
   Study Participants ................................................................................. 64
   Presentation of Findings ........................................................................ 66
   Theme 1: Leading Based on Beliefs, Values and Identity ..................... 66
   Theme 2: Limiting Access and Opportunities ..................................... 69
   Target Student Population .................................................................... 70
   Application Process ............................................................................... 73
   Special Education and ESL Students .................................................. 75
   Theme 3: Setting High Standards for Achievement ............................. 76
   Retention Rate ....................................................................................... 77
   Standardized Tests ............................................................................... 77
   Graduation Rates/Degrees Earned ....................................................... 78
   Finish in Four ......................................................................................... 78
   Theme 4: Creating a Safe, Disciplined Climate ................................... 79
   Safety/Student Discipline ..................................................................... 80
   School Culture and Climate .................................................................. 84
   Theme 5: Managing the Organization .................................................. 89
   Finances ................................................................................................. 89
   Staffing ................................................................................................. 91
   Instruction ............................................................................................ 93
   Vision and Mission .............................................................................. 97
   Theme 6: Mandating Relationships ..................................................... 98
   Inside the School .................................................................................. 99
   Outside the School ...............................................................................103
Table of Contents (Continued)

| Summary of Principal Robinson’s Leadership | 109 |
| Principal Robinson and the Conceptual Framework | 112 |
| Chapter Summary | 115 |

VI. CHAPTER FIVE: CASE 2: PRINCIPAL KAREN LEWIS .......................... 117
   Research Context ........................................................................ 117
   Study Participants ....................................................................... 119
   Presentation of Findings ............................................................. 121
   Theme 1: Leading and Living in her Father’s Legacy ................. 121
   Theme 2: Open, Equitable Access to any Student ....................... 126
     Target Student Population ......................................................... 127
     Application Process .................................................................. 129
     Special Education and ESL Students ........................................ 130
   Theme 3: Success Defined by Growth not Test Scores .......... 130
     Retention Rate .......................................................................... 131
     Standardized Tests ................................................................ 132
     Graduation Rates/Degrees Earned ............................................ 133
     “The 5th Year or 13th Grade” .................................................. 134
   Theme 4: Balancing Teacher’s Expectation on Discipline ...... 136
     Safety/Student Discipline ......................................................... 137
     School Culture and Climate ...................................................... 140
   Theme 5: Managing the Organization ........................................ 144
     Finances .................................................................................... 144
     Staffing .................................................................................... 146
     Instruction ................................................................................ 147
     Vision and Mission .................................................................. 150
   Theme 6: Building Authentic Relationships ............................... 152
     Inside the School ..................................................................... 152
     Outside the School ................................................................ 158
   Summary of Principal Lewis’ Leadership ................................. 162
   Principal Lewis and the Conceptual Framework ...................... 164
   Chapter Summary ....................................................................... 166

VII. CHAPTER SIX: CASE 3: PRINCIPAL JAMES WASHINGTON .......... 168
    Research Context ....................................................................... 168
    Study Participants ...................................................................... 169
    Presentation of Findings ............................................................. 171
    Theme 1: Leadership that Combats Racism and Inequality ...... 171
    Theme 2: Streamlined Application Process to Open Access ...... 176
     Target Student Population ......................................................... 176
     Application Process .................................................................. 177
     Special Education and ESL Students ........................................ 180
Table of Contents (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 3: Success Defined by Completion not Test Scores</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retention Rate</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standardized Tests</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduation Rates/Degrees Earned</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The 5th Year or 13th Grade”</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4: Creating a Culture of Shared Leadership</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety/Student Discipline</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Culture and Climate</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5: Managing the Organization</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision and Mission</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 6: Fostering a Nurturing, Patriarchal Relationship</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside the School</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside the School</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Principal Washington’s Leadership</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Washington and the Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Summary</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. CHAPTER SEVEN ................................................................................... 219

Discussion of the Findings using Existing Literature .................. 219
Discussion of the Findings through the Lenses of the Conceptual Framework .......... 257
The Research Questions Answered ................................................. 264
Implications for Policy, Practice and Future Research ................. 273
Conclusion ..................................................................................... 276
Final Thoughts ..................................................................................... 276

VIII. APPENDICES ..................................................................................... 262

A: ECHS Principal Interview Protocol ........................................... 263
B: Parent/Guardian Focus Group Protocol ........................................ 266
C: Teacher Focus Group Protocol .................................................... 269
D: Student Focus Group Protocol .................................................... 272
E: Liaison Interview Protocol ........................................................ 274
F: Initial Letter to Participants - Principal .................................. 276
G: Initial Letter to Participants – Parent/Guardian ......................... 277
H: Initial Letter to Participants – Teachers ..................................... 278
I: Initial Letter to Participants – Students ..................................... 279
J: Initial Letter to Participants – Liaison ....................................... 280
Table of Contents (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K: Informed Consent - Principal</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L: Informed Consent – Parent/Guardian</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M: Informed Consent – Teachers</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N: Informed Consent – Students</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O: Informed Consent – Parent Permission</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P: Informed Consent – Liaison</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES ............................................................................................................ 322

TABLES .............................................................................................................. 343
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Conceptual framework summary table</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>NC Early College High School vs. NC Public Schools Comparison</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>17 Themes Based on Metasynthesis of Qualitative Findings</td>
<td>343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Table of Prior Studies on ECHSs (2006-2014)</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Racial/Ethnic Information for 77 ECHSs in NC</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Free/Reduced Information for remaining 35 ECHSs in NC</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>School A Participants</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>School B Participants</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>School C Participants</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Cross Analysis Theme 1 – Access and Equity</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Cross Analysis Theme 2 – Academics</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Cross Analysis Theme 3 – Culture and Climate</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Cross Analysis Theme 4 – Managing the Organization</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>Cross Analysis Theme 5 - Relationships</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>Cross Analysis Theme 6 - Identity</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>Cross-Analysis table of principals using conceptual framework</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

"The transforming impact of excellent public schools is proven. The sad irony is that learning-related resources necessary for high academic performance are often tilted toward middle-class and affluent schools."

- Edwin C. Darden, Director of Education Law and Policy, Appleseed

"Despite the best efforts of America's educators to bring greater equity to our schools, too many children - especially low-income and minority children - are still denied the educational opportunities they need to succeed."

- Russlynn Ali, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, U.S. Dept. of Education

The history of education for students of color and lower-income students in America is a history fraught with inequality, disenfranchisement and underrepresentation in K-12 and higher education. Statistic after statistic show that large gaps exist in education attainment between White or Asian students and Black, Latino and Native American students (American Council on Education, 2006). Black and Latino students are more likely to attend high-poverty schools than White or Asian students (NCES, 2007). When it comes to high-achieving Black students, most will attend schools that have less rigorous curriculum, fewer resources and are staffed by teachers that expect less of them (Azzam, 2008).

Gaps in achievement between White or Asian students and students of color typically begin before students even start kindergarten. In 2006, White, Black and Asian 4-year olds participated in preschool more than Latino 4-year olds (NCES, 2007). From
2000 to 2010, the number of White students enrolling in public schools decreased while the number of Latino and Pacific Islander students increased (Adams et al, 2012).

One reason achievement gaps and differences in educational attainment exists between different racial/ethnic groups is because of socioeconomic status. Research shows that children born into poverty have lower school completion rates (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Evans & Schamberg, 2009). In 2007, almost 20 percent of children under the age of 18 lived in poverty (Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Evans & Schamberg, 2009).

Once students start school, educational disparities that existed from birth are exacerbated. Black and Latino students are more likely than White and Asian students to repeat a grade at some point before high school (Adams et al, 2012). Retention rates for Black students do not improve once they make it to high school; the percentage of Black students held back in ninth grade is 12 percent while only 4 percent of Whites are retained (Adams et al, 2012). Students that are retained once or twice in their lives are more likely to dropout and not earn a high school diploma.

Another reason Black students are more likely to be detained or drop out of school are because of disparities in discipline and referral rates. Starting in preschool, Blacks make up 42% of students placed on out-of-school suspension, yet they are only 18% of the preschool population nationwide (Cook, 2015). Suspension rates for Blacks increase throughout their time in K-12 schools. Blacks represent 16% of America’s student enrollment, but account for 32 percent of students receiving in-school suspension, 42% of
students receiving out-of-school suspension and 34% of students being expelled (Adams et al., 2012; Cook, 2015).

Even though the school-age population is diverse nationally the same cannot be said about the teachers and administrators that students encounter daily. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2013), 80% of principals and 83% of teachers are White. Black teachers make up only 6% of America’s high school teachers and the subject most teach is health and physical education (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

These ethnic/racial disparities in achievement, retention, suspension rates and school personnel highlight serious issues across American public school systems. Many of these disparities came to light when the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was reauthorized. The reauthorization of ESEA of 1965 was what many educators referred to as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) because the act emphasized increased school accountability and standards-based learning for all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The purpose of the act was to hold schools accountable for ensuring that students of color, lower-income students and students with disabilities, which had experienced historic educational disparities, would receive an education that raised achievement levels to be the same as or better than their White and Asian counterparts.

The result of NCLB was increased federal oversight in public education as schools were classified as successful based on whether or not all students reached proficiency or increased achievement levels (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). After the authorization of NCLB, principals became increasingly responsible for school success and student achievement (SREB, 2002). The role of the principal shifted from being a
manager of the organization to being the chief learner in the school. Principals were expected to understand effective teaching, regularly observe and coach teachers on instructional strategies and use data to make decisions about instructional goals, resource allocation and, most recently, teacher performance (NASSP, 2007). Increasingly, the most successful principals are ones that provide leadership that is visionary, community-based, instructional and culturally responsive (Bolman & Deal, 1995; Foster, 1997, 2002, 2004; Fullan, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Lindsey, Roberts, & Campbell-Jones, 2005; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1989, 2001).

Today, some of the nation’s most effective school leaders are ones that engage in “reflective, purposeful thought” coupled with their own personal beliefs or values and strong knowledge base (Colon, 1994). Successful principals are ones that have transitioned from leadership models that were traditionally bureaucratic, hierarchical, and non-inclusive to a model that is more adaptive, democratic and inclusive with the goal of empowering instead of controlling others (DuFour, 1998; NASSP, 2007). Principals that can help people within their schools make sense of actions they should take to improve outcomes for all students are needed in today’s schools (Murphy & Seashore-Louis, 1994; Duttweiler and Hord, 1987). This is especially true as schools across America enroll more students of color that are increasing economically disadvantaged and have been historically disenfranchised and underserved by our nation’s schools.

**Statement of the Problem**

In 2012, the U.S. Census released data showing that by the year 2040, the majority of children born in this country will be children of color (Kayne, 2013). In thirteen states
across the country including Florida, California, Texas, the under-5 population is now “majority-minority” with 25 more states fast approaching this milestone. At the same time these demographic shifts are occurring, 40 percent of Whites, 15 percent of Latinos and 23 percent of Blacks nationally graduate from college (Kayne, 2013). Many educators and policymakers across the country believe college completion rates must increase in order for the United States to remain competitive in the future (OECD, 2011).

As the general population becomes more diverse, so does the school-age population within K-12 schools. If the educational experiences most first generation, students of color and low-income students have traditionally experienced continue, then the country’s economic outlook will worsen as this new “majority-minority” fails to secure jobs, attain college degrees or invest in America’s economy (OECD, 2011). School reforms over the past thirty years do not appear to work because according to Murphy (1990), most school reforms are cyclical and accomplish little.

Another reason most school reforms have not worked in the past are because they focus on one way of improving students learning through addressing concerns on one of four paths - the classroom or school level, emotional, organizational or family (Leithwood et al., 2010). Best estimates show, however, that everything schools do within the building to improve achievement down the classroom or organization paths only accounts for a 20% variation in student achievement while addressing reforms down the emotional and family paths provide “high leverage” for school leaders and would provide the greatest impact on student learning (Creemers & Reetzig, 1996; Kyriakides & Creemers, 2006).
One school reform initiative that appears to address all four paths while improving student’s learning is the Early College High School Initiative (ECHSI). Started in 2002, the purpose of early college high schools is to increase college access and high school completion rates for first generation, lower-income students and students of color (NC New Schools, 2013).

Most research on early college high schools has centered on their creation, the early college model, their success and student outcomes (AIR & SRI, 2008; 2009). Few studies have examined leadership practices of the early college high school principals and how they promote student success. Principals are considered to be the person at the school-level that is responsible for maintaining and implementing the goals and objectives of a school reform initiative (Good, 2008). With this in mind, there is a need to examine early college high schools principals to determine how they balance constant pressure to ensure all students achieve with the purpose of early college high schools, which is to increase college access and high school completion rates for first generation, lower-income students and students of color.

Principals at early college high schools must confront daily, longstanding challenges that come with leading schools that are tasked with a dual purpose: helping first generation, students of color and low-income students earn a high school diploma all while preparing students to take college classes that could lead to completing a 2-year Associates degree before they graduate. Additionally, there is a need to understand how leaders of early college high schools work collaboratively with students, parents, teachers and their partner college to increase academic success and maintain high expectations for
all students while leading schools that are inclusive, equitable, and provide all stakeholders, including students, with a voice in the decision-making process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, multi-site, multi-case study was to examine how early college high school principals promote the success of the first generation, students of color and low-income students they serve. The study examined three early college high school principals in North Carolina through two lenses: the traditional role of principals and a conceptual framework of democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders.

Since no two people are alike and “some principals influence their schools by means of their personality while others demonstrate leadership capacity through the strength of their convictions,” (Notman et al., 2008) gaining insight into the personal and professional experiences that led these principals to serve at an early college high school will provide valuable information for future principals. Additional insight will be gained by examining early college high school principals as democratic, socially just, culturally leaders that encourage equity and inclusion and seek to counter deficit thinking and low expectations for first generation, students of color and low income students while providing widespread academic support for students from diverse and traditionally underserved backgrounds.

Research Questions

With these goals in mind the following questions guide this study:

1. How do early college high school principals promote the success of the first generation, lower-income students and students of color?
2. How do early college high school principals demonstrate the qualities and characteristics of democratic, socially just and culturally responsive leaders?

**Significance of the Study**

As our country becomes more diverse, the need to ensure that students receive equitable educational opportunities is imperative. Most traditional schools have not accomplished this despite all the research and money that have gone into improving schools, raising standards and emphasizing the need for highly qualified teachers and administrators leading schools. Early college high schools and the reform initiative that surrounds these schools seem to overcome these challenges successfully. Since principals are responsible for implementing the initiative at the school-level, an examination of who these principals are, what they do and why they do what they do can inform traditional school principals, especially those that serve racially/ethnically diverse and lower-income student populations.

The current study also posits that the “one size fits all” model of training principals in educational leadership programs is outmoded and does not produce leaders that can serve all students, especially first generation, students of color and lower-income students that traditionally have lacked a voice in the education process or are marginalized in relation to education policies, funding and laws. The success or failure of many schools will rely on a principal’s ability to navigate various issues of race, ethnicity and class that arise in schools, particularly schools that have the greatest racial and economic diversity or are part of a school reform or school improvement initiative (White-Smith & White, 2009). Therefore, the current study provides insight into how principals that face these
numerous challenges and issues navigate them successfully all while promoting the academic success of their first generation, students of color and lower-income students.

**Definition of Terms**

**Academic or student success** – Pertains to students achieving satisfactory or exceptional levels academically; success is normally measured quantitatively using test or achievement scores.

**Early college high schools** – small, public high schools that are schools of choice and enroll students of color, low-income and first generation students with the goal of these schools obtaining both a high school diploma and college credits or a 2-year degree upon graduation

**First generation students** – Students that are or would be the first in their family to obtain a 4-year college degree

**Low-income students or lower-income students** – Students that participate in the national school lunch program

**NC New Schools** – A public-private partnership in North Carolina that serves as a professional services organization that provides technical assistance and resources to the 77 early college high schools that exist within the state (NC New Schools, 2014).

**Students of color** – Students that identify as non-white racially and can include African American, Native American, Hispanic or Latino/a and Pacific Islanders/Asian students.
Organization of the Study

The current study is divided into seven chapters and an appendix section. The first chapter provided a brief introduction including information about the role of the principal in relation to increasing accountability, changing demographics and how leaders must respond to these changes. The first chapter also provided the rationale for the study, statement of the problem, the research questions and definitions. Chapter 2 will provide a comprehensive review of the literature. Chapter 3 describes the study’s research methods including how cases were selected, forms of data collection, how data was analyzed, potential ethical issues, limitations and the role and background of the researcher.

Chapters 4-6 will present the three cases including information on school context and community, study participants and findings on each principal’s leadership based on the data analysis.

Chapter 7 will provide a cross-case analysis and discussion for the three principals. Chapter will also include implications for practice and policy and recommendations for future research. Lastly, there was a reference section and an appendix section that includes copies of the internal review board approval from Clemson University, the informed consent forms, interview and focus group protocols, a table of prior studies on early college high schools and demographic information about all early college high schools in the study state, North Carolina.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 1 provided information about the background of the problem, the rationale for the current study, the problem statement, research questions and definitions. Chapter 2 will provide a comprehensive literature review in an effort to lay the groundwork for answering the two research questions and the conceptual framework of early college high school principals as democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders that promote the success of the first generation, students of color and low-income students they serve. Chapter 2 starts with a brief discussion about the history of education for students of color in America, an overview of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, outcomes of this legislation and its impact on how students, particularly students of color, were perceived academically.

Then, the chapter includes a discussion about the rise in deficit thinking as a result of NCLB and the role of principals, especially in combating deficit thinking and ensuring equitable educational opportunities for students that have been traditionally underserved and disenfranchised.

Next, the chapter discusses how principals that adopt democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leadership practices are needed in today’s schools and how early college high school leaders embody the qualities and characteristics of these leaders because they work to promote the academic success of the first generation, students of color and low-income students they serve.
Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion about the conceptual framework for centered on early college high school principals as democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders.

**Brief History of Education for Students of Color and Lower-income Students in U.S.**

Prior to the 1900’s, receiving a high school education was considered to be a privilege reserved for families that had the money and status to send their children away from home to school instead of them working on farms or factories (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Students attending high school during that time period were placed on one of two tracks: college preparatory or vocational training. Placement on a track was determined using standardized tests that measured a student’s intellectual ability (2008).

Schools during the early 20th century were legally segregated in the South and physically segregated in the North based on school district lines (Cordes, 2012). Funding for segregated schools was unequal since White schools had adequate resources and facilities while Black schools were under-funded which caused them to lack basic resources like school supplies, books and decent facilities (2012).

In 1954, the Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling in the *Brown vs. Board of Education* case that ordered schools across the nation to desegregate in an effort to make more equitable educational opportunities for students of color. Despite the high court’s ruling, however, inequities in schools continued particularly in relation to school funding, resource allocation and student achievement (Evans, 2005; Gardner, 2007). One reason funding inequalities continued was because large numbers of mostly White, middle-class families moved to the suburbs as schools in major cities desegregated during the 1970’s
Taxpayer dollars followed the migrating middle-class families leaving urban schools with mostly lower-income Black and Latino students and limited funding. The lack of funding and appropriate resources impacted graduation rates and academic achievement among students of color in reading and math for decades.

Issues about the differences in achievement between White students and students of color became a national issue with the release of the *A Nation at Risk* report in 1983. The report depicted America as a place that was not competitive or preparing students for current or future employment (U.S. Department of Education, 1983). America’s education inequality issues shined in the report as principals and teachers were blamed for not having adequate training or the knowledge to know how to provide a sound education for *all* students regardless of race, socioeconomic background or location (Cordes, 2012).

The *A Nation at Risk* report spawned a wave of educational reforms and increased academic federal and state standards in a rush to make sure that *all* students received a public education that prepared them to be college or career ready. Despite numerous federal and state reforms and interventions the dropout rate, high school graduation rates and academic performance on national reading and math tests continued to fall, especially for students of color and lower-income students that historically were underprepared and underserved with resources and funding to help them reach the nation’s new higher standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). In 2002, the federal government introduced additional federal legislation as a way to once again address
historically inequitable education attainment and outcomes for America’s students of color and lower-income students.

*No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and its Impact*

In 2001, former President George W. Bush reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. This legislation contained new requirements that *all* students regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status or disability status, would receive an equitable, high quality education (Holloway, 2004). The reauthorization was what many educators referred to as *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* because the act emphasized increased school accountability and standards-based learning (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The purpose of NCLB was, “…to close the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers” (2001).

The NCLB legislation led to increased federal oversight in public education and yearly testing in core subjects like Reading and Math to ensure that students performed at a proficient level. Schools would be classified as successful based on whether or not *all* students reached proficiency or increased achievement levels. NCLB called for reforms in five areas: standards and assessment, accountability and adequate yearly progress, corrective action, staff qualifications and parental involvement (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

The impact of NCLB was felt immediately across the nation, but not all those impacts were positive, especially for students of color and low-income students.
According to the Center on Education Policy (CEP), this standards-based federal reform movement had major effects (CEP, 2006). Student achievement scores on tests improved, but the ongoing discussion about an “achievement gap” between students of color and White students led to unintended consequences including deficit-thinking and schools spending more time on tested subjects and less time on History, Physical Education and the Arts. Another effect was schools disaggregating testing data across subgroups based on gender, race/ethnicity, grade level, disability status and socioeconomic status. Schools that were classified as low-performing were required to improve for face dramatic restructuring or closing if improvement did not occur.

Additionally, 88% of schools nationally had highly qualified teachers teaching in the core subject areas (CEP, 2006). This was not the case, however, in hard-to-staff subject areas like Special Education, Math and Science or in hard-to-staff schools in rural, urban and more racially diverse or economically disadvantaged schools. Many students in those types of schools were not participating in the opportunity structure that education should provide. Instead, many students of color and low-income students identified with their oppressed and marginal position in society (Ogbu, 2003). Finally, NCLB caused understaffed and underfunded schools to be held more accountable which led to more students of color experiencing less rigorous curriculum because they were spending more time taking standardized tests than learning skills that could lead to college or employment (CEP, 2006).
Deficit Thinking and Increased Scrutiny on Student Achievement

NCLB’s scrutiny on students of color and low-income student achievement led to both positive and negative effects. On the positive side, more money was provided to schools through the Title I program for supplemental services like increased tutoring and reduced class sizes (Ravitch & Chubb, 2009). Many Title I schools across the country started before and after school tutoring programs that were free and provided transportation for participants. Additionally, NCLB provided parents whose children were in low-performing schools the ability to choose the school they wanted to send their children to even, in some cases, if that was a private or charter school. The number of charter schools and tutoring companies skyrocketed throughout the country after NCLB was authorized (Ravitch & Chubb, 2009).

Unfortunately, only 20% of the students that were eligible to receive additional services like tutoring took advantage of the opportunity (Ravitch & Chubb, 2009). Those that did participate showed little or no improvement in academic performance despite increased individual instructional time. If anything, students of color demonstrated less significant gains on standardized tests. This last situation led to a second unintended consequence of increased scrutiny on student achievement – stereotypes and deficit thinking.

One big unintended consequence of NCLB was the increasingly negative rhetoric surrounding students of color and lower-income student academic performance, especially in the face of funding for tutoring, school choice and lower class sizes. Many Americans started looking outside the school for reasons why this these students were
underachieving. Many Americans, including educators, placed the blame for student’s academic failures on the children and their families. A parallel discourse was that students of color and low-income families did not value education or want their children to be successful like White parents and families (Brandon, 2003; Valencia, 1997; Weiner, 2003; Yosso, 2005).

The way that NCLB reported achievement results by race and ethnicity did not help with this rhetoric because it appeared that Blacks, Native American and Latinos, especially boys, were at the “bottom” of all academic measures. This led many educators to speak about these students based on “perceptions of their weaknesses rather than their strengths,” (Valencia, 1997; Gorski, 2010). Suddenly, difference (or rather being in the “minority”) was no longer seen or thought of positively or as “adding value”. Difference (or being in the “minority”) was seen as a factor that negatively impacted achievement. Additionally, difference (or being in the “minority”) was characterized as being near the bottom of measures that the majority culture used to define success including power, class, money, position, language, education and location (Valencia, 1997; Gorski, 2010).

While research on deficit thinking has centered on societal and political issues, an examination of this type of thinking in schools has emerged over the past decade (Sleeter, 2004; Ford & Grantham, 2003; Pearl, 1997; Valencia, 1997; Yosso, 2005). Researchers see deficit thinking as more than “individual assumptions and dispositions. Deficit thinking is an institutionalized worldview, an ideology woven into the fabric of U.S. society and its socializing institutions, including schools” (Gorski, 2010), p. 3). Sleeter (2004) pointed out that, “the long-standing deficit ideology still runs rampant in many
schools….despite the abstraction that ‘all children can learn’” (Sleeter, 2004, p. 133) or that no child will be left behind.

According to Gorski (2010), “deficit thinking is a worldview that explains and justifies outcome inequalities – standardized test scores or levels of educational attainment, for example – by pointing to supposed deficiencies within disenfranchised individuals and communities” (Gorski, 2010, p. 3). Deficit thinkers usually ignore how race, gender and economics provide greater access for some people and not others to things, like education and jobs, and how that access could have a positive effect on the educational achievement and attainment of students of color and low-income students and their families (Gorski, 2010).

One way to combat deficit thinking at the school level is to work with principals and teachers to ensure they do not espouse these beliefs consciously or subconsciously (Valencia, 1997). School reform or improvement initiatives and movements that have deficit-thinking leaders will not be successful because blame for failures will be placed on the students and families those reforms are supposed to help. Instead of providing equitable schooling practices, deficit-thinking school reformers and educators will continue labeling students as “at-risk”, “disadvantaged” and “high needs” individuals that are responsible for their own dire circumstances and ultimately they cannot achieve or be successful (Valencia, 1997).

At the school level the person that can combat deficit thinking among teachers while implementing school reform programs and aligning resources that truly help first generation, students of color and low-income students be successful is the principal.
Traditional Role of the Principal

According to the Leithwood et al (2008), leadership is second to classroom instruction in factors that affect student learning. The Wallace Foundation (2011) posited that principals perform five key functions:

- Shaping a vision of academic success for all students based on high standards;
- Creating a climate that is hospitable to education and has a safe, cooperative spirit;
- Cultivating leadership in others so stakeholders can contribute to the school’s vision;
- Improving instruction so teachers teach their best and student learning is optimum;
- Managing people, data and processes that promote school improvement.

Performing these five functions are imperative as principals manage the demands of numerous stakeholders that usually have more power and influence to intervene. Therefore, successful principals must possess a strong and well-articulated values orientation (Day, 2004; Leithwood, 2004). Although this values orientation varies based on a principal’s personality, personal background and experiences, almost all successful leaders draw on the same basic leadership practices (Leithwood, et al., 2008). What differs among principals is the way leaders apply these practices and demonstrate the principal’s responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts where they work.

One study that sought to examine leadership practices in situ was the International Successful School Principals Project (ISSPP), an international network that compiles
research on successful principals around the world (Day, 2004). The goal of this project has been to collect data from multiple perspectives, compare effective leadership in various contexts and identify the personal qualities and dispositions leaders share (Day, 2004). As of today, over 200 studies have been conducted using the ISSPP protocols. Results from these studies reveal eleven common themes or behaviors of successful principal leadership (Gurr, 2015):

- Individual high expectations help everyone achieve their best despite accountability demands.
- Leadership qualities that are both transformational and instructional motivate and support staff to ensure improved teaching and learning (Moos, Johansson & Day, 2011).
- Leadership is distributed and contributions from teachers, parents and students are valued (Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2011).
- Regardless of context or setting, principals have four core practices: setting direction, developing people, leading change and improving teaching and learning. Other core practices leaders possess include being problem-solvers, articulating ethical values, building trust, creating a safe, secure environment, being visible in the building, building coalitions and promoting equity, care and achievement (Leithwood, et al., 2006).
- Leaders are heroic leaders that challenge the status quo and fight for better outcomes for their students (Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2007).
- Leaders build the capacity of teachers and students (Day & Leithwood, 2007).
• Leaders are transparent about their values, beliefs and actions which help them gain the trust and respect of stakeholders (Drysdale & Gurr, 2011).

• Leaders are continuously learning and developing their leadership through socially constructed life experiences and knowledge gained professionally (Day, 2011).

• Leaders have many personal qualities, beliefs and values that come from a “…spiritual, moral or social justice base or from an understanding of what is possible in education. They have the courage to [do] what is right to help students be the best they can be” (Pashiardis, Savvides & Cyprus, 2014, p. 35-39).

• Leaders were sensitive to context, but not driven by it (Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2011).

• Leaders sustain success by actively engaging with others, being resilient, balancing competing interests, continuing personal professional learning and managing accountability expectations (Wasonga, 2014).

Despite the number of studies within the ISSPP, few studies have examined successful principals who practice at schools that are part of a school reform initiative designed to promote the success of students that have traditionally been underserved and disenfranchised in traditional high school settings. Also, few studies in the ISSPP or elsewhere have examined the humanistic side of successful school leaders and how a principal’s personal background and personality affect the roles and actions they take within and outside the school to promote student success (Hargreaves, 1996; Thompson, 2004).
Leadership that promotes success in diverse schools

According to Harris (2002), successful principals promote student success when they create a personal vision for their organizations that is aligned with their values, distribute leadership, invest in staff development and build or maintain relationships including professional learning communities which connect home, school and community. Goldring & Greenfield (2005) posit that four conditions distinguish the work of school principals from administration work in other contexts and present unique challenges for today’s school leaders.

- The moral dimension of educational leadership including how resources such as time, money, materials and staff effort are dispersed in a way that promotes success for all students.

- Principals must act as advocates for the students they serve by encouraging communities and business leaders to elect officials that adopt policies and practices which improve circumstances that interfere with a student’s ability to succeed in school.

- The stewardship of the public’s trust and how principals guide and develop the public’s understanding of and support for the role public education plays in developing a more socially just and democratic society. Principals serve as stewards when they challenge the anti-intellectual belief that academic learning is useful only for a few and not needed by all. Additionally, principals must help communities, particularly the voting public and elected officials, understand that schools must ensure that all students learn regardless of what they look like or
where they’re from and that accomplishing this goal will require changes in how schooling occurs.

- Finally, principals must cultivate support for the development of cultural competence among students as a goal of public education. One way principals can accomplish this goal is to help teachers understand that students of color and White students respond differently to engagement strategies, therefore schools should foster an environment where learning for all truly happens using culturally-responsive teaching and practices (Ladson-Billings, 2004).

How principals navigate these challenges to promote the success of all students, particularly students that have been historically underserved and disenfranchised, represents the greatest challenge for today’s and future principals.

According to Marshall and Oliva (2009), school leaders can respond to these challenges by shifting their thinking about diversity and understand that inequitable outcomes are not merely the result of deficiencies in the students, nor their communities. Principals must help stakeholders understand that inequitable outcomes often come from organizational practices and policies that are a part of school and administrator practices, but have not been analyzed to determine their impact on students of color (McDonough, 1997; Sewell, DuCette, & Shapiro, 1998; Kozol, 1991; Scheurich & Laible, 1995; Cochran-Smith et al., 1999; Larson & Ovando, 2001).

Fortunately, research shows that ongoing inequities in the schools can be remedied through sustained interventions (Cambron-McCabe, 2000; Scheurich, 1998; Shapiro, Sewell, & DuCette, 1995); however, not enough has changed in training, credentialing,
recruiting, and promoting school leaders or in national education policies for leaders to believe that their instinct to enact democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leadership will be understood or supported by district school boards (Marshall and Oliva, 2009). The challenges of demographics and inequities are chronic and remain unresolved by decades of traditional practice, scholarship, theory, and professional training in educational administration (Marshall and Oliva, 2009).

Today’s schools need principals that are trained to foster practices which promote success for all students, especially students that have been traditionally underserved and disenfranchised in and by schools. Today’s schools need critical leaders that demonstrate three behaviors: they recognize and understand critical issues, convince others that there are issues and create safe spaces for conversations, reflections and actions (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2011). Research shows that three types of critical school leaders – democratic leaders, socially just leaders, culturally responsive leaders - promote student success while combatting deficit-thinking and seeking equitable outcomes for all students.

**Democratic Leadership**

Thoughts about democratic leadership originated with John Dewey’s notion that educators could not function within a democracy if they did not practice these same beliefs in schools (Dewey, 1916; Rusch, 1995). Democratic leadership is participatory, interactive and collaborative with the end goal being that everyone’s voice is heard and no one was excluded from the decision-making process (1995).
Democratic leaders are active and know that their influence over the school’s development is important and can only be achieved by deciding on an agenda or purpose, leading discussion and dialogue with others inside and outside the school building and being the chief learner in the building (Johansson, 2006). At the heart of democratic leaders is a focus on the values they possess and the ones they place on specific actions and goals (Leithwood and Duke, 1999). These values “become the mental map that guides an individual’s actions and thoughts and serves as the foundation for these processes” (Johansson, 2006, p. 623). Although it is good to focus on the practical side of leadership theory, there is a need to discuss and analyze the “non-rational, moral and ethical aspects of leadership” (Johansson, 2006, p. 623), especially as student populations and their needs become more diverse. Principals must be able to successfully navigate competing values and interests between students, parents, teachers, policymakers and within themselves, particularly as schools continue to seek ways to reform and improve.

Research shows that finding democratic leaders in practice is difficult, especially as federal and state policies pressure principals to ensure that all students are achieving based on quantitative measures (i.e. test scores). Principals also face challenges when working with teachers, parents and students because those stakeholders usually do not believe they have a voice in what happens within schools (Johnson, 1988; Wasley, 1992; Conley, 1991). Neither teachers nor students or parents believe that anyone is advocating for them; therefore, interactions between schools, families and the community continues to decline (Conley, 1991). According to Blasé (1991), the biggest form of communication within schools emphasizes compliance and non-confrontation instead of democratic
practices. Democratic leaders seek to ensure that this is not the main communication pattern in their school and that major decisions are made only after everyone has had a chance to provide input and debate.

**Socially Just Leadership**

Socially just leadership derives its origins from Freire (1970) who believed that education should emancipate and people should engage in constant reflection before acting to make the world a more equitable place for everyone. Freire wanted students to engage in dialogue that helped free them to become agents that could identify places where oppression was evident and then form plans to change the status quo (1970). The purpose of dialogue was justice for all and “to stimulate doubt, criticism, curiosity, questioning, a taste for risk-taking, the adventure of creating” (Freire, 1970, p. 50). With this in mind, leaders for social justice “examine power relations within schools and society, scrutinize differential schooling and critique social class stratifications” (Brown, 2006).

Socially just leaders understand that they lead based on their values and that in order to ensure justice for all sometimes they will need to “leave the comforts and confines of professional codes and state mandates for the riskier waters of higher moral callings” (Rapp, 2002, p. 233). Socially just leaders know that not discussing or addressing issues of race and income within schools will allow deficit thinking and the status quo to continue (Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Larson & Ovando, 2001). Foster (2004) implored school leaders to serve as change agents that challenged systemic institutional beliefs, especially in relation to minority and low-income student achievement and attainment.
Theoharis (2007) posited that socially just leaders have an eye towards respect, caring, recognition and empathy. Socially just leaders, “make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation and other historically and currently marginalized conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice and vision” (Theoharis, 2007, p. 223). Socially just principals work to eliminate marginalization and push inclusion for all within their schools.

**Culturally Responsive Leaders**

Ladson-Billings (1994) conceived the term “culturally relevant pedagogy” in her book *The Dreamkeepers*, which examined eight teachers that successfully worked with African American students. Ladson-Billings believed culturally responsive practitioners should aid students in becoming academically successful while maintaining cultural competence and developing a critical consciousness that challenges the status quo (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Although the notion of challenging the status quo is similar to socially just beliefs, the emphasis on acknowledging, maintaining and promoting various cultures within and outside the school is a hallmark of culturally responsive pedagogy. According to Madhlangobe & Gordon (2012), culturally responsiveness:

Validates students’ ways of knowing and doing and therefore allows students the freedom to focus on academic tasks [and] enables students to find their voices, contextualize issues in multiple cultural perspectives, achieve higher levels of understanding, practice insightful thinking and become more active participants in shaping their own learning (p. 180).
Like social justice leaders, culturally responsive practitioners emphasize a belief that students have freedom to find their voice and shape their own learning (Ladson-Billings, 2009). Lastly, culturally responsive pedagogy emphasizes cooperation, mutual aid, reciprocity, connectedness and interdependence (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Although most culturally responsive pedagogy research centers on teacher practices, there is a growing call for this pedagogy to be applied within school leadership, particularly those principals that serve in schools that have high numbers of students of color and low-income students (Johnson, 2007). Most studies on culturally responsive leaders have focused on Black principals that practice in urban schools (Reitzug & Patterson, 1998; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; and Lomotey, 1989). Those principals emphasized high expectations for students, an ethic of care and commitment to the community.

In a study of how principals can prepare to serve in more diverse schools, Riehl (2000) believed that principals needed to devise new definitions of diversity, promote inclusive school practices and build connections between schools and communities. This is extremely important since:

The majority of principals and teachers of culturally diverse students do not come from the same cultural backgrounds as they do, and a number of studies over the past decade indicate that students’ school performance may be linked to lack of congruence between the students’ cultures and the norms, values, expectations, and practices of schools. However, there is little guidance for school leaders on how they
should help teachers work with students from cultural backgrounds different from their own (Johnson, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2002; Saifer & Barton, 2007).

The current researcher sought to find and examine principals that demonstrate the characteristics, behaviors and interests of democratic, social justice, culturally responsive leaders that promote the success traditionally underserved and disenfranchised students (see Table 2.1). Principal practices using a conceptual framework based on the characteristics/behaviors and interests of democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders will be employed in the current study (see Table 2.1 and Figure 1). One location where these leaders may exist are within early college high schools because the mission of these schools are to promote access and higher education attainment for first generation students, students of color and low-income students.
Table 2.1

*Conceptual framework summary table with pedagogical origin of leadership types, leadership characteristics and behaviors and leadership interests*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pedagogical Origin</th>
<th>Democratic Leaders</th>
<th>Socially Just Leaders</th>
<th>Culturally Responsive Leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership Characteristics and Behaviors</td>
<td>Values-oriented Collaborative Participatory Interactive Ethical</td>
<td>Constantly questioning Challenges status quo Lead by values Change agent Risk-taking Creator Critical Curious</td>
<td>Culturally-competent Challenges status quo Has high expectations Ethic of care Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interests</td>
<td>Multiple perspectives Discussion Inclusion Dialogue Sharing Voice</td>
<td>Eliminate deficits Emancipation Recognition Respect Empathy Inclusion Caring Equity</td>
<td>Interdependence Student freedom Connectedness Student voice Cooperation Reciprocity Mutual aid Culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conceptual framework for early college high school principals as democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders
Early College High Schools – A School Reform Initiative

Started in 2002, early college high schools are public high schools usually located on or near 2- and 4-year colleges and target first generation, students of color and low-income students that have traditionally been underserved in traditional schools or are underrepresented in higher education (NC New Schools, 2012). Early college high schools are classified as schools of choice because parents must apply for their children to attend the school. Students usually enroll during their ninth grade year and after receiving intense academic support and passing qualifying exams like the COMPASS or ACCUPLACER, then students are eligible to take up to two years of college classes that are transferable to other colleges across the country (NC New Schools, 2012).

Early college high schools are designed in a way that promote student success for all while challenging traditional deficit thinking about first generation, students of color and low-income students. Six principles guide the design of most schools and represent the initiative’s model for early college high schools: shared leadership for improved student outcomes; small learning environment with 400 or fewer students; respect and responsibility among and between students and faculty; staff collaboration, parent inclusion and community-school partnerships; integration of technology for learning and instruction; and rigorous academic standards for high school and college-level work (Jobs for the Future, 2013). Research on these schools show they are achieving the initiative’s lofty goals of increasing high school completion rates and providing college access for traditionally underserved students (Jobs for the Future, 2013).
In 2006, American Institutes for Research (AIR) and SRI International (SRI) were contracted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to examine the progress of the first groups of early college high school graduates. The first report on outcomes of the initiative showed that early college high schools nationally were enrolling the target population of first generation, students or color and low-income students and 90 percent of schools had students enrolled in at least one college class two years after the inception of the initiative (AIR & SRI, 2006).

A follow-up study two years later showed that the target population was still being served and that the average daily attendance rate was 94 percent, which was 5 to 15 percentage points higher than similar populations at traditional high schools (AIR & SRI, 2008). In 2007, students at early college high schools outperformed students in comparison school districts on state assessments in English and Math (AIR & SRI, 2009). Nationally, 24 percent of students that graduated from early college high schools earned a two year or Associate’s degree and 44 percent earned at least one year of college credit (Webb & Myaka, 2011). In 2007-08, the overall GPA for all early college high school students was a 2.8 for females while students from non-English speaking homes reported higher GPAs than similar students in traditional high schools (AIR & SRI, 2009).

Between 2006 and 2009, the average rate of students moving from 9th to 10th grade at an early college high school was 85 percent with schools located on a college campus having progression rates higher than those that were not (AIR & SRI, 2009). This statistic supports what many founders of the early college high school initiative believed - that placing schools on a college campus would help students develop a
stronger relationship with both the school and college based on what they called “the power of the site” (New Schools Project, 2006).

One goal for early college high schools is to increase the college-going rates of students that traditionally are underrepresented in four-year colleges. According to the National Student Clearinghouse, student enrollment in postsecondary education in the fall after HS graduation was higher for ECHS students than for a nationally representative sample (88 percent vs. 72 percent) while the rate of students of color, first generation and low-income students that accessed higher education was 69 percent, which is 20 to 30 percentage points higher than similar students that graduated from traditional high schools in 2010 (AIR & SRI, 2009; Webb & Mayka, 2011).

On July 9, 2014, the SERVE Center, a research organization at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, was awarded a $1.2 million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Education to conduct a study on postsecondary outcomes for early college high school graduates that attended a 2- or 4-year college (“Julie Edmunds”, 2014). This information will be helpful in determining whether or not early college high schools are achieving their ultimate goal of making sure that students, particularly those from underrepresented groups, arrive on campus prepared for college-level work and then graduate with a degree within three to five years of arriving to college.

According to NC New Schools (2013), the state support network for early college high schools in North Carolina, results from the state’s schools showed that the initiative increased graduation rates particularly among Black male and low-income students, decreased the dropout rate, retained more students from the ninth to tenth grade and
increased the number of students achieving associate degrees and students enrolling in a postsecondary institution when compared with students that attended traditional high schools (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>NC Public Schools</th>
<th>NC Early College High Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-yr graduation rate</td>
<td>83.8%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black male HS graduation rate</td>
<td>68.1%</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degrees conferred</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled in postsecondary ed</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained or promoted students from 9th to 10th grade</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In an effort to find out more about early college high schools, the current researcher conducted a synthesis of literature (Hammonds, 2013). A synthesis provides researchers with a way to “synthesize qualitative findings into one theory, model or description [while] generating new complete understandings of a phenomenon” (Paterson et al., 2001, p. 2). The goal of the qualitative synthesis was to include all the findings about early college high schools so the current researcher could seek out commonalities and differences that led to knowledge creation, theory-building and a new conceptual understanding about the subject (Thorne et al., 2004).

The current researcher searched databases such as ERIC, Academic One File and Academic Search Complete using two keyword search terms: ‘early college high school’
and ‘early college’. All results were further limited by searching within only academic journals and not periodicals or magazines. Once all academic journal articles were displayed with either keyword search term, abstracts and titles were read to see if the study was qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods and narrowly focused on early college high schools. Studies that did not mention early college high schools within their title or abstracts were excluded from the study. Several databases repeated studies but after searching three databases, sixteen studies were identified for the synthesis (Hammonds, 2013).

The synthesis revealed seventeen themes and 134 findings on early college high schools (see Table 2.3 p. 345). The findings from the synthesis revealed that even though principals play an important role during any school reform initiative, few studies included findings on the role of the principal at early college high schools. The synthesis revealed the following findings about principals (Born, 2006; Cravey, 2013):

- Principals make schools more open, participatory and inclusive by sharing governance
- Personnel selection was critical because teachers must be able to accelerate instruction for at-risk students in order to prepare them for college-level work
- Principals made sure to hire nurturing, culturally sensitive teachers
- Principals took time to provide written comments on every student’s report card and student quarterly goal sheets
Principals collaborated with teachers and college administrators to help students find careers and colleges that matched student’s financial situations and ability levels.

The synthesis led the current researcher to the conclusion that principals are an understudied group within the early college high school initiative. Since principals are second only to teachers and classroom instruction in factors that affect student learning and a school’s success (Wallace Foundation, 2011), an examination of the role of principals at an early college high school was warranted.

**Pilot Study Results**

In a continued effort to learn more about principals at early college high schools, the current researcher conducted an exploratory study on two leaders at early college high schools in a southern state (Hammonds, 2014). The first participant was Rhonda Little, an assistant principal and director of Land Early College Academy, an early college with 150 students housed inside a larger Title I high school with 1700 students. The second participant was Dr. Adam Graham, principal at Plain Early College Charter School, a charter school on the campus of a community college with 450 students. Both participants had over twenty years of experience in education and were committed to making sure that the core principles of early college high schools were implemented to fidelity. Additionally, both worked to ensure that the students they served – particularly students of color, lower-income and first generation students – experienced academic success and had a voice in the decision-making process within their schools.
The current researcher conducted interviews with each school leader in an effort to answer two questions: how do they view their role within the early college high school particularly in relation to promoting the success of their students of color and lower-income students and how did they implement and maintain the five core principles of the early college high school initiative. The core principles of the early college high school initiative are: purposeful design, professionalism, personalization, college ready and powerful teaching and learning (Jobs for the Future, 2009).

Although both leaders implemented and maintained the five core principles of early college high schools to fidelity, the approaches each used to promote the success of their students of color and lower-income students differed. Little chose to address barriers to minority and lower-income student achievement by challenging teacher’s deficit-thinking and lowered expectations for students. In spite of the fact that Little had worked at the school for over twenty years, colleagues alienated her as soon as she questioned their instructional practices and deficit thinking. Although Little admitted this was difficult for her to endure, she believed that what she was doing was correct and proper because it truly was what was in the best interest of all, especially the students of color and lower-income students the school served.

Alternatively, Graham addressed barriers to student achievement by allowing students to have a voice in decision-making processes within the school and empowering students by ensuring they were culturally competent and leaders for change within their own communities. Graham sponsored quarterly meetings with students so they could to be responsible for their own learning. During the quarterly meetings students organized
class sessions, activities and Socratic seminars on topics such as bullying, social media awareness and human/gay rights. Although students and teachers liked the student-centered and student-ran days, parents were not as pleased and many complained to the charter school board that the principal was too liberal and was pushing a social agenda they did not agree with. After great pressure from parents, the board asked Graham to resign and he consented.

Despite the challenges and obstacles both leaders faced, each were committed to implementing the early college high school initiative based on visions they had for their schools and goals they set for themselves and others within the organization. The actions Little and Graham took within their respective schools to promote the success of their minority and lower-income students mirrored the qualities and characteristics of democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders. This led the current researcher to question if these findings were unique to these two leaders or if similar qualities and characteristics existed among other early college high school leaders.

Since early college high schools target first generation, students of color and lower-income students, issues of race, ethnicity and social justice are inherent and should be explored (Watlington, 2008). With this goal in mind, the current study uses a conceptual framework that views early college high school principals as democratic, socially just, culturally leaders that challenge deficit-thinking and promote the academic success of the first generation, students of color and low-income students they serve.
Summary

Chapter 1 provided information about the background of the problem, the rationale for the current study, the problem state, research questions and definitions. Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive literature review in an effort to lay the groundwork for the conceptual framework of early college high school principals as democratic, socially just and culturally responsive leaders that promote the success of the students of color and low-income students they serve. Chapter 2 began with a discussion about the history of education for students of color in the United States, information about the No Child Left Behind legislation, reforms that took place after this law and its impact, particularly on how students, particularly students of color, were perceived academically.

Next, the chapter included a discussion about the rise in deficit thinking as a result of these school reforms and the role of the principal in schools, particularly the role principals should play in combating deficit thinking and ensuring equitable educational opportunities for students that have been traditionally underserved and disenfranchised.

Finally, the chapter discussed how principals that adopt democratic, socially just and culturally responsive leadership practices are what is needed in today’s schools and how early college high school leaders embody the qualities and characteristics of these leaders because they combat deficit thinking and work to promote the academic success of the first generation, students of color and low-income students they serve. Finally, the chapter concluded with a discussion about the conceptual framework for the study centered on early college high school principals that practice democratic, socially just and culturally responsive leadership.
Chapter 3 will describe the research methods including how cases were selected, the forms of data collection, how data was analyzed, potential ethical issues, limitations and the role and background of the researcher.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN

Chapter 1 provided information about the background of the problem, the rationale for the current study, the problem statement, research questions and definitions. Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive literature review and a conceptual framework of early college high school principals as democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders that promote the success of the first generation, students of color and low-income students they serve. Chapter 3 will describe the research design including an overview of the current study, background information about qualitative research, rationale for choosing qualitative research methods, case study overview, sample and site selection, information about interviews and focus groups, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Background of the Study

Students of color and lower-income students have not traditionally fared well in schools across America. Despite numerous school reforms, students of color and lower-income students continue to be underserved and disenfranchised in schools. Although there are many reasons within and outside schools to explain why this is occurring, the fact remains that traditional school practices and actions cannot continue if success for all students is to be realized. Over the next ten to fifteen years, the “minority” will become the “majority” of not only the general population, but also the school-aged population. In many places such as California, Texas and Florida, this is already the reality. If our country wants to continue to be a superpower and remain competitive globally, then a critical examination of how students of color and lower-income students are educated and
what people that are responsible for providing that education at the school level (i.e. principals and teachers) are or are not doing to promote these student’s success is necessary.

In order to discern the behaviors and attitudes of principals that lead schools where first generation, students of color and low-income students have been successful, the researcher examined principals at early college high schools. Early college high schools are public high schools that are usually located on or near 2- and 4-year colleges and target first generation, students of color and low-income students that have traditionally been underserved and disenfranchised in regular high schools. Since the first early college high schools opened nationally in 2002, there have been 29 studies conducted on these schools using quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods (see Table 2.2 p. 345).

Most studies have used qualitative methods and have focused on how students are supported socially and academically once they enter the school (Born, 2006; Thompson & Ongaga, 2011; Leonard, 2013; Locke et al., 2014); student and teacher experiences within the school (Trevino & Mayes, 2006; Ongaga, 2010; Alaie, 2011; Chambers, 2012; Morrow & Torrez, 2012; Cravey, 2013); student experiences after graduation (Valdez et al., 2012; McDonald & Farrell, 2012; Woodcock & Beal, 2013) how early college high schools are implemented (AIR & SRI, 2006; Leonard, 2013); expanding the early college high school model (Howley et al., 2013); and state policies that support these schools (Hoffman et al., 2009).

Quantitative and mixed method studies have examined relationships between the early college high school, funding subsidiaries and the school’s higher education partners
(AIR & SRI, 2008; 2009); impact of high school student attendance on traditional-age community college student experiences (Williams & Southers, 2010); early college high school retention and why students opt out and return to traditional high school settings (Edmunds et al., 2010); impact of early college high school, learning outcomes and the school’s success with stated goals (Kanuika & Vickers, 2010; Edmunds et al., 2010; Webb & Mayka, 2011; Edmunds et al., 2012; Hall, 2013); and college-level support systems for early college high school students (Oliver et al., 2010).

The current study sought to bridge a gap in the literature on early college high schools and leaders at these schools. As the person responsible for implementing the early college high school initiative, principals play an important role when it comes to ensuring these schools succeed, particularly with the school’s target population. As more early college high schools open around the nation and founders seek to scale their design up to traditional high schools, there is a need to examine why these leaders chose to serve at these schools and how they work with students, parents, teachers and the partner college to promote academic success and high expectations for all students while making sure their schools remain inclusive and equitable, and provide stakeholders with a voice in the decision-making process. The current study will utilize a conceptual framework that views early college high school principals as democratic, socially justice, culturally leaders that challenge deficit-thinking and promote the academic success and achievement of their first generation, students of color and low-income students. The research questions the current study sought to address were:
1. How do early college high school principals promote the success of the first generation, lower-income students and students of color?

2. How do early college high school principals demonstrate the qualities and characteristics of democratic, socially just and culturally responsive leaders?

This qualitative study utilized a multisite case study design to determine why early college high school principals choose to work at these schools, what actions they took within the school and the impact of those actions on the success of the first generation, students of color and low-income students the schools serve.

**Qualitative Research Overview**

Qualitative research is sometimes referred to as naturalistic inquiry because the researcher is not interested in manipulating variables or intervening to alter an outcome. Instead, the researcher is interested in the behaviors, beliefs and feelings of the participants in their natural setting (Jacobs, 1985). The use of qualitative research or naturalistic inquiry is important for training and development because it helps people see how decisions impact a particular group of people or what changes might be necessary to ensure that people receive equitable treatment.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), qualitative research focuses on interpreting phenomena in their natural settings to make sense of the meanings people bring to those settings. Qualitative research involves collecting information about personal experiences, interviews, life history, visuals and interactions that are important and meaningful to a person. Patton (2002) believes that researchers should not seek to predict what will happen, as what occurs with quantitative research. Instead, researchers should understand
a situation in depth and the meaning that people bring to the situation. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis; therefore, bracketing is used to “mitigate the potential deleterious effects of unacknowledged preconceptions related to the researcher and thereby to increase the rigor of the project” (Tufford & Newman, 2010, p. 81).

The strength of qualitative research is its ability to look at the “human” side of an issue and talk about a person’s experiences while identifying intangible factors such as gender, ethnicity, race, religion and socioeconomic status (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Qualitative research is focused on explaining a person’s constructed meaning and how people make sense of the world they live in and experiences they have had (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to understand the meaning a person draws from experiences, qualitative research uses thick, rich description to paint a picture in the reader’s mind about what participants are discussing or have experienced (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Weaknesses of qualitative research are that fewer people are usually studied, there is a difficulty generalizing results to the larger population and data analysis depends on the researcher’s skills and attributes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

If a researcher is interested in learning about the lived experiences, personal values, beliefs, interactions and relationships of a person in order to generate new theories or hypotheses, then qualitative research is the appropriate method to use. If a person is interested in testing a theory, explaining phenomena and determining why the phenomena occurred, then quantitative research is the method a researcher would choose. Since the current researcher is interested in learning about the lived experiences of early college
high school principals including what made them choose to work at this school, what they do to promote students of color and low-income student success and what is the impact of those decisions on the larger school setting, then qualitative research is the appropriate method to use for the current study.

**Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design**

The current study used a qualitative design as a way of providing a “complex, holistic picture” (Creswell, 1994) of early college high school principals as democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders. When deciding what design to use in a study Creswell (1998) provided researchers with five reasons for pursuing qualitative research.

First, the nature of the question lends itself to this design, especially because the study’s questions begin with *how* or *what* instead of *why*, which is asked in quantitative studies. The current study asks only *how* or *what questions* in relation to *how* do early college high school principals practice democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leadership, *what* lead early college high school principals to practice within these schools, *what* actions they take within the school to promote students of color and low-income student success and *what* the impact is of those actions are on minority and low-income student success?

Second, researchers choose a qualitative design because of the topic to be studied. The topic of the current study is early college high school principals. Even though research exists on principals in various settings, research on principals in this environment is sparse. Additionally, there are few studies that focus on principals that practice democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leadership.
Third, the current study seeks to study principals in their natural environment – the early college high schools where they serve. This meets the requirement that qualitative research not be out of context so that findings are honest and sincere.

Fourth, qualitative researchers are interested in telling a story and “writing in a literary style” (Creswell, 1998, p. 18). The current researcher seeks to become an instrument in the study that not only interprets information, but also crafts a story about participant’s lived experiences based on the participant’s view, not the researcher’s.

Finally, qualitative researchers are interested in spending time and resources in the field to collect data that will lead to a detailed analysis and help craft the participant’s story. The current researcher plans to spend extensive time in the school setting collecting information from principals, teachers, parents/guardians, students and the higher education partner in order to provide a detailed yet holistic description of the early college high school principal’s leadership, particularly in relation to the students of color and low-income students these schools serve.

The decision to use a qualitative design made sense based on the research questions that were asked, the topic that was researched (early college high school principals), the fact that the study took place in the principal’s natural setting (the early college high school) and the current researcher sought to “emphasize episodes of nuance, the sequentiality of happenings in context, the wholeness of the individual” (Stake, 1995, xii). The current researcher provided a story on each principal’s leadership and was willing to spend the time and resources that were necessary to tell their story. In order to ensure the current researcher had enough information to tell the story of each early
college high school principal’s leadership, a case study design with multiple participants was utilized.

Case Study

The current study focused on people because a specific object was examined instead of an abstract idea (Stake, 1995). The current study developed as a “bounded system or case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). As an intrinsic case study (Creswell, 1998; Stake, 1995), the current study required study of a particular case or cases (i.e. principals at early college high schools).

When considering the number of cases to involve in a qualitative study, researchers must consider the impact of having multiple cases, particularly in relation to generalizability. Generalizability or the ability to take what is discovered in the study and move to theory-building is not a central aim of qualitative researchers (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). According to Creswell (1998), most qualitative researchers choose no more than four cases; therefore, the current study will seek to include three case studies with principals at early college high schools in North Carolina.

Participant Selection

Prior to beginning the current study, the researcher contacted NC New Schools to gather advice about the best criterion to use when select participants for the study. The researcher spoke with Ms. Joyce Loveless, Senior Director, School Services. Ms. Loveless suggested that the researcher contact rural counties because larger counties often required more paperwork and procedures to gain entry. She also suggested that the
researcher pick a percentage of students of color and lower-income students that was 50% or lower because anything higher than 50% would eliminate potential schools. Lastly, she warned the researcher that the requirement that principals have served at the school for at least four years might be a problem because several schools had not been opened that long while many others had new principals because of turnover or retirements.

Based on the information the current researcher gathered from Ms. Loveless, the current study employed purposive sampling to select three principals that served at early college high schools with a student body population that had 40% or more non-White students. Additionally, the principal had to serve at an early college high school that carried a Title I designation, which indicated that the school served a high number of students that participate in the national school lunch program. Finally, in order to show how the principal’s practices impacted student success, the principal must have served at the early college high school for four consecutive years and had seen at least one class graduate and transition out of the school.

With this criterion in mind, the researcher sought three early college high school principals to include in the study. There are 77 early college high schools in North Carolina. The first criterion that was applied to the list of schools was the percentage of students that were non-White. If the percentage of non-White students at the school was over 40%, then the school was still eligible to be in the study. After applying this first criterion, the number of eligible schools dropped to 35 possible participants (see Table 3.1, p. 351).
The next criterion that was applied to the 35 remaining schools was the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch. Information for the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch was provided by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) website. If the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch was over 40%, then the school was still eligible for the study. After applying the second criterion, the number of eligible schools dropped to 31 possible participants (see Table 3.2, p. 356).

The last criterion that was applied to the remaining 31 schools was the tenure of the principal. Since the researcher was interested in showing how the principal’s practices impacted student success, the principal must have served at the early college high school for four consecutive years and had seen at least one class graduate and transition out of the school. Information about principal’s tenure came from information available on each school’s website or from phone calls to the schools asking how long the principal had served at the school. Once this criterion was applied to the 31 eligible schools, the number of eligible schools dropped to 12 possible participants (see Table 3.3, p. 358).

The researcher contacted principals at the remaining 12 schools. One district (School 16) presented a conflict of interest for the researcher because she knew students and faculty at the school on a personal basis and was familiar with the principal because the researcher had spoken with the principal in the past at district-sponsored events. Three principals worked in two districts that required prior school board approval or a formal presentation before the school board before permission to conduct research would be granted. The researcher contacted these three principals to determine if they were willing
to participate before presenting information to the school board. All three principals declined to participate in the study via telephone or email.

Another principal declined to participate via email because of scheduling conflicts and the fact that she was short-staffed and therefore had to teach four classes of Freshmen Success in addition to her administrative duties. An additional three principals failed to respond to repeated emails or phone calls about participation. One district (School 56) refused to allow students to participate in any studies, so this excluded that school from the study. The principals at Schools 9, 13 and 69 agreed via email to participate in the study (see Table 3.4, p. 359). Data collection in the field, which took approximately three weeks to complete, took place in February 2015.

**Interview Protocols**

The current study followed the research protocols from two projects: the International Successful School Principals Project (ISSPP), an international network that compiles research on successful principals around the world (Day, 2004) and Santamaria and Santamaria’s work on critical leadership (2011). The goal of the ISSPP project was to collect data from multiple perspectives, compare effective leadership in various contexts and identify the personal qualities and dispositions leaders share (Day, 2004). The goal of Santamaria and Santamaria’s research was to determine how and why leaders act within an organization to challenge and change the status quo.

The current study used the ISSPP protocols, but included questions centered on the context where the three principals served (early college high schools). The protocols also included questions on each principal’s culture, race and ethnicity adapted from questions
used by Santamaria and Santamaria (2011). The purpose of these questions was to overcome what Slee et al. (2003) described as a “bleaching” of context, identity and difference from the successful schools research. Both protocols closely mirror how research on these issues should be conducted because they relied on face-to-face interviews, focus groups and archival data analysis to document the lived experiences and practices of school principals and leaders (Gopaldas, 2013).

The interview protocols for the study included questions from multiple sources: principals, teachers, students, parents and the early college liaison as the partner college representative. Since this study took place in early college high schools, an interview protocol for representatives from the higher education partner was developed based on questions that were asked to parents and teachers. Additionally, questions on the five core design principles of early college high schools and the principal’s cultural, ethnic and racial background were added (see Appendices A-F). All interviews and focus groups were recorded with a digital recorder. Field notes taken throughout the study to gather data beyond the interviews and focus groups because, “what is observed is not controlled by researchers…what is covered in the interview is targeted and influenced by the interview” (Stake, 1995, p. 66).

**Interviews**

Interviews are a commonly used data collection tool in social science and most qualitative research. They are used to gather information about participants’ experiences, views and beliefs about a phenomena or question (Lambert & Loiselle, 2007; Sandelowski, 2002). There are three types of interviews: standardized (structured), semi-
standardized (semi-structured) and unstandardized or unstructured (Ryan et al., 2009).

Standardized interviews use a schedule where only the questions that are on the paper are asked using the same wording and order. Berg (2009) believes this helps with data analysis because answers to the same questions can be compared equally. Standardized interviews are usually conducted using a survey instrument in quantitative research, but some qualitative questions might be present.

Semi-standardized interviews are more flexible. Although a researcher might have an interview protocol, unanticipated responses and issues are allowed to emerge during questioning (Tod, 2006). Most of these interviews include open-ended and probing questions that allow the interviewee, not the interviewer, to control the interview process. The goal of semi-standardized interviews is to allow participants to tell their story and discover additional issues or topics that might better explain the phenomena under investigation (Bridges et al., 2008).

Unstandardized or unstructured interviews do not use a particular protocol or structure for questioning. The interviewer starts a conversation with the interviewee about a topic and then asks broad, open-ended questions (Ryan et al., 2009). The purpose of this type of interview is to gain knowledge about a topic where little information exists therefore there are no predetermined questions to ask.

The current study utilized semi-standardized or semi-structured interview protocols to allow for further probing of answers that participants provided and to help generate additional themes and questions for better understanding each early college high school principal’s practice. A total of nine interviews were conducted for the study: an interview
with each principal split into two sessions, an interview with each early college high school liaison and an interview with three teachers at one school. The researcher originally intended to have focus groups with all teachers, but scheduling conflicts would not allow for this to occur with the second school.

**Focus Groups**

Focus groups typically have the following characteristics: small group of 4-12 people; a researcher that serves as moderator; typically last one to two hours; discussion centers on a specific topic or topics; encourages group interaction; and the goal is to explore the participants’ perceptions, attitudes, feelings and ideas (Merton, 1987; Bers, 1989; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990; Krueger, 1994).

Focus groups are traditionally used in the business and marketing world in order to get respondents to disclose their feelings and thoughts about either a product or a decision a company might be looking to make or improve upon (Krueger, 1994). Today, focus groups are used in education as a way to add additional information on a phenomena and because it is a fairly inexpensive and easy to organize (Acocella, 2012). Additionally, focus groups can assist with triangulating data in research (Denzin, 1978; Webb, 1992).

A total of eight focus groups were utilized in the current study. School A had focus groups for each teacher, student and parent group (total participants = 13). School B included focus groups for students and parents (total participants = 8). School C had focus groups for each teacher, student and parent group (total participants = 15). A total of 45 people participated in the study (see Appendix H).
**Data Analysis**

Data was analyzed continually throughout the study to look for common themes and concepts. All interviews and focus group data was transcribed and coded with open coding and axial coding in NVivo 10. All analyzed data was compared and contrasted against field notes for further meaning and greater understanding of the cases. Additionally, the researcher triangulated data in order to address issues of validity using numerous sources of information and multiple subjects to aid in establishing patterns and commonality between and among cases (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).

**Cross-case analysis**

Patton (1996) defines cross-case analysis as a way to group answers to common questions from various people or to analyze different perspectives on issues. According to Patton (1996), “…for scholarly inquiry the qualitative synthesis is a way to build theory through induction and interpretation [but] for evaluators, the purpose of the qualitative synthesis is to identify and extrapolate lessons learned” (Patton, 1996, p. 425).

Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that one purpose for doing cross-analysis was to enhance generalizability. Even though some researchers believe that generalizability should not be a goal of qualitative research (Denzin, 1983; Guba & Lincoln, 1981), cross-case analysis can help answer questions that extend beyond the individual cases in the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Miles and Huberman (1994) provided three strategies for conducting a cross-case analysis. In the case-oriented strategy, one case is studied in depth while additional cases are studied to find common patterns and themes based on the first case. Secondly, the
variable-oriented strategy seeks themes that exist across all cases. The final strategy combines the previous two and uses a set of variables across the several cases from which matrices are constructed for analysis. “It’s possible, and usually desirable, to combine or integrate case-oriented and variable oriented approaches” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 176).

**Ethical Considerations**

Since this was a qualitative study and the nature of the questions were extremely personal, protecting the true identity and confidentiality of all participants in the study was important. One way the researcher ensured confidentiality was that all principal participants, their schools and partner universities received pseudonyms. All transcripts bear the participant’s pseudonyms only with no identifying demographic information. All data was kept in password protected files on a password protected computer.

**Limitations**

One limitation of the study are that the researcher relied on principals self-identifying that they are democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders, so this led to some principals not being totally objective about what they do within the school or what type of leadership they possess. Including data from teachers, students, parents and the higher education partner helped overcome participant bias.

Another limitation was that all the principals were one race/ethnicity. The researcher sought to overcome this by intentionally contacting principals of color that served at schools which met the criterion for the study. Of the eight principals that responded to the researcher’s calls and emails, four were African American. All four African American
principals said they believed the current study was relevant and extremely important, but they did or could not participate because of personal schedules or the demands of their job. The remaining three principals that agreed to participate were Caucasian. Since the majority of school leaders and teachers in America’s schools are Caucasian, the researcher believed that this limitation would help shape the implications part of the study.

Finally, the time to complete the study was a concern, particularly since schools are not predictable places. Schedules changed, people were busy and since data collection took place in February 2015 during the winter, weather did interfere with data collection. For example, one school that the researcher wanted to visit was not open for four days because of adverse weather. Despite these limitations, the researcher collected data in the field from three principals and other stakeholders within a one-month timeframe upon securing IRB approval in January 2015.

**Role of the Researcher**

The current researcher approached the current study from a constructivist paradigm and believes that “knowledge is socially constructed by people active in the research process and that researchers should attempt to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt, 2000). The constructivist researcher approaches research in two phases – discovery and assimilation (Guba & Lincoln, 2001). During the discovery phase, the researcher sought to describe “what’s going on here” with the “here” being the context of the study. The assimilation phase represented the researcher’s effort to incorporate new findings or meanings into
existing research or literature to determine how the new information fits with existing
dwork (Guba & Lincoln, 2001). The current researcher sought to discover how principals
serve in schools that target students that have been traditionally underserved and
disenfranchised and how their practices “fit” with existing literature on the role of the
principal, particularly those that serve in diverse settings.

Based on Stake’s (1995) discussion about researcher roles, the current researcher
served as an interpreter of information about what principals at early college high schools
do to promote the success of their first generation, students of color and low-income
students. The current researcher’s prior work experiences as a traditional high school and
early college high school teacher helped her see that the actions early college high school
principals take to promote the success of their students of color and lower income
students differ from actions most traditional high school principals take.

The researcher sought to discover if what early college high school principals are
doing aligned with research on successful principals and democratic, socially just,
culturally responsive leaders. The researcher came into the current study with prior
knowledge gained through work experience, a synthesis that was conducted in fall 2013
(Hammonds, 2013) and a pilot study that was conducted in fall 2014 (Hammonds, 2014).
The researcher was not familiar, however, with what principals that serve in the same
context (early college high schools) within the same state with the same state and national
academic requirements do to promote the success of the first generation, students of color
and lower income students they serve.
Finally, the researcher is a female person of color that was born and raised in North Carolina. The researcher also was raised in a lower-income to lower-middle class family and was a first generation college student like many students that attend early college high schools. This information is what informed the researcher’s current interest in early college high schools and will inform future research projects and presentations.

**Summary**

Chapter 1 provided information about the background of the problem, the rationale for the current study, the problem statement, research questions and definitions. Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive literature review and a conceptual framework of early college high school principals as democratic, socially just and culturally responsive leaders that promote the success of the first generation, students of color and low-income students they serve.

Chapter 3 described the research design including an overview of the current study, background information about the study, assumptions and rationale for choosing a qualitative research design, research about case studies, interviews and focus groups. Finally, the chapter included information about how data was analyzed, ethical considerations, limitations and the role of the researcher. The next three chapters will present the findings for each case.
INTRODUCTION TO CASES

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will present findings from the data analysis process for the three cases. Each chapter will be organized in the same way. The first section will offer details about the research context for each case. The second section will provide an introduction of study participants divided by school. The third section will present the findings on each principal arranged by overarching themes and subthemes. The fourth section will provide a summary of each principal’s leadership based on the themes. The fifth and final section will provide findings on each principal’s leadership based on the conceptual framework. A summary of each case will complete each chapter.

Study Overview

This study explored how early college high school principals promote the success of the first generation, lower-income students and students of color they serve using democratic, socially just, culturally responsive practices. Two research questions were posed in this study:

1. How do early college high school principals promote the success of the first generation, lower-income students and students of color?

2. How do early college high school principals demonstrate the qualities and characteristics of democratic, socially just and culturally responsive leaders?

The purpose of the study was achieved through a multisite, multi-method case study. The procedures included engaging three principals at three early college high schools in North Carolina that served at schools with the following criterion: at least 40% of the school population were students of color and received free or reduced lunch and the
principal had to have served at the school at least four years. Other sources of data included interviews with the early college liaison at each school and focus groups with teachers, parents and students at each early college high school. Two final sources of data were document analysis of school-related achievement information and field notes the researcher took during data collection.

Data analysis involved analyzing the data through open coding and axial coding using NVivo 10 to look for common themes, concepts and ideas. The themes and subthemes that emerged in the current study came using an iterative process where the researcher continually revisited the data making more connections and gaining a deeper understanding of the data (Patton, 2002). For example, initial analysis of participant’s transcripts revealed 8 themes and 21 subthemes, but as the researcher continued working with the data, better defined and refined themes and subthemes emerged. Also, analyzed data was compared and contrasted against the researcher’s field notes for further meaning and greater understanding of the cases. Additionally, the researcher triangulated data in order to address issues of validity using numerous sources of information and multiple subjects to aid in establishing patterns and commonality between and among cases (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008).
CHAPTER FOUR

CASE 1 - SCHOOL A PRINCIPAL JOAN ROBINSON

Chapter 4 included findings from the data analysis process for School A Principal Joan Robinson. Data was collected from Principal Robinson and participants to create themes that described her leadership. The first section offered details about the research context for School A. The second section provided an introduction to School A’s study participants. The third section presented the findings on Principal Robinson’s leadership arranged by overarching themes and subthemes. The fourth section provided a summary of Principal Robinson’s leadership based on the themes. The fifth and final section provided findings on Principal Robinson’s leadership based on the conceptual framework. A summary of case one rounded out the chapter at the end.

Research Context

School A was located on a community college campus in a small North Carolina city with approximately 40,000 residents. The demographics of the city are 70% White, 14% Black, 11% Latino and 3% Asian and 2% multiracial. The median family income of the city’s residents is $39,000 and 20% of the city’s population lives below the poverty level. While many of the city’s residents have a high school diploma (85%) approximately 30% have a bachelor’s degree or higher.

One unique feature about School A was the number of immigrant families that settled in the area because of potential religious or political persecution in their home country. English is the second or third language for many School A students and families.
School A serves as a school of choice for a three-county area and has 360 students. The demographics of the school are 49% White, 21% Asian/Pacific Islander, 20% Latino/a, 6% Black and 4% multiracial. The gender breakdown of the school was 64% female and 36% male. The school is classified as Title I because 53% of the student body receives free or reduced lunch. Approximately 80% of the students that attend the school would be classified as first generation college students.

**Study Participants**

**Principal Joan Robinson.** Principal Robinson, who was in her late 30s, has been in Education for the past 15 years ever since she graduated with an undergraduate degree in Secondary Education. Principal Robinson also has degrees in Biology and Chemistry and holds a master’s degree in School Administration. At the time of the study she was working on her doctorate in School Administration from a local university. Robinson’s prior jobs included being a high school Science teacher and serving as a director with the statewide support network for early colleges. After leaving the support network five years ago she spent one year as assistant principal at School A before becoming principal four years ago.

**Teachers.** Five teachers with two to eight years of experience at the school participated in the focus group. The focus group included three White women and two men (one White and one Black).

**Students.** The student focus group included five students that were 17 years old and classified as juniors at the school. Three of the five students were first generation
students. The demographics of the student focus group were three males and two females
with one student being Latina, one White and three Asian students.

**Parents.** The parent focus group included one White male and two White females.
One parent classified her child as a first generation student and one parent said her child
had been homeschooled prior to attending School A. One parent classified himself as the
Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO) president.

**Liaison.** The liaison had served at School A for the past seven years. She started
working at the partner college in the financial aid department before obtaining her current
position. The liaison, who was White and in her mid-50’s, was working on a master’s
degree at the time of the study. While the liaison expressed happiness about working at
the school, she was ready for a new role at the community college because she believed
she had achieved all her goals at School A. Table 4.1 provides a summary of School A’s
participants.

Table 4.1

**School A Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
<th>Yrs at School</th>
<th>Yrs current role</th>
<th>Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>20s-50s</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2-8</td>
<td>2-8</td>
<td>X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>X X X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Mid-40s</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liaison</td>
<td>Early 50’s</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The findings about the actions and practices Principal Robinson took to promote the success of School A’s students point to a complex picture of a principal that valued success and achievement over promoting access for students that are traditionally underserved and underrepresented. Some of the actions and practices she took within her school contradict the mission and purpose of early college high schools. Findings on Principal Robinson’s leadership are divided into six themes based on participant’s answers and researcher’s field notes.

Theme 1: Leading based on beliefs, values and personal and professional identities

The first theme that emerged from the data referred to the prior and current roles Principal Robinson held inside and outside the school and how those multiple roles impacted her leadership. This theme also examined Principal Robinson’s personal, educational and professional background to determine what impact, if any, her background had on current leadership practices.

Principal Robinson was born in Kentucky into a lower middle class family. Her father was a music minister which according to her, “…was no money at all even though he had two masters degrees.” Principal Robinson’s mother held degrees in computer programming, but admitted that at the time her mother earned those degrees there wasn’t much she could do with them. Principal Robinson explained, “My mother didn’t start making money with her degree until I was in high school because she was almost ahead of her time with her degrees.”
Since Principal Robinson grew up in a religious family she said she was raised to accept people regardless of who they were or where they came from. She grew up participating in mission trips to Chicago to help educate inner city children, which fed her passion for working with underserved children. She explained:

I grew up doing mission trips. I always had a heart for urban-urban or rural-rural, I don't know why, but I just always had a heart for that. We used to do Chicago -- inner city Chicago mission trips, and then my own family is from a rural county. My parents grew up on dirt roads and just dusting off the clothes they had to pass it down to the sibling down the line kind of thing, so I got these two opposite ends of where I really feel passion, and I'm just really fortunate to have my passion and my paycheck align, where I'm in a position and I can do something about it.

Although she is not from a racial or ethnic group that had been traditionally underserved or underrepresented, Principal Robinson still found ways to relate to her diverse student body. She recalled a situation that had occurred the day of data collection:

I think students know that White females are leading the country in going to college. They know that White females are leading businesses and their perception of strength … I get that, and so I have to break it down a lot. Even today, this morning I was dealing with a student issue, and she was part of something that, in my opinion, was slanderous, and I said, ‘I'm a person. My name is Joan. I have a sister. I have a mom and a dad. I have a dog. I buy groceries. I go to the movies. I'm a person. I'm normal, right?’
The way that Principal Robinson related to students that came from a different racial background than her own was to help students understand that everyone deserved respect regardless of their race or gender. She viewed her identity as a white female from a strength-based perspective and believed that white females are leading the country today, especially in business and education. Principal Robinson believed one problem students had when it came to relating to her was them viewing her by her title of “principal” or a “persona that’s in their mind,” therefore she tried to help students remember that she’s a person first and a principal second.

Additionally, Principal Robinson grew up in a lower middle class home, but she still tried to find ways to relate to her students that came from less affluent backgrounds:

Even if they’re talking about misunderstanding their parents or growing up and never thinking they’re going to be anybody -- I mean, I dig inside of myself and try to find it so that -- Because the truth is, I felt that way, right? The truth is I know what it feels like to not have the jeans you want because mom can't afford them.

Even though Principal Robinson grew up in a middle class family, her way of relating to students that come from less privileged backgrounds was to find common interests or experiences she had growing up.

Educationally, Principal Robinson said that the training she received as an undergraduate prepared her to become a Science teacher and her graduate and doctoral work helped her develop the dispositions of a servant leader. She replied, “My doctoral program is based on the triangulation that leaders from divinity, business, and school all
share the same servant-leader mission and I just had to say okay to that. I had to say, yeah, that's right on the money because I believe that's true.”

Principal Robinson shared that the one professional experience that impacted her current leadership was the work she did at the state support network for early colleges. She explained:

Working there gave me the opportunity to be a director where folks just poured skill building into me. [They would say] ‘Don't do it this way; do it this way.’ They would come back and say, ‘Okay, that presentation was mediocre. Here's how you make it better, or this writing looks okay, but here's how you make it better,’ and they just polished, and polished, and polished. I really came into the world of being an assistant principal and principal far, far ahead because of the folks that had spent time polishing me and helping me grow.

Principal Robinson believed that her experience at the support network taught her how to be an effective principal that strove for excellence. That experience also helped her learn the correct way to implement and maintain the early college high school model at a school. Principal Robinson thought that the doctorate she was scheduled to earn a few weeks after the current study would allow her to take the lessons and success she had at School A and help other early college high school principals in the future.

**Theme 2: Limiting Access and Opportunities to Attend the School**

The second theme to emerge for School A was centered on Principal Robinson limiting access and an equitable opportunity for students to attend the school. Three subthemes, Target Student Population, Application Process, and Special Education and
ESL Students, all describe how access and to School A was limited based on which students Principal Robinson targeted for admission, the application process and how students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency were discouraged from attending or, once admitted, were not properly served.

**Target Student Population**

Early college high schools target three groups of students: first generation students, lower-income students and students of color. Early college high school principals in North Carolina, however, seem to have discretion about which groups they choose to target first, second and third. At School A, Principal Robinson and teachers reported that they normally target, “…first generation college students, first generation high school graduates, and [students] that are from single parent households so typically they're low income, and because of the area that we're in, we get a lot of Asian ethnicity.”

As far as the ability level of the students that attend the school, Principal Joan Robinson reported that School A students would not be the highest performers in their classes if they were in a traditional high school. She admitted that many people in the community assumed the smartest students in the district attended School A because it was small and enrolled a high percentage of Asian and White students, which are groups that typically excel in school. Principal Robinson explained that she targeted students that perform in the middle on state tests:

- What we do is we take that middle 60 [percent] and do amazing things with them.
- We really are very, very strategic about what we do with kids. It's not about whom you have; it's about what you do, so we're very deliberate about academic
supports. We have high scores, but it's what we do with kids, not where they come in at, and so the assumption in the community is that we have all the best kids, and that is not true at all. It's a huge misconception.

Principal Joan Robinson emphasized that she targeted the population early college high schools were designed for, especially first generation students, because funding for the school was tied to her school enrolling at least 80% first generation students. She pointed out that some schools might have a hard time doing the same, but she was fortunate because her school was located in an area that had a huge immigrant population:

No parent in the home can have a bachelor's degree, and so essentially if [schools] can't recruit that many kids, then they can go to another at risk category like minority or financial poverty, etc., single parent home, things like that. Most people can recruit 80% first gen. Our surrounding area is actually the county area [and is] only 20% bachelor's degree, so if you look at the research, we have an 80% population that does not have a bachelor's degree in the home, however, they don't all apply to come here. Typically I only get about 60% to 70% first gen, and then I have to go to minority to get my 80%.

Despite seeking to enroll students that are first generation and students of color, School A does not have many Black or male students. Teachers believed one reason Blacks or male students did not apply to the school was because, “We don't offer a football team, and if you're athletics focused, it's not going to be your first choice.” One
teacher reported that most Black students attend two nearby county schools and that last year only five Black students applied for admission from both schools.

The School A liaison reported that the lack of Black students at the school was discussed several years ago when a Black assistant principal was on staff:

Several years ago we had an African-American assistant principal and we picked her brain constantly about what can we do? How can we present this? And she said we need to be doing this earlier, like in elementary and middle school, trying to get parents to understand that their students need more education. They need to go to college. They need associate's degrees, and we tried -- Because she seemed to think it was a trust issue, because this was -- It's still kind of a new program, and we haven't had that many African-Americans that graduated and came back to the community, because the ones who have, they're gone.

Neither the teachers nor the liaison were able to identify any programs or strategies Principal Robinson had implemented or planned over the past five years in order to increase the number of Black and male students that applied to or were admitted at the school. When Principal Robinson was questioned about the dearth of Black and male students at the school, she stated that “they don’t apply” and when she traveled to middle schools to recruit, “They'll raise their hands, like they'll ask ‘what sports do you have’? And as soon as I say we don't have football, the whole crowd will be like, ‘ugh’ and I'll say, ‘we have basketball’, and they'll say ‘but do you play so-and-so’?” Principal Robinson also stated that:
We've done the church route. We have tried to go to the churches. I'm just -- It's a block. It's a thing, for real, [but] it's a statewide thing. I mean, it's not -- It's a push, I should say. It's a push statewide to really draw minority -- We don't typically draw -- We draw Hispanic minority, which is also a push and African-American and Hispanic minority males are [also] a push statewide. We do draw Hispanic minority, but we don't typically draw African-American minority.

While it is true that the percentage of Black and male students that participate in early college high schools throughout North Carolina is low in most counties, Principal Robinson seemed to struggle with answering the researcher’s questions about future plans she had to address this situation at her school. Instead, she seemed content with the students her school targeted and enrolled even if this meant her school did not serve the three groups early college high schools were intended to help.

**Application Process**

Early college high schools in North Carolina do not use a standardized application process; therefore, principals are responsible for determining what criterion they use to admit students to their schools. The application process at School A was the most rigorous out of all the schools in the current study. Parents must complete an application and get three letters of recommendation from middle school teachers or community members. Then, students must complete an essay on-site. Once the application process is complete, parents and students must wait to see if they are selected for admission based on a competitive lottery process. Applicants that are related to staff members or are siblings of alumni or students currently attending the school get first consideration.
School A parents revealed that gaining admission to the school was difficult because, “We have usually over 400 applicants every year and they only take 100, so it's a really sought after position. It's a real honor to be here.” Parents also shared that there were numerous steps before gaining admission to the school:

They're recruiting as we speak. You fill out paperwork. They want to know your background, your family background, your family income; those sorts of things. You turn in three letters of recommendation…. then after that I think in the middle schools the counselors sit with the children and they have to do an essay. They do not know what the topic question is. It changes from year to year. Homeschoolers come here and do the essay. It's all supervised. You don't get to do it with your parents, or at home, or anything like that.

The parents could not explain the purpose for the essay, but stated that all students had to submit one before they could be considered for admission. When Principal Robinson was asked if the lengthy application process might prevent some students from applying because there were many steps, she responded:

We are admitting 80% first generation. In our community, it's thought of as the best kids, the high achieving kids. That's going to vary across the state, but here it's certainly thought of as the smartest kids, because we have very high test scores, they assume that we have the best kids, and that's just absolutely not true.”

Principal Robinson was adamant that her school did not screen out students that potential should attend the school based of the purpose of the early college high school initiative.
She did not believe the application process needed to change or that the process had an impact on the previously mentioned racial and gender imbalances at the school.

**Special Education and ESL students**

Since early college high schools are public high schools that receive local, state and federal monies, the schools must provide accommodations for students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency. Principal Joan Robinson said her school had some Special Education students, but not many because of the rigor of the college program. She also explained why she believed it was difficult for the school to properly accommodate Special Education and ESL students:

Our particular situation is that we do not have a Special Ed assigned district person. We don't have an ESL assigned district person. We're not staffed like a regular school, and so we can accept IEPs. We can accept 504s, but they have to acknowledge that the college will not serve -- No college will serve them the same way. They have to go through the disabilities coordinator at the college. Their legal rights are not the same in K-12 as they are at the college, so they acknowledge those things, and then on the high school side, we of course have to comply with their legal requirements, so we give them minutes, their IEPs set, we do everything that's required.

Principal Robinson appeared to place the responsibility for making sure she had adequate staff to work with Special Education and ESL students on the district and not herself. She said that two teachers at the school were Special Education certified, but that any services that ESL students needed were provided through a community translation
center that served the area’s immigrant population instead of the school district. Another reason she believed Special Education and ESL students did not apply for admission was because they knew they would not be successful in the early college program. She explained, “They don't typically apply to come here, because they know they're going to get Fs in the classes on the college side….so we typically don't have a ton apply. The ones that do come here are high functioning.”

Principal Robinson appeared to have low expectations and preconceived ideas about the ability level of current or potential Special Education and ESL students. Again, she did not seek ways to admit more students from these groups nor did she discuss making plans to better serve these students once they arrived at her school.

**Theme 3: Setting High Standards for Achievement and Degree Completion**

The third theme to emerge on Principal Robinson’s leadership was the academic achievements or milestones the school had achieved since she became principal four years ago. Principal Robinson and participants defined success based on four areas, which serve as subthemes for the third theme. Success at School A was defined by the school’s ability to retain students through all four years of high school (Retention Rate), student’s performance on standardized tests (Standardized Tests), the percentage of students that graduate from the school with a diploma and 2-year degree (Graduation Rates/Degrees Earned) and student’s ability to achieve a diploma and 2-year degree in four, not five, years (Finish in Four).
**Retention Rate**

One measure the early college high school initiative uses to determine if schools are successful is to examine retention rates from ninth to tenth grade and during the four to five years students are at the school. Since early college high schools are schools of choice, students have the option to return to their designated high school if they no longer want to participate in the program.

According to School A teachers, the school had a high retention rate from ninth to tenth and tenth to eleventh grade and that out of the 400 students that attended the school, “…maybe four students over the course of a year” decided to opt out and return to their regular high school. According to a teacher, only one student did not graduate last year because she got pregnant and obtained a GED instead of completing her studies at the school. Parents reported that most students leave during their ninth grade year because, “They realize that they don't like it. All their friends aren't here from middle school and maybe athletics aren't quite what they expected.” Parents also stated that students that arrived to the school based on a parent’s desire that they attend and not their own will generally “don’t make it through,” “get culled pretty quick” and “are shown back to their home schools very quickly.” Principal Robinson acknowledged that her school had a high retention rate, but she contributed this to the school’s admission standards.

**Standardized Tests**

Early college high school students in North Carolina take the same statewide standardized tests as students in traditional high schools. According to data from local newspapers, state report cards and state accountability databases, School A has achieved
many accolades over the past four years. Some accolades included Principal Joan Robinson being selected as the county’s Principal of the Year last year and the school’s guidance counselor being recognized as the state’s Counselor of the Year. Over the past two years School A has had no dropouts. School A’s performance on the SAT is noteworthy because the school has surpassed the nation’s average for the past three years. Finally, School A was the only school in the county to earn an “A” on the state’s report card this year.

**Graduation Rates/Degrees Earned**

One key goal of early college high schools is to increase student’s college readiness and one factor that aids with this goal is making sure students graduate from high school with transferable college credits or a 2-year degree if possible. Over the past two years, School A has had a 100% high school graduation rate. Principal Robinson also reported that the school had a 90% average high school/2-year degree rate during the four years she has been principal. This year, 65 of the school’s 72 graduates will receive a 2-year degree.

**Finish in Four**

When the early college high school initiative started in 2002 the original goal was for students to earn a high school diploma and 2-year college degree in four years. This goal, while noteworthy, was unobtainable for many schools since many students that arrived at these schools were at least one grade level behind academically. Over the past few years, early college high schools in North Carolina have started allowing students to stay an additional year after 12th grade in order to achieve the initiative’s goals. Principal
Robinson, however, does not utilize this option even though this option used to exist under the previous principal. Students reported that staying for a fifth year was not an option Principal Robinson allowed. One student said, “I think we used to. I think they stopped it though, because they're trying to just get everyone done in four years.”

Principal Robinson confirmed that a fifth year option did not exist at her school because the early college model called for students to complete both a diploma and a 2-year degree in four years and since she structured the school based on the model, then there was no need for students to stay five years. Principal Robinson’s belief in implementing the model to fidelity demonstrated the high and somewhat lofty expectations she had for the students at her school.

**Theme 4: Creating a Safe, Disciplined Climate and Collaborative Culture**

Since many early college high schools in North Carolina are located on public 2-year or 4-year college campuses, safety and discipline concerns are inherent. Students at these schools are classified as minors, but they take classes and navigate campuses with adult students. This has led to several incidents that require principals and staff members to be more alert than they normally would at a traditional school. The fourth theme centers on how Principal Robinson created a safe, disciplined environment and a culture where teachers collaborate and believed their voices were heard in school decisions. The fourth theme also discussed School A’s climate or the “feel” of the school based on participant information and the researcher’s observations. Two subthemes supported the fourth theme: Safety/Student Discipline and School Culture and Climate.
Safety/Student Discipline

School A is located on the grounds of its partner community college. One situation
the researcher noted had upon arriving at the school was the lack of security on the high
school side of the campus. The researcher was able to enter through the back doors and
walk all the way through the school pass classrooms filled with high school students
without anyone asking who she was or checking to see if the researcher belonged on that
side of the campus. This led the researcher to ask participants questions about their
perception of the school’s safety.

School A teachers said that the school faced numerous safety issues because they
were on a public campus and they, “…couldn’t monitor who comes in and out of [their]
building.” Teachers commented that in most traditional schools, “You don't typically get
to walk in areas where there are students until you have gone to the office and gotten a
visitors badge and whatever. There's no way for us to police that being on a public
campus.”

Teachers pointed out that their students take classes all over the campus, so it is
impossible to monitor every student’s movements. Since most early college high school
students are below 18 years old, issues about minors fraternizing with adults are
addressed at the school. Teachers said they tell students, “It has to kind of be your
responsibility that you have to know that it's not okay for you, a 14-year old freshman, to
date a college student who is 18. That's not okay….If they feel like they're being harassed
or pursued a little more vigorously than they know how to handle, they can come and talk
to us and we will help them out of that situation.” When asked if fraternizing had been an
issue in the past, the teachers said no, but did admit that random people came through their part of the campus at times and the assistant principal had to redirect them.

Teachers believed that their school’s safety issues were an inherent part of the model because, “We’re preparing them to be students at a university, and they're going to go out and be students at a university, have two years of college already, and so part of that is, we have to trust them to be the adults that they're agreeing to be.”

School A parents elaborated on what teachers said by sharing that two years ago the school had, “A couple of lockdowns,” because allegedly, “A man with a gun [was] on campus.” Parents expressed that they never felt concerned about their child’s safety because, “They [the school] were on top of it.” Parents believed:

Principal Robinson did a great job of running what was necessary to practice for safety…. [so] it was like a drill for them. That's how well they maintained safety here with the communications challenges that they were facing at the time. All the teachers had cell phones [because] there weren't phones in the classrooms and not every classroom had a telephone, but considering all the challenges they did a great job.

School A students agreed with what teachers and parents had to say about campus safety. Students said that the school was safe, “Especially in comparison to [the] alternatives” which were one of two local high schools. Students said that at the other high schools, “You would see a much greater presence of fighting, and drugs and stuff like that, but we have virtually none of that here.” Students also stated they had never
seen a fight at their school during the past four years and discipline issues were almost non-existent.

Despite feeling safe on the high school side of the campus, one female student admitted that she did not always feel safe while on the college campus. She shared that, “There was an incident where I was in the elevator, and it was just me and a guy, and I was really scared.” The female student said that even though the man did not do anything to her, she was concerned enough to bring the incident up to her father who purchased a Taser for her that she keeps with her at all times.

School A’s liaison believed that Principal Robinson did an excellent job enforcing discipline on the high school and college side. The liaison explained:

When we do have students who violate a community college policy, it is carried through to high school, too. For example, several years ago we had a student for whatever reason that decided to put a camera in one of the elevators, so that caused a huge disruption in one of the buildings, because they didn't know if it was a bomb or whatever. He received suspension, and she fully backed that. She could have said, ‘Well, you know, he still can come to his high school -- I mean, his high school classes’, but she's like, “No. It works both ways.”

The liaison said there were times when she and Principal Robinson did not agree on discipline issues, but this did not prevent them from reaching a compromise. One example of this was a situation involving a student and medication:

We had a student who was having some issues with medication that caused him to act out in class, and it was severe enough that the instructor contacted me about the
disruption. I did not see that this warranted being pushed up the ladder, because I understood the situation, and I addressed it with [the principal] as far as he needs to understand that this is -- We know why it's happening, but it cannot continue to happen.

The student was punished on the high school side, but the liaison decided not to impose any punishment on the college side because she felt the issue, “…could be handled better in house without getting others involved.”

Principal Robinson reiterated many of the same points other participants raised when discussing her school’s safety and student discipline. “I think that there are lots of reasons that we are on alert, right? It's a college campus. There are lots of reasons to be aware. There are lots of doors that are not locked like a traditional school is locked.” She continued by explaining the procedures she goes over with faculty, staff and students at the beginning of the school year:

There [are] six sets of doors and they're open all the time, and so lockdown or fire escape or any of that stuff -- We go over it every semester with the staff. We go over it every semester with the kids. Of course you don't practice lockdown with kids in this county, but some counties do, but ours does not. We practice with the adults, though. So in a high risk [situation] safety we're as ready as we can be. We've got walkies. Every teacher has a walkie talkie and those kinds of things. On the day to day safety, there's not a high theft situation here. There's not a high fight situation here. They know the campus doesn't tolerate adults behaving that way and that the
police will charge you as an adult, because you're an adult on this campus, so those kinds of things don't happen here.

Principal Robinson was confident that she and her staff had done all they could to protect students on the high school side. She explained that students received advise from her and the liaison about how students needed to behave on the college side of the school and students were encouraged to reach out to them if they ever had any safety concerns.

**School Culture and Climate**

Research shows that principals are responsible for creating a school’s culture and climate, which can positively or negatively impact a school’s effectiveness. School A students reported that the climate of their school was “overall positive” and that they felt comfortable because the school was “family oriented” and the community and local area were involved. One student commented that she, “…couldn’t imagine going to another school and I might be a different person if I had.” She said, “I’m really happy with the person I’ve become and now I have really good character because I’ve been here.”

Other students believed that even though the school was a good place to be and everyone felt like family, the school was missing one aspect that many traditional high schools seemed to have – school spirit. According to one female student:

It's like when you go to [School A], there's not going to be sports, and there's not going to be [the same]. That is what middle schoolers believe. If you were to do this same survey in a middle school and you asked them about [School A], that's what everyone believes, because that's what everyone tells you, which isn't true. We have a homecoming, a prom, a basketball and volleyball teams, but sometimes
it's because of conflict in times where some students are not able to wait up for like our SGA meetings. We kind of have less effort in that club, just because we kind of have a low sense of authority, and also our times are just kind of conflicting, where we have priorities to meet. That's part of the reason.

This female student described the school’s culture and climate in terms of how much school spirit existed at the school. She also pointed out that students at the school did not feel empowered and had a “low sense of authority” to make changes at the school.

Another female student said she had recently started a spirit club, but that it, “…had not been quite a success, which makes me sad and sports-wise we’re not the best.”

Another example of the lack of school spirit students spoke about was the fact that none of them was sure what their school mascot was or the school’s motto. Another student rationalized that one reason the school lacked school spirit was because of its diversity and Principal Robinson not allowing certain activities because she did not want students to offend others. A student explained:

When I was president of SGA, whenever we proposed ideas, the whole topic on the floor became do you think [Principal Robinson] would approve that. Like whenever we proposed something, that's the first thing she -- I haven't been in a while, but that's the first thing [our SGA advisor] would say is, ‘Do you really think [Principal Robinson] would approve of that? It wasn't a question of, ‘Alright, let's take it to her and see what happens.’ It's like, ‘No, it's probably not going to happen.’

This student pointed out that students did not feel comfortable approaching Principal Robinson with new ideas because they believed their ideas would be shot down or
ignored. One incident all student focus group members commented on was when they approached Principal Robinson with ideas for homecoming. One idea students discussed with Principal Robinson was having a “come as you’re not day,” which was where females would dress as males and vice versa. The students explained that their partner community college had put on a drag contest during their homecoming, which was where students got the idea. Principal Robinson, however, did not approve this activity and students believed it was because the principal did not want to offend the school’s transgender or gay students. One student commented that he didn’t see a problem with the idea and that is would not have been harmful. He explained:

She might not be accepting to a lot of things because she cares too much about the students, so I feel like she thinks oh, every little thing we do might hurt somebody. There [have] been guys who just wear skirts to school just because, like and dresses, and it's not even spirit week.

All students said they understood Principal Robinson’s concerns, but still wished that more decisions were made based on the impact on a majority of students and not the minority or that more opportunities to discuss alternative solutions existed.

Despite the concerns that students raised about Principal Robinson’s impact on the school’s climate and culture, most teachers reported the school being a positive, supportive place to work. When Principal Robinson took over, she arranged teacher desks in a way that encouraged collaboration. School A teachers share rooms with college faculty members, so no one has an assigned room. Teachers referred to the common planning area that Principal Robinson set up as “the bullpen,” a location where 15 teacher
desks were arranged into a huge concentric square located in the office area next to the principal’s office. The only people at School A that had their own office were the administrative assistant, administrators and counselors. School A teachers also had a common planning time every morning while college classes took place in the school’s classrooms.

School A teachers said that Principal Robinson had to work hard to “get us all rowing the same way” and developed the culture that existed now at the school. Teachers said that sitting in “the bullpen” five years ago “was not a pleasant experience” and that there was “contention” and “tension” because people “talked behind each other’s back” were “cliquish” and not “team players”. Teachers credited Principal Robinson with being, “…very intentional about getting that culture changed.” According to the teachers, people that were not willing to change eventually left the school or were fired.

School A parents said that they had to adjust to the freedom students have on the campus because, “The environment that they're exposed to expands exponentially just on their first day of school.” Parents said that one concern they had when they enrolled their children was what they would be exposed to in the college classes. One parent that used to homeschool her son commented:

He has learned a lot of things that I would rather he not have learned. Social things, you know…bad behavior from other children. I have to say, he is his own individual. He's not a follower, so he talks to me openly about other kids around here that are making bad decisions. ‘I can't hang around with so-and-so anymore, because he or she is making a bad decision and I can't deal with that right now.’
So I'm glad [and] guess that means I did something right all those years he was home with me, but it's scary the things he comes home and tells me sometimes, because it’s not a perfect school.

The parent explained that some incidents with students and medication on campus concerned her, which was why she said the school was not perfect. Despite the concerns raised by parents and students, Principal Joan Robinson believed that the culture of the school was “collaborative” and “high functioning”. She commented that the school was not perfect, but, “I don't want to say peaceful, but it's peaceful. It's a learning culture. It's a great place to be. I think that it's a problem solving culture. I think that it can be high stress at times, and it's also fun at times; it's [also] goal oriented.”

Principal Robinson believed that, “…creating a culture is about deciding what kind of community norms you want to have and abiding by them.” One example she provided was that “every classroom decides how they want to function as a community in the class” and that community spaces also have community norms:

Our community room, this space, how do we want that to be, all the way down to not wearing perfumes or lotions that are strong smelling, or cooking fish, or popcorn that could be abrasive to somebody. I mean we really have created community agreements, but that plays into safety, too, that we all just really highly respect each other.

Principal Robison thought that the “community norms” helped keep disagreements or arguments at a minimal and created a calm, peaceful environment where everyone performed at their highest level.
Theme 5: Managing the Organization

The fifth theme to emerge from the data on Principal Robinson was how she managed the school, especially based on the values and beliefs she held on how a school should run. This theme also represents the duties or responsibilities most researchers believe principals should have in a traditional school. Four subthemes emerged from this theme: Finances, Staffing, Instruction, and Vision and Mission.

Finances

The first subtheme Finances investigated where money came from to run School A, funding shortfalls at the school and how Principal Robinson and other stakeholders worked to overcome funding issues. Principal Joan Robinson explained how the majority of early college high schools in the state were funded, especially since most were started with grant funding over a decade ago:

We have money that comes from the state that is in the re-occurring budget of at the General Assembly level. It used to be a grant, but it's no longer a grant. Every early college is built this way. The funding structure happens because we serve a population of at least 80% first generation college graduates in their families, so what that means is the young person has to be first generation bachelor's degree.

According to Principal Robinson, her school was funded like an elementary school based on enrollment numbers. Therefore, the assistant principal was paid by the county, but athletics and music/band funding was withheld. Both of these activities were funded by parents. One parent commented, “There's no cache of school instruments for the kids
to use. The athletics have to pay for everything that happens including the referees. Those fees are all driven by fundraising, and it's expensive.”

School A parents shared Principal Robinson’s concerns about funding and believed this was the school’s biggest challenge. Parents thought the district saw the school as a place of academics, so funding for athletics and band was unimportant. School A parents explained that if they wanted their children to participate in athletics or band, then they had to pay $125 per sport which they admitted “was challenging for [many families] considering the income level [and] average income of the student population's family here.” To offset the cost to families that cannot afford extra fees, the parent organization holds fundraisers throughout the school year.

Teachers and parents also pointed out that the only way School A could hold whole-school collaborative meetings was for parents to come on Wednesdays to watch the students while the staff met. One parent explained:

We don't have the same funding as other places and the same manpower, and so in order for us to run the model like on Wednesdays we meet together as an entire staff, and in order for that to happen, the parents come in and like answer the phones and watch the students and things like that, I mean, so it's absolutely essential to the function of our school.

Principal Robinson and School A parents cited funding as their school’s number one problem, followed immediately by staff numbers.
Staffing

When it came to addressing concerns about staff size and increased responsibilities, Principal Robinson explained that she had a total of 24 teachers and staff to serve all students, which meant that everyone in the school had approximately 15-20 students they mentored through the school’s advisor/advisee program. Teachers also served as coaches for the school’s sports teams and club advisors, which Principal Robinson admitted did “spread them thin” most times. Unlike most early college high schools in the state, School A had an assistant principal based on student enrollment numbers. Principal Robinson said she was able to “make the case” with the county school board that her school needed an assistant principal that could deal with discipline and running the facility especially based on the size of the college campus and “the number of at-risk kids” the school served. She commented that at most early college high schools guidance counselors acted as quasi-administrators, which should not be their responsibility:

The other early colleges are still dealing with that…their counselors end up being like an assistant principal, and with this many at risk kids you have to make the case to your superintendent. You cannot share a counselor and an AP role when you’ve got this many at risk kids. These counselors are busy all the time. There is no way they’re getting the services they need from a counselor when she has to spread her day as an AP.

School A teachers believed that staffing issues were a challenge in the past but that Principal Robinson had “made really good hires” over the past few years, so turnover has lessened. One teacher explained, “People wanted to be hired here, because they thought
that we had cream of the crop students, and it would be a super easy job, and then they
found out that it's actually really difficult.” Another teacher thought some former teachers
left because of career advancement opportunities such as becoming administrators.

All teachers believed the quality of their work was “excellent” but admitted that the
ideal early college high school teacher must possess unique qualities and characteristics.
One teacher commented:

It's just people who are open and willing to not fit into the traditional mold of
what being a teacher looks like. I know that in our evaluations or at least in my
evaluations with [Principal Robinson], and I can't speak for everybody, but it has
definitely been more of, ‘This is how we improve. This is how we grow your skill
as a teacher and your profession. This is how we grow you in the profession.’
Whereas other schools it's just been kind of like a checklist. Yes, you did this.
Yes, you did this. Well, you don't do this, but yes, you do this, kind of thing. And
so I think it's just -- The biggest thing is just people who can be open-minded and
are interested and can buy into doing school differently and are not afraid to
change, and not afraid to fail either.

Another teacher added, “We've had people in the past that have been unable to make
that change. They've tried it and they've been unable to make that change, and they've
moved back into more traditional roles.” All School A teachers pointed out that they had
heavy workloads and some former teachers could not “handle the rigor” and increased
responsibilities they took on at the school because of the staff’s size.
Instruction

School A used various programs and professional development trainings to address myriad student needs at the school. One program that all School A participants spoke about was the school’s PAA (personal adult advocate) program, which Principal Robinson implemented four years ago. Principal Robinson explained that every staff member served as advisors and advocates for fifteen to twenty students from their freshmen through senior year. PAAs are required to contact parents every fifteen days to discuss grades and attendance.

School A teachers considered PAAs to serve as “school parents” that acted as “liaisons between the parents and the rest of the school.” School A students commented that they consider their PAA to be like “another parent to us because they introduce us to what we’re getting ourselves into” when they arrive as ninth graders and “they’re there to help us get through academically or if we have any problems.” One female student stated, “My PAA feels like a second mom to me, like emotionally and physically. She checks on me if I’m injured and I can tell her anything.” She continued, “My PAA was my math teacher sophomore year, and I recently just had surgery, and she texted me, took the time out of her day and asked me how I was and it was really nice just to see that she cared.”

All School A parents did not report such a positive experience with the PAA program. One parent explained that sometimes there were “personality conflicts” between the PAA and the student, so students would be reassigned. One mother commented:
My son personally has had three different PAAs because teachers have quit. He had the same one for two years, that teacher moved on. He got put with another male teacher here, the band teacher. He had two PAAs at one time…it was just too many. He had every boy that was in the junior class last year. That was too many for him, so when they hired some new office staff my son got a female PAA, which is not traditional here. Males are with males, females are with females, because topics of conversation come up where you need that. He has a female PAA right now, but he misses PAA every week because he's in college classes, so he has not had that connection this year at all.

Another program School A used to assist students was SAS or student academic support time. According to the School A liaison, the program used to be called “club time” and provided a way for, “…clubs to be built into the school day since the school doesn’t dismiss until 4:30.” During SAS time, students can meet with clubs, get tutoring, work on homework or get individualized instruction from a teacher.

School A was unique from the other schools in the study because they structured their classes and lessons differently. School A used single-sex classes and mastery-based learning to promote their student’s success. Teacher explained that all freshmen classes were gender-separated except for college classes because, “…research shows that they do better in same gender classrooms, especially math, and it actually goes really well into the rest of our classes in freshman year, because the girls are with other girls, so it's safe for them to share their ideas.” School A parents believed that single-gender classes “were
effective at removing distractions” because there was “so much these 9th graders have to deal with and cope with on this campus especially when they first get here.”

Principal Robinson stated that she decided to implement mastery-based learning at her school because, “There's research out there now about competency based grading and mastery based standards based grading helping students achieve more and increase their learning, so we just adopted it a couple years ago.” She explained how the process worked at the school:

Right now they get feedback during the semester in a class, let's just say biology class, all the way through I'm the teacher, you're the student, you're getting things like on the cell unit, you're proficient. On the genetics unit, your mastery on the sustainability unit, you got a ‘not yet’. Well, that means you've got to keep doing the sustainability unit until you're proficient. Mastery is what your goal is - to master the content and then at the end, all those things translate into a grade. At the end, maybe you got a C because you still didn't master the sustainability unit or if you did master it, then you would have a higher grade, because you mastered or got proficiency in everything; but if you have a bunch of ‘not yet’s,’ then you would have a lower grade, because you didn't master this stuff.

Principal Robinson said that in May or December the “proficient, not yet’s and mastery’s” become letter grades. She admitted that parents were not initially pleased with mastery-based learning because “they’re used to seeing grades not words,” but teachers did a good job explaining how grading and GPAs would work and parents now seemed to be onboard.
The final instructional strategy Principal Robinson used to promote learning was based on information gathered through Ruby Paine’s training on poverty. Principal Robinson said that one result of the training was that students are taught how to “style shift” once they arrive at the school:

We really spend time on helping them respect their home environment, respect where they are. We get it…we know that's where you are. It's good. We came from the places where we are from, but when we're here, we've got to behave this way, and we've got to talk this way. We've got to dress this way and we've got to learn how to solve problems this way. We've got to learn how to survive in this situation when you're here, so you learned how to survive at home, but you've got to learn how to survive here. Style shifting is big here.

Principal Robinson said that district personnel come yearly to train her staff on Ruby Paine’s teachings. Upon being asked if she realized that some people believed that Ruby Paine’s training was too broad and enforced stereotypes, she replied:

I do a really intentional job of every time we do this, we talk about this is her perspective. This is what she learned in her school. Let's keep an open mind about where we can apply it, where it works, where it doesn't work, and so I try to just say that every time I bring her name up. It's just a sensitive topic, but I think culturally it's important, because we all come from different places and different backgrounds, and so it's going to make you or me feel some type of way potentially, right? Or make me feel some type of way potentially, but I do think it’s important so that’s why I continue to do it.
Despite Principal Robinson admitted that the Ruby Paine training was outdated, she still required new teachers to complete it yearly and continuing teachers to keep the teachings in mind as they worked with students.

**Vision and Mission**

School A participants had various responses when asked what they thought Principal Robinson’s vision and mission was for the school. Teachers thought that the principal’s vision and mission was “the model” and for students to be “college ready.” One teacher shared a story about Principal Robinson:

I was talking to her one day at our summer meeting about how something was misunderstood amongst some of the staff or some of the newer teachers. I don't want to say took it personally, but she really took it to heart because she said, ‘I take that as not that you're saying I'm a bad teacher, but my job is to teach the model. I know the model. My job is to run the model.’ She said, ‘…that's why it works….I didn't make up what I'm doing. It's the model.’

School A parents believed that one vision Principal Robinson had was the school to have its own facility. The parents commented:

That would be a dream for her, because it's hard to cram all of us into one wing of this building when we don't have proper eating facilities - we don't have a cafeteria. They bring food from another school every day. It would be nice to have our own school, our own building, and that's been talked about.

School A parents also shared that Principal Robinson was driven to “be a rock star” because, “…she wants to succeed at everything and wants the kids to succeed.” The
parents joked that she does not even let the students beat her during the faculty versus student basketball game at the end of the year because she was “driven to win”.

School A students also believed that Principal Robinson wanted to be a winner, which was what motivated her. One student commented:

We want to excel so the same thing drives her. I really do think she enjoys being the principal of a school that has a 100% graduation rate except for the ones that go back to their traditional high schools, but then they graduate from there, and that's kind of the same thing. I think she really enjoys being the principal of a school with some of the statistically highest ACT scores and where students graduate with a two year degree and last year she was named principal of the year and stuff like that, so If we strive for excellence in what we do, I think the same could be said about her.

Principal Robinson agreed that she strived for excellence and to be at the top, but she wanted the same for her students. She explained, “I want them to have it all. I want them to know more; be more; do more; go further; see more; go faster. I want them to have it all. I don't want them held back. I don't want barriers.”

**Theme 6: Mandating Relationships between Teachers, Parents and Students while Building Relationships outside the School**

The sixth and final theme described how Principal Robinson built relationships within and outside School A. This theme consisted of two subthemes: Relationships within the school, which referred to the relationships between and among Principal Robinson, teachers, students and the early college liaison within each school; and
Relationships outside the school, which explored how Principal Robinson promoted relationships between and among stakeholders located outside the school including the partner college, parents and the community.

**Relationships within the school**

*Principal-Teacher Relationship*

School A students said that they believed Principal Robison and the teachers, “…work together for our success and so we can achieve.” School A teachers agreed with the students and see the principal as their “professional leader” but she also listened to them. One teacher stated:

I have never been as comfortable sitting in a post-conference about an observation as I have here. I feel like that, number one, in my content, it's hard to get people to actually be able to watch you and give constructive critiques. So many administrators that I've had before have gone in and I felt like they didn't know what they were looking for…she watches for content, but she also watches my performance as a teacher and how I deliver my content. When I go to a post-conference, I know it's about how to make me better as a teacher, whereas I've been in the situation before where it's been just the fluff of like, ‘Yeah, you did this good, good, good, good, good.’ I've also been in the situation where someone was intentionally trying to make me look bad on paper. I've never been more comfortable and never felt more supported.

School A teachers also believed their principal supported their personal endeavors and lives because she, “…didn’t necessarily see people staying here forever since part of
her goal is to train us here and send us out to take this style of teaching other places.”

They felt that they could approach her and share if they planned to interview for another position or wanted to advance their career. A male teacher shared the following story:

A couple years ago a middle school position came open at the county, and I always thought doing middle school band would be interesting, and it was really close to my house, so I called her and said, ‘Hey, I just want to let you know like I'm not looking -- I wasn't looking for anything’, but I know that she has supported any staff member that has been looking for a transition to another school, whether it was due to a family need or just furthering themselves. We've had a teacher that went on to get their administration degree and she helped support them in attaining the administration degree, and he's now an AP at another school in the county.

The teachers also reported that Principal Robinson sought opportunities for teachers that would help them hone their skills not only as a teacher, but also as a well-rounded educator.

Principal Robinson agreed that she supported her teachers because, “…I love them tremendously and tell them I’m proud of them all the time.” She admitted that she did not “nickel and dime” their time and teachers earned comp time because of all the activities they were responsible for within the school. Principal Robinson said she also tried to host monthly celebrations with snacks and free giveaways during Wednesday collaborative meetings.
**Principal-Student Relationship**

School A students said that Principal Robinson was “more interactive with the students than traditional high school principals” and this happened mostly through twice a month “assemblies for freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors.” One criticism the students had about Principal Robinson was that sometimes she could be “abrasive” and overly involved with the student body. A female student said:

> When Zack talks about she's really involved with students; that is true. She catches a lot of criticism that in my opinion she doesn't deserve. I think one of the criticisms you could make is that she is almost overly involved in the student body a lot of the times, and when we do have meetings we often times have meetings that are unnecessary, that we really don't need to have. She's so involved with the students is that when we talk about this being a really safe school we don't really have real discipline problems here. You have something once in a blue moon, but not actual ones that require any sort of intervention. It almost just seems like she's too involved a lot of the time.

Despite feeling like Principal Robinson might be overly involved in their lives, the students know that she does it because, “…She's just really looking forward to all of us leaving the school and look[ing] back and say[ing], ‘wow, this school has really changed me.’” Students believed that Principal Robinson wanted to be able to take credit for their future success and that she made an impact lives.
**Teacher-Student Relationship**

School A students believed that their teachers were “awesome” because, “…we make friendships and you can go to them with any problem and communicate easily.” Another student said, “They care about their students and what’s best for us and they want us to achieve and rise to the top.”

Students also shared stories about their most memorable positive class experiences. One female student said:

A teacher that was our chemistry teacher was really funny, and she dressed up as a witch one day and used a lot of illustrations to explain things, and it made it clear so. I guess just whenever she dressed up as a witch it helped us remember the lesson.

A male student shared a story about a math teacher that used collaborative learning to help students work on complex math concepts:

I remember taking this honors history mathematics class my sophomore year, and what the course really taught us was the teacher, she took it to a different perspective as in the students teaching themselves. We actually learned from each other by doing math problems, solving equations, helping each other and understanding together better with each other, and the teacher -- I mean, she was there to help us, but she was just guiding us in a way where we can always learn different ways of solving problems.
Although the students recalled many positive teaching experiences, they admitted that not all teachers embraced the students or the concept of the school, which showed in their classroom instruction. Another male student explained:

There have been some teachers that are completely uninterested in personal relationships and are very interested in this is how it's going to be, and this is how you're going to learn it, which is fine. I mean, that's typically a traditional high school anyway, but then they're very unresponsive to questions.

All the students believed that most of that type of teacher left when the school experienced a huge teacher turnover three years ago.

**Relationships outside the school**

**School-Partner College Relationship**

School A teachers reported that the relationship between their partner college and the school was strained initially and several professors took this out on the students. Two teachers shared the following story:

Our kids actually get treated with some bias because they know that they're (School A) kids. In the past there’s been a stigma that follows the kids around, so they hear that these are (School A) kids, and treat them differently. In the very beginning there were a number of professors that did not buy into having an early college high school on their campus, so there was some serious ugliness but not anymore. There's [still] some passive-aggressive ugliness and snide comments about the students, which is why we don’t require them to were name tags or IDs.
The teachers pointed out that some professors are “thrilled to have our students” and point them out to older students saying “these kids are in high school and they’re outperforming you,” which has led to some tension between School A students and adults in the college classes. When it comes to discipline on the college side one School A teacher said, “Our students are singled out and get turned in for everything,” when it is not their students usually being disruptive immature.

The college liaison’s job is to serve as a go-between for the school and the college while making sure students are being treated fairly and progressing academically. The School A liaison admitted that she had a tough job working between two different educational institutions:

It is a lot of hard work. It's letting the faculty know that you are there to help them with our students and that you're concerned about students. It's also working with administration. I do my job well and hold students to a high level where they don't have a lot of problems. They don't have many problems with not having seats for the students and they have allowed me to participate in the schedule building so our students are not stacked in classes together.

The liaison said she was not “buttering people up” but does let college faculty members know that she was on their side as much as she was on the high school’s side, but admitted that sometimes situations turned into a high school versus college issue:

I wish I could tell you that everybody here at (the community college) is on board with it, but there's still some people around that you'll find every once in a while that think these kids need to be in their home high school. It bothers them that they get to
go to school for free and I think that comes from them having a poverty mentality and thinking, ‘If they go to school for free then I’m not going to be able to go to school and they’re taking something from me.’

The liaison commented that she coached students on the possibility that everyone might not be happy they’re on the campus:

I tell them not everybody is happier here, and that you will hear things in your classes like, ‘You all don't have to pay for anything. Why are you here? You're taking my spot. You're 14 years old.’ You may hear that, but then I coach them how to handle that, ‘You didn't break any rules. This is an opportunity you took.’ It's better than it was, but I don't think it will ever be perfect.

School A students shared that they had experienced some students and professors “talking down” to them, but they ignored it unless they could tell a professor was not grading them fairly because they were a high school student. Despite these issues, School A teachers believed the relationship between the high school and college were improving:

They're talking about clearing out a building that is currently in use to let us have that building, spend lots of money refitting it to suit our needs. They're not just sticking us in there the way it's already set up, but redoing it to house us. They definitely want us here on campus.

School-Parent Relationship

Principal Robinson said that one way she tried to involve parents in school affairs and decisions was by meeting them as their places of employment:
I try to go to the parents' businesses where they work, so if you own a business or work at a business, we'd love to have your business involved. We have job shadowing where we have businesses that we contact and ask would they let us job shadow a kid there. We have 50 hours of volunteerism that all of our students have to do to before they graduate, so in their junior year they start volunteering, and we have business partnerships with places where they can go volunteer. We work on campus with the person who is the liaison [for the collaborative partnership between the community college and the business community] and we partner with her.

Like students at the school, parents at School A are required to volunteer four hours per year in some capacity at the school. The penalty for families that had not met the requirement was their child not being allowed to walk across the high school stage at graduation. According to one School A parent, the school provided numerous opportunities for parents to volunteer including running concessions at sporting events, preparing and dropping off a dish at the yearly international festival or coming on a Wednesday to watch students and answer phones while teachers hold their weekly collaborative meetings.

Another requirement at School A was that all PAAs in the building had to contact parents every 15 days to give updates on student’s attendance and grades. Principal Robinson considered this to be a consistent way the school maintained a relationship with parents. Most of those required calls were placed from teacher’s personal phones because parents and students have all the teacher’s and principal’s phone numbers in case they
have questions about homework or other school affairs. Principal Robinson explained the process:

They have to answer the phone when we call. Every 15 days we call home with grades and say here is how your child is doing. They're required to answer the phone when we call… Every 15 days and I say, ‘Howdy, it's Joan. Little Susie Q is -- I've got to talk to you about these grades. We've got to go over this and we've got to talk about chemistry. Are you ready? You got a couple minutes?’ You say, ‘Yes.’ I say, ‘Okay, it'll just take two minutes. Let's just roll through this real quick…Boom, boom, boom.’ You say, ‘You know what, I'm so glad you called, because I've been asking her about chemistry, and she always tells me she doesn't have any homework to do.’ Then we converse. We have a relationship [because] we're talking every 15 days for 4 years. We have a relationship.

Principal Robinson explained that when PAAs contact parents of students that have A’s or B’s that they can leave voicemail messages, but if students are making any grades below a B, then the teacher has to speak with a parent or guardian. Teachers and parents also pointed out that the only way they could hold weekly whole-school collaborative planning meetings was for parents to come on Wednesdays and watch the students while the staff met. One teacher explained why this level of participation was so important for the school:

We don't have the same funding as other places and the same manpower, and so in order for us to run the model like on Wednesdays we meet together as an entire staff, and in order for that to happen, the parents come in and like answer the
phones and watch the students and things like that, I mean, so it's absolutely essential to the function of our school.

Teachers also reported that the school holds quarterly parent meetings (QPM’s) so the school can continue sharing information with parents about the early college model and how the school implemented it. One teacher said the meetings and weekly calls were essential because, “Without that understanding on the parents' part, I don't think that we would have the buy in. I don't think we'd be successful.”

A final way School A maintained a relationship with parents was through the school’s Parent Support Organization (PSO), which provided financial support for students that were experiencing hardships and unexpected situations including as one teacher said, “…students in the past whose homes had burned down and we've come together as a school and donated to help them out.”

**School-Community Relationship**

School A teachers and Principal Robinson reported that the relationship between the school and the community had improved greatly over the years. One reason for the past strained relationship was the community’s perception that the school only enrolled the top students, which hurt the other high schools in the area. One teacher explained:

For a long time their perception was that we only had cream of the crop students, and that we were taking all of their good students. The way we [were] presented to the community was really fabulous, but that's because we were taking all their good students. Now the perception is that our scores are doing well, and we're recognized at the state level because our graduation rate is 100%, and so now
what I hear throughout the rest of the county community schools is, ‘Oh, it's because they send all their students back to their home high school that won't graduate.’

School A teachers agreed that it was true the school sent students back to their base school when they did not pass college placement exams the school had sent back less than 10 students over the past two or three years. Principal Robinson said, “One reason the relationship with the community improved was because our students are going into the community and being more visible, which has helped changed how the school is viewed now.”

**Summary of Principal Robinson’s Leadership and the Six Themes**

Chapter four has examined Principal Robinson’s practices and actions she takes to promote the success of her students. Theme one revealed that Principal Robinson leads School A based on her upbringing in a middle class family that emphasized community service and personal identity as a white female school leader working in a school whose goal is to ensure that students leave with a high school diploma and 2-year college degree. Her approach to achieving this goal placed academic success over increasing access and opportunity for traditionally underserved students, which was a goal of the early college high school initiative.

One way access and an opportunity to attend the school was limited was through Principal Robinson continuing the school’s rigorous application process once she became principal. Another way access was denied at the school was when Principal Robinson targeted first generation students over lower-income and students of color. The
demographics of School A did not match the demographics of the other two high schools in the district, but this fact did not seem to dissuade Principal Robinson to alter the application process to increase access to the school.

Once students arrive at the school, Principal Robinson pushes students to achieve a diploma and college degree in four instead of five years. While setting high standards was not bad, students pointed out that their school experience was not as positive as they wished it could be. Despite the school having sports teams and clubs, students reported that the school lacked spirit and the principal did not include them in decision-making processes. While it is true that the school has received numerous accolades for student’s achieving, the price appeared to be that students did not have a caring, empathic relationship with their principal. All participants, including the principal, commented that Principal’s Robinson’s mission and vision was to be at the top and to excel, which seemed to take precedent over genuine relationships with those most impacted by her practices and actions – the students.

Principal Robinson appeared to run her school like a traditional school including having an assistant principal, which most early college high schools in North Carolina do not have. Instead of coming up with creative solutions to staff and funding shortages, Principal Robinson allowed Special Education and ESL students to continue to be disenfranchised and underserved at her school.

Most participants admitted that they lacked a personal relationship with Principal Robinson, but did not seem to mind that she mandated teachers having relationships with parents through phone calls every fifteen days. The relationship between students and
teachers were positive overall, but one parent did not believe that a program Principal Robinson implemented (PAA) made any difference in her son’s life. Finally, the instructional practices Principal Robinson boasted about, single-sex classes and mastery-based learning, neither received few accolades from participants nor were these interventions proven to affect student learning or achievement. Overall, School A’s six themes depict a principal that values success, achievement and recognition over inclusion, innovation and empowerment.
Principal Joan Robinson’s Leadership and the Conceptual Framework

Examining Principal Robinson’s leadership in relation to the conceptual framework provided a picture of how her actions and practices promoted or impeded the goals and purpose of early college high schools. Figure 4.1 shows that she valued success over providing access and opportunities for students these schools were intended to help.

Figure 4.1

*Principal Joan Robinson’s leadership based on the conceptual framework*

*Note:* Principal Robinson’s leadership is not balanced based on the conceptual framework. While she displayed democratic leadership with most participants, student’s were not included in the decision-making process. Principal Robinson displayed no qualities or characteristics of a culturally-responsive leader. Finally, the only group she displayed socially just leadership with were the school’s transgender and gay students.
Principal Robinson exhibited some characteristics, behaviors and interests that aligned with her being a democratic leader, socially just, culturally responsive leader. She demonstrated democratic leadership when she encouraged teachers to plan and work collaboratively (Rusch, 1995). Additionally, she solicited participation from others when she asked parents to volunteer every Wednesday so teachers could have common planning.

Principal Robinson’s democratic leadership with her students, however, paints a conflicting picture. On one hand she interacted with students during monthly grade-level meetings, but during these meetings she talked at the students instead of with the students. This led some students to say that she was too involved in their lives. Conversely, Principal Robinson sought student input on some school issues, but never seemed to implement the solutions students provided. These actions showed that Principal Robinson was interested in hearing multiple perspectives and having deliberate discussion before making a decision, but ultimately she came to most conversations with students already knowing what action she would take. However, Principal Robinson did include teacher, parent and liaison voices in the decision-making process and operation of the school (Johnson, 1988; Wasley, 1992; Conley, 1991).

Principal Robinson did not exhibit many characteristics or interests of a socially just leader. Although she engaged in dialogue with stakeholders, the dialogue was not to “stimulate doubt, curiosity, risk-taking or creative” (Freire, 1970). Principal Robinson did not understand that she needed to, “leave the comforts and confines of professional codes and state mandates for the riskier waters of higher moral callings” (Rapp, 2002, p. 233).
She was so interested in making sure that her school followed the early college model and remained at the top academically that she failed to take risks or come up with creative, innovative solutions to challenges in her school. One way Principal Robinson showed that she maintained the status quo at School A centered on providing access and equitable opportunities for participation in the early college program (Foster, 2004). She did not alter the admissions procedures or criterion the school has used for the past ten years so more Black and male students could attend.

Another way Principal Robinson demonstrated that she was not a change agent was when she required teachers to participate in the Ruby Paine training on poverty. Principal Robinson did not understand that this type of training was outdated and helped reinforce instead of eliminate stereotypes about students of color and lower-income students.

Principal Robinson showed that she did not respect or care about parents when she mandated that they volunteer four hours yearly or face consequences. Her decision to force parent participation demonstrated that she did not understand the challenges faced by some parents such as having to take time off of work or finding transportation to the school during the day to complete volunteer hours. Principal Robinson did, however, show that she respected and was emphatic towards the transgendered and gay students in her school and took steps to ensure those students did not feel ostracized or excluded on campus (Theoharis, 2007).

Principal Robinson demonstrated a couple of behaviors of a culturally responsive leader. She set high expectations for herself, the staff and students (Reitzug & Patterson, 1998; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; and Lomotey, 1989). She was committed to making
sure students reached their highest potential, strived for excellence and knew they were supported as they embarked on and completed school at the early college high school. Principal Robinson helped create a collaborative culture among teachers and students that was interdependent and connected, but she did not have a true relationship with either group (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Finally, the professional development on Ruby Payne’s cultural frameworks for understanding poverty and speaking with the students about code-switching showed that Principal Robinson was aware of her student’s culture. However, instead of encouraging students to maintain their cultural and ethnic identities, she tried to assimilate students into mainstream values and beliefs using what she called “community norms.” Again, this showed that she was not challenging the status quo or allowing students and staff to be free to express their true selves. The only time that student’s cultures were acknowledged or embraced was during a yearly international festival, which runs counter to actions a culturally responsive leader would take.

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter 4 presented the first case in the study, Principal Joan Robinson. Six themes emerged from the data that showed that she valued achievement over access and opportunity for the three groups of students the early college high school initiative intended to serve. Principal Robinson set high standards for her students including the goal that all students achieve a diploma and 2-year degree in four years. Her focus on academics and achievement over creating positive high school experiences led staff, student and parent participants to say they lacked a close relationship with Principal
Robinson. Additionally, Principal Robinson ran her school like a traditional school with numerous programs that failed to show any improvement in student performance.

When examining Principal Robinson’s leadership in relation to the conceptual framework, she demonstrated democratic leadership, but minimal socially just or culturally responsive leadership. Instead of encouraging students and staff to be individuals, she worked to assimilate them using “community norms.” Overall, the six themes coupled with the conceptual framework paints a picture of a principal that values success, achievement and recognition over inclusion, innovation and empowerment.
CHAPTER FIVE

CASE 2 - SCHOOL B PRINCIPAL KAREN LEWIS

Chapter 5 included findings from the data analysis process for School B Principal Karen Lewis. Data was collected from Principal Lewis and participants to create themes that described her leadership. The first section offered details about the research context for School B. The second section provided an introduction to School B’s study participants. The third section presented the findings on Principal Lewis’ leadership arranged by overarching themes and subthemes. The fourth section provided a summary of Principal Lewis’ leadership based on the themes. The fifth and final section provided findings on Principal Lewis’ leadership based on the conceptual framework. A summary of case two rounded out the chapter at the end.

Research Context

School B is the sole high school located in a rural North Carolina town that has a population of less than 1000 people. The demographics of the town are 43% Black, 39% White, 13% Latino/a, 3% Asian and 2% American Indian or multiracial. The median family income of the town’s residents is $28,500 and 24% of the town’s population live below the poverty level. The percentage of the population that has at least a high school diploma is 61% while only 7% of the population has a bachelor’s degree or higher. The majority of residents commute 30 minutes to an hour away to work.

School B transitioned from being a traditional high school to one that started a school-wide early college program seven years ago. The principal and teachers reported that the program did not really take off during the first four years because of issues
working with the partner college. After those issues were resolved, the school’s program has flourished. At the time of the study approximately 80% of all students at the school participated in the early college program while the remaining 20% were enrolled in the school’s career and technical education (CTE) program. For the first time since the program started, the entire ninth grade decided to enroll in the early college program this past year.

School B’s partner community college is 90 minutes away from the school, so college classes are broadcast from a distance daily to students at the school. Students sit in one of two classrooms that are equipped with huge screens and cameras. Students are able to see the college instructor and college classes in session on the monitor and vice versa on the college side. A facilitator sits in the room with the students to monitor their progress, help with discipline and act as a test administrator during exams. Once a month, partner community college instructors travel to the school and instruct students face-to-face while broadcasting their classes back to the on-campus community college students.

School B started a 1:1 laptop initiative two years ago thanks to a grant written by the principal, so all 140 students at the school have Chromebooks that they use daily in both their high school and distance college classes.

The demographics of the school were 45% White, 36% Black, 11% Latino/a, 5% multiracial and 2% Asian/Pacific Islander. The gender breakdown of the school was 56% female and 44% male. School B was classified as whole school Title I after the free or reduced lunch rate exceeded 60%. Approximately 95% of the students that attend the school would be classified as first college generation students.
Study Participants

Principal Karen Lewis. Principal Lewis, who was in her early 50s, has been in Education for the past 26 years ever since she graduated with an undergraduate degree in Biology. Principal Lewis started her career in Education as a lateral entry teacher and earned teaching certification from a local university. She also holds a master’s degree in School Administration. Principal Lewis was working on her doctorate in School Administration from a local university at the time of the study. Lewis’s prior jobs included serving ten years as a high school Science teacher at School B. She also served two years as an assistant principal at the local elementary school and principal for seven years at the local middle school. Principal Lewis has been principal at School B for the past seven years and was responsible for working with the district, partner community college and other stakeholders to write the grant that brought the early college program to School B.

Teachers. Four teachers with four to eight years of experience working at School B participated in four separate interviews. The interviews were conducted with one White woman, one Latina woman and two White men. All the teachers that were interviewed ranged in age from the late 30s to late 50s.

Students. The student focus group included six students that were 15 or 16 years old and were classified as sophomores and juniors at the school. Four of the six students were first generation students. The gender breakdown of the student focus group was five females and one male. The student focus group was diverse with one Latina student, one White student, three Black students and one biracial student.
Parents. The parent focus group included two White males that were in their 40s and worked on the custodial staff at the middle and elementary schools. Both had children that participated in the early college program and one parent classified his child as a first generation student.

Liaison. The liaison had served at School B for the past four years. She started working at the partner college in the English department and now works as an English instructor and liaison for School B. She visits School B once a week because the community college is 90 minutes away from its partner community college. The liaison, who was White and in her mid-30’s and at the time of the study, admitted that she was seeking employment elsewhere at the end of the school year because of responsibilities related to working with two different schools that were a great distance from each other.

Table 5.1 provides a summary of School B’s participants.

Table 5.1

School B Participants

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
<th>Yrs at School</th>
<th>Yrs current role</th>
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<td>X</td>
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</table>
PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The findings about the actions and practices Principal Lewis took to promote the success of School B’s students point to a principal that believes she will never live up to the legacy of her father’s former principalship at an elementary school in the state. Principal Lewis and her husband, who teaches at the school, moved to the area over 25 years ago. All three of their sons attended the town’s schools including School B. Principal Lewis believed this was one reason why she worked so hard to provide opportunities for students to participate in the early college program. Since School B is in a rural, impoverished area, Principal Lewis has come up with innovative ways to make sure students receive a first-class education that will prepare them to be as competitive and prepared as students in more affluent schools. Findings on Principal Lewis’ leadership are divided into six themes based on participant’s answers and researcher field notes.

Theme 1: Leading and living in the shadow of her father’s legacy

The first theme that emerged from the data referred to the prior and current roles Principal Lewis assumed both inside and outside the school and how those multiple roles impacted her leadership. This theme also examined Principal Lewis’ personal, educational and professional background and what impact her background had on her current leadership.

Principal Lewis was born and raised in North Carolina into a middle class family. Her mother was a preschool teacher while her father was a high school Science teacher that became an elementary school principal later in life. Principal Lewis joked, “I didn’t
mean to follow in his footsteps, but apparently I did.” She acknowledged that her father was the first influence on her current principal role:

I think my first influence was my father, even though I didn't intend to be a principal. I think he set a standard that I keep in my head that I will never feel like I live up to, because he was that principal that did everything in a rural community and really transformed the community because his school became the school that everybody wanted their children to attend. It went from being a high poverty section of the county to becoming a very affluent section of the county and was transformational because the school was so good. It was a very desirable place to live in that school district.

The earliest influence on Principal Lewis’ leader was her father as she watched him take a high poverty, under-resourced school (like the one she currently works in) and transform it into the school more affluent families sought to send their children. Despite all the work Principal Lewis has done to improve School B and the surrounding community, she still believed that no matter how hard she worked that she would never measure up to the type of principal her father was. She explained:

In the summer he did the grounds at the school. He did a lot of beautification and cleaned up and made sure it was a beautiful campus. He hired teachers and held them to a very high standard, but he was beloved from that point until he retired. Daddy also waxed the floors himself every Easter and Christmas and summer, and had over 700 students and no assistant principal in his elementary school. He was one of the first people that looked at test scores as an indicator of helping teachers
and giving them feedback. He would analyze the scores and help teachers see the areas where were strong and areas where they might want to collaborate with another teacher.

Principal Lewis’ father was an innovative principal and appeared to pass this same quality down to his daughter including the desire to have a clean, beautiful campus, highly qualified teachers and plans for ways to improve class instruction. Principal Lewis said that when her father retired, the town renamed the road in front of the school after him. She replied, “He's kind of the epitome in my head that I need to live up to but that I never will.” Despite all the successes Principal Lewis has obtained while being School B’s principal such as bringing the early college program and CTE programs to the school she still believed she would never live up to her father’s legacy. This did not stop her from working to make sure her students, and even students at the neighboring elementary and middle school, receive the resources and instruction they need to be successful.

When Principal Lewis was asked what impact her background had on her relationships within and outside the school, she explained that the way she related to students and parents was as the mother of three adult sons that went through the county’s schools from kindergarten through 12th grade. She commented:

I guess the biggest way that I relate to kids is as a mom, because all three of my children went through the county’s schools from kindergarten through graduation. All three of them were successful, and graduated, and went on to college and were also athletes. They participated in clubs. They applied and earned scholarships, and they were not perfect children. They made mistakes and they had things that
happened where I had to push and motivate them and have high expectations for
them, and I think that that helps me as a principal. First of all, it gives me credibility
with parents, because I'm not ever pushing their children to work harder than I
pushed my own children and I think that it lets me preach that message of high
expectations. ‘If you want your kid to go to college, they're going to have to study
hard. They're going to have to work hard.’

Principal Lewis pushes students to be successful and holds them to high expectations.
She sees the students as her children and she’s their mother and like any parent she wants
them to enjoy their school experience participating in clubs and athletics, but to
remember that academics comes before athletics. Principal Lewis also holds parents to
high standards and explained that she never expects parents to do anything she had not
done parenting her own children. She explained:

When parents talk about how a college class is too hard or a teacher gives too
much homework, or their child is too busy, because they're playing sports, then I
can truthfully tell them that my children took books with them and sat in the
bleachers when they weren't playing basketball while the other teams were playing
on away games and studied. My kids had to get home at 10:00 after a basketball
game and go to their room and study for two hours and sometimes they complained.

Principal Lewis continued to discuss how her background as a parent with three boys
that participated in clubs and sports at School B provides her with experiences she can
share with other parents when they believe their child’s workload or teacher’s
expectations are unreasonable. She even had a story she shares with parents about her
oldest son being frustrated because he believed he was being pushed too hard, but now
that same child is a doctor and now thanks her for his upbringing. She said, “When he
had a tough course load and was involved in academics as a senior and everybody around
him was playing and having fun, he told me that I had ruined his life.” She said she took
that barb in stride and knew that she was right to push her children because that child is
now a doctor, self-sufficient and grateful for how he was raised.

Principal Lewis admitted that she never thought she would become a teacher or a
principal when she was in college; therefore, she did not major in Education as an
undergraduate. She entered education as a lateral entry teacher after earning a Biology
degree. Principal Lewis believed, however, this gave her an advantage in the classroom
because she had the content knowledge before receiving instruction on how to teach her
subject area. As far as her graduate training to become a principal, she believed that
professors “that had been principals themselves” were the best teachers.

Professionally, the one experience that prepared her to serve as a high school
principal was working as a high school Science teacher. She explained:

I started my career as a high school teacher, and so I think having taught high
school kids gives me credibility with my [current] high school faculty. I taught
biology and physical science and honors physical science and AP biology, and so
those experiences give me credibility.

Principal Lewis believed that principals needed to have credibility and be authentic
when working with teachers or their suggestions for improvement might be ignored. Her
background as a parent with children that attended School B coupled with her prior
experience teaching at the school provided her with a rich history she now uses to advance her goals and vision for the school. At the time of the study Principal Lewis was enrolled in a doctoral program and desired to use the degree to train other teachers on how to assume leadership roles within their schools including how to become an effective principal.

**Theme 2: Open, equitable access to any student that desires to participate**

The second theme showed that Principal Lewis did not limit access to any student that wanted to participate in the school’s early college program. Since School B is a traditional school that started an early college program, students are not required to participate, but since the school is the only one in the town, students still must attend.

Principal Lewis was so determined that students would leave the school prepared to either go to college through the early college program or into a career that she wrote a grant to start a career and technical education (CTE) program two years ago. Students that participate in the CTE program can graduate with a diploma and certification in several fields including agriculture (horticulture, animal science, biotechnology or environmental and natural resources), allied health sciences, or sports and entertainment marketing. The courses prepare students to enter the workforce with certification that proves they have the skills and knowledge needed to be successful. Students must choose which path they want to take in eighth grade, but if a student in the CTE program wants to transfer into the early college program or vice versa, this must take place before the student’s junior year.
Theme 2 was supported by three subthemes: Target Student Population, Open Admissions Process, and Special Education and ESL Students.

**Target Student Population**

Principal Lewis has implemented an open admissions policy for the early college program; therefore, the school serves the initiative’s target student population of first generation, students of color and lower-income students. According to one teacher, the school’s early college program appeals to lower-income families in the area:

This is an impoverished area, and a lot of kids, their parents haven't gone to school, so this was one way to get them to buy into it, especially because of the low income clientele that we have, getting these services virtually for free, and then not only that, but having a support system right here to kind of wean them into it.

Since School B is located in an impoverished, rural area parents are very cost-conscious. With the rising price of college tuition and fees, one parent reported that the reason he allowed his daughter to participate was because his family could save money on the first two years of college. He said, “…now we only have to focus on paying for the last two years instead of four years.”

Another teacher reported that one reason the school successfully enrolled the target student population was because of Principal Karen Lewis’ efforts to include all students regardless of race, socioeconomic status or prior academic performance. The teacher explained that she does not allow students to have an excuse to fail:

She won't let them fail. She'll give them so many chances. She'll run to their house and bring them to school if she has to. She'll send somebody after them.
She's not going to let them get too many absences. She's very personal [and] not afraid to make phone calls. She's really understanding of the things that go on at home or might be going on at home, so when some of these kids come in…she's very nurturing to these kids, and doesn't matter who they are or what color they are, what socioeconomic group they belong to..

Principal Lewis was so interested in making sure that her school and other early college high schools served the target student population that she currently serves on the student selection team with the state support network for the initiative. She elaborated on why she decided to serve on this committee:

I was on the student selection team, principals' council, where we were really looking to be sure that early colleges are doing what we're supposed to do, which is attracting the economically disadvantaged and first generation college goers that won't make it without us. Sometimes early colleges tend to go in the other direction and just take those elite students that are already going to be successful and give them a leg up, and that's not what we're about. We're supposed to be taking students [that] when they start our program, they don't know what a credit hour is, what a semester hour means, why they have to take a course that's in a subject they don't really like…. [We are supposed] to be helping them with that college knowledge, which is a big mission [of the initiative].

Principal Lewis believed that admitting the target student population was a part of the early college mission that did not need to go away because that would weaken the initiative’s true purpose.
Open Admissions Process

Since School B started out as a traditional school before becoming an early college high school, not all students in the school participate in the program. School B used an application process that was drastically different than the stringent process used at School A. The School B liaison reported:

There is a process, but it's -- Nobody is turned down. If they want to be a part of it, they can be a part of it, but we say that they have to continue to be successful, so if they come in, and they're not doing well, we don't want to keep pushing them. We also say you've got to be doing well in your high school [classes].

Since the early college program is optional, Principal Lewis and staff members make sure that students are not failing or falling behind in the classes that are mandatory to graduate with a diploma. Like all early college high schools, students at School B must pass a placement exam such as ACCUPLACER or COMPASS, in order to be in the program. Principal Lewis said that they are some college classes students can take that do not require that they pass the placement exam such as music appreciation or computer applications. If students have not passed the placement exam by the start of their junior year, then they are automatically placed in the CTE program.

School B’s open admissions policy seemed to work because the number of students participating in the program has increased yearly. One teacher stated, “The current sophomore class is probably near 100% of students. The junior class and the senior class don't have those high numbers. The freshmen coming in, a lot of them are…getting ready to take those college courses.” The teacher believed that one reason seniors and juniors
did not participate as much is because, “It was like a brand new program. They didn't really understand it, and it was still trying to get rolling.” The program started seven years and as more students graduate with a diploma and college credit, the participation rate continues to increase.

**Special Education and ESL students**

Since the early college program operates as a program within a traditional school, the school is staffed like a regular high school. According to Principal Lewis and teachers, School B had a Special Education and ESL teachers, so the school had no problem accommodating students with special needs. One teacher shared a quote that showed Principal Lewis’ view about serving these students. The teacher said that during a Special Education meeting Principal Lewis said, “God didn't promise everybody everything.” The teacher said Principal Lewis directs teachers to work with and support students regardless of their disability or perceived ability level not because it is mandated by law, but because it was the right thing to do for the students.

**Theme 3: Success defined by Academic Growth and Degree Completion not State Grade Reports and Standardized Test Scores**

The third theme to emerge from the findings described the academic achievements or milestones the school has achieved under Principal Lewis’ leadership. Since Principal Lewis helped write the grant that brought the early college program to School B, she can solely take credit for the success or failures that have occurred over the program’s past seven years.
Even though the early college program was implemented seven years ago participation and completion rates were low because the community college was not initially offering the school an adequate number of classes. According to Principal Lewis, a community college administrator continuously blocked her efforts to encourage the college to offer more distant education classes during the program’s first three years. After that person retired, the early college program continually improved and gained more students. Principal Lewis acknowledged, however, that the program’s initial challenges negatively impacted the number of students that have completed 2-year degrees or graduated with any college credit.

Despite these early setbacks, success at this school defined by the number of students that remain in the early college program after their freshmen and sophomore years (Retention Rate), student’s growth on standardized tests (Standardized Tests), the number of students that graduate from school with a diploma and a 2-year degree (Graduation Rates/Degrees Earned) and the number of student’s choosing to stay at the school for a fifth year to complete all the requirements for a 2-year degree (Finish in Four…or Five).

**Retention Rate**

According to the liaison, the school’s retention rate has increased steadily over the past four years. She said, “We have a pretty good [rate]. I'm not sure about numbers but they want them to stay in it, and we may have a few that don't, but a majority of the students do stay in.” The liaison also stated that students that wanted to remain in the early college program “…have to pass ACA [a college-level study skills class] and then after their freshmen year is when they can get into their first class.” The liaison pointed
out that Principal Lewis wants students to get as much college credit as they can even if they do not pass the placement exam, so those that do not can still take classes like Art Appreciation or Music Appreciation because they do not require much reading.

**Standardized Tests**

The subtheme Standardized Tests referred to School B’s performance on state and national standardized tests based on participant narratives and data from newspapers, state report cards and state accountability databases.

At the time of the study, School B had just received their state report card grade, which was a “C”. The state report card grade was a point of discussion among teachers and Principal Karen Lewis on day the researcher arrived to collect data. Principal Lewis explained:

Yesterday at our faculty meeting, we spent an hour talking about the most recently released North Carolina report card, and my school received a grade of C, which is good and bad. We were only 3 points from a B….I don't like Cs. I would be much happier with a B or even an A, but only 20% of that score is based on growth, and my school exceeded growth for the past three years, so I highlighted that. Our reading score was 68% proficiency, which is seven points above the state [average]. Our biology scores were only one point -- I think the state [average] was 55 and we were 54. Then math is the area [where] we are challenged. Our kids struggle in math. Instead of focusing on the negative or failing to take responsibility for the report card grade, Principal Lewis stepped up and gave an honest, constructive assessment of her school’s strengths and areas that could be improved. Despite School B receiving a “C” on
their state report card, the school was still classified as “exceeding growth,” which the principal also pointed out.

Another standardized test that many high school students take is the SAT. School B’s average was 100-150 points below the national average, but like the state tests, math was the subject that brought the average down. Principal Lewis explained that the school was taking steps to address student’s math deficiencies, which will be outlined later in this chapter.

Since Principal Lewis emphasizes strengths over weaknesses when describing her school or students, this attitude appears to have transferred to those around her as well. According to all School B study participants, Principal Lewis’ biggest accomplishment had nothing to do with a test score or degree obtainment. The principal’s best accomplishment and lasting legacy was her securing two grants that brought laptops and the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program to the school over two years ago. The participants believed these accomplishments changed the school in ways that will benefit the community and students for many years to come.

**Graduation Rates/Degrees Earned**

The subtheme Graduation Rates/Degrees Earned explored School B’s graduation rate to see if the school was achieving one of the goals of early college high schools, which was to increase the number of students graduating with a diploma. This subtheme also looked at the number of college credits and 2-year degrees students earned upon graduation. This information was important because another goal of early college high schools was to increase students’ college readiness and one factor that aids with this goal
was making sure students graduate from high school with transferable college credits or a 2-year degree if possible.

According to state accountability databases, the graduation rate at School B has steadily increased over the past three years as the early college program flourished at the school. The overall graduation rate at the school is four points above the state average. Last year, a Latino male student became the first student to graduate with both a diploma and a 2-year degree. Principal Lewis had this student come speak with rising ninth graders last year and he was able to convince the entire current ninth grade class to participate in the early college program. Additionally, eight students were on track to graduate in 2015 with both a diploma and a 2-year degree, which shows that since the initial roadblocks to the program’s success were removed, it has continued to grow and be successful.

“The 5th year or 13th grade”

The 5th Year or 13th grade referred to the fact that some early college high schools, including School B, allowed students to continue taking college classes for free once they completed the requirements for a diploma during what has been termed “the 5th year” or “the 13th grade” by many early college high schools. This practice started because many students were not able to complete requirements for a diploma and college degree in four years since many students arrived in ninth grade one or two grade levels behind academically. The solution that North Carolina came up with was to allow students to stay a fifth year to complete degree requirements. As more students have realized the benefit of earning more college credits for free and as schools realized the 5th year did not
negatively impact their high school graduation rates, this practice has increased in early college high schools across the state.

Principal Lewis encourages students and parents to allow their children to stay for a 5th year for a variety of reasons. Again, since many families in the area live below the poverty line, the economic benefit of students finishing a 2-year degree for free at the school is too good to pass up. Students that stay for a fifth year take all their classes on the main college campus 90 minutes away. Principal Lewis said that as more students stay the additional year the school has devised ways including relying on community members to help students that do not have transportation reach the college campus. The liaison said that the transportation issue was the biggest concern with students staying a fifth year, but now that this has been worked out, participation has increased. According to the liaison:

Broadcast and online [classes] are not going to give you the same benefit as being in a classroom, so we do encourage that fifth year. When they come on campus it makes a world of difference just in their attitudes because they're getting out of the high school and they're getting into the college campus.

The success the fifth year option is now enjoying was non-existent when a couple of years ago. One male teacher explained:

The first year that they were offered to stay five years, they didn't stay. I think only one student did. Last year there were easily triple the number, and I think that this year there will be more. I think that the students are opening their eyes to see how much money they can save by taking the early college classes.
Principal Lewis agreed that the economic benefit of the fifth year as appealed to many students and parents. She elaborated on the 5th year and its success:

This year we had nine kids that elected to do the 5th year with varying degrees of success…. I want to get to the point that if you want to go to a university, I want you prepared to go on to the university, but that if you think your next step is going to be community college, that you stay here and do the 5th year and earn that associate's degree.

Principal Lewis reiterated that the 5th year is free, but admitted that sometimes students are ready to graduate and get away from the small, rural town. With this in mind, she waits until the beginning of May during the student’s senior year to ask about staying the additional year, which gives her and the community college plenty of time to work out logistics such as finances and transportation.

**Theme 4: Balancing Teacher’s Expectations on Discipline and Rules with Providing Students with Equitable Treatment in a Supportive, Caring Environment**

The fourth theme described how Principal Lewis balanced competing interests of enforcing discipline policies and rules against creating a supportive, caring environment for students. School B is not located on a college campus, but shared some facilities with a neighboring elementary and middle school, which reside on the same tract of land. Safety and discipline issues impact a school’s culture and climate, which is why these terms serve as the subthemes for theme four.
Safety/Student Discipline

The subtheme Safety/Student Discipline referred to safety and student discipline issues that existed at School B and how Principal Lewis addressed both of these concerns. School B has traditional doors and entries that can be locked and access limited. Upon arriving to the school, a visitor has to check in at the front office with a receptionist, sign-in and provide a picture ID for a visitor badge before gaining access to the rest of the school. School B also had one school resource officer that patrolled the elementary, middle and high school at the time of the study.

School B students reported that they felt safe at the school because, “Nothing ever happens here.” The students did admit, however, that fights occasionally broke out at the school, but that teachers and Principal Lewis quickly dealt with them.

One male teacher that had been teaching at School B for the past seven years did not believe the school was safe. The teacher shared two stories about being verbally attacked by one student and physically attacked by another during his time at the school:

I had to get a young man arrested and press charges against him for threatening me with bodily harm, and he was found guilty. I just asked him to -- He was actually a student who had graduated and came back in to help. He didn't have his passes, and he was cursing, and he had a lot of kids around. I asked him to leave the building. I said, ‘thank you for doing what you did, for helping, but now you need to leave’, and he wasn't about to. And I got very little support from anybody here, because they said that's something you've got to take care of yourself because he wasn't a student.
The teacher explained that he received little administrative support during the first incident or the second incident a year later. He believed that Principal Lewis needed to be more of a disciplinarian and stop allowing students to walk all over her. He shared another story that demonstrated Principal Lewis’ lax disciplinary practices:

I asked a student something under direct orders of the principal, and this kid threatened to hurt me, and he was still a student, and he got very little punishment for that. He got one day out, and that wasn't even from her (Principal Lewis). She wasn't here that day. [The punishment] was from the superintendent. [Principal Lewis] wouldn't make him come sit down with me. She said, ‘I can't get him to come sit down at the school.’ I'm thinking well, you make him or you don't let him back. The next year he was sitting in my class again. All she did was like take him out of my class and make him sit in ISS the rest of the year, and then she put him back in my class. I said, ‘Come on, you're supposed to have a sit down with me before this happens,’ but it didn't happen.

The male teacher was extremely frustrated with Principal Lewis’ discipline record and did not believe he was supported during either situation. He admitted that he sought to leave the county and go to another school, but since he was less than five years from retirement, he decided to “stick it out” especially since most counties in the area were more interested in hiring younger teachers that could be paid a lower salary.

Another male teacher at School B offered a mixed opinion about safety at the school. The teacher said, “I don’t think there are really any issues here,” but admitted that he had
witnessed one fight in the three years he taught at the school. He also shared a story about a disciplinary incident he had with another student involving a pencil sharpener:

[There was a] situation where a student threw my pencil sharpener -- I had an electric pencil sharpener. He threw it against that wall right there behind you (pointing). He wasn't doing anything in class, so I'd try and motivate him. ‘Come on, let's go.’ ‘Get with your group. Let's get this done.’ He said something, cursed, stormed out and threw my pencil sharpener. His punishment was out-of-school suspension - I think three days OSS and then ultimately removal from my classroom.

The second male teacher said the incident shook him, but after thinking about the situation, Principal Lewis’ decision to place the student in another class was a good solution because “[the student] doesn't have the audience he had in my class that he thrived on.” Now the student is doing better academically and behaviorally.

Upon being questioned about her discipline philosophy, Principal Lewis acknowledged that some teachers had problems with how she dealt with student discipline. She admitted disciplining students based on seeing them as individuals and not based on what a handbook said to do or what teachers believed was right. She explained her rationale for this practice:

Students are all different and you have to push them, expect the best out of them and love them, and not constantly be looking to punish. Everything that happens with them is a teaching experience and you don't treat them all equally because that's not equitable. You have to realize that they're all different and make sure
they're getting what's equitable. [For example] the discipline will say you do exactly this, [but] that lock step handling of things is not necessarily equitable, because kids have different gifts, and so I try to treat them as individuals.

The goal of Principal Lewis’ discipline philosophy is to treat students as individuals not based on a set of rules and regulations that are neither equitable nor fair for all students. While Principal Lewis admitted that balancing what teachers wanted – strict, by the book discipline – with what she believed was in the best interest of the students, she was always going to put student’s interests first because they needed advocates more than they needed a disciplinarian.

**School Culture and Climate**

The subtheme School Culture and Climate denoted how participants viewed Principal Lewis’ leadership based on the culture and climate or “feeling” she created within the school. School B teachers had varied thoughts about the school’s culture and climate. The male teacher that complained about Principal Lewis not being a disciplinarian said that the school sat in a small community, which impacted what happened in the school. This teacher commented that Principal Lewis allowed religion to be a part of the school’s culture, which he did not agree with. He explained:

> There's (a program) here, and [Principal Lewis] makes it a teacher's duty at the end of the year. I didn't know about it until I came here. It's a Christian get together at the end of the year for the seniors, and they sing and dance.

The teacher said that he believed it was okay for the program to take place, but that it should be off campus because the law dictated that there should be a separation of church
and state and since School B was a public school, then religious programs should not take place at the school and teacher should not be required to work at the event. The teacher commented that one reason Principal Lewis allowed the program to take place at the school was because her husband (who teaches at the school and was the athletic director) acted like a “preacher teacher” and gets his wife to pressure teachers to participate in the program. When he was asked if Principal Lewis required all teachers to participate in the program he replied, “She says participation is voluntary and we don't make anybody go.” He said that he had not participated during the time he was there, but this made him appear to be an outcast and “not a team player.”

The teacher’s final comments on the culture and climate Principal Lewis created centered on her husband working at the school, which he called “nepotism”. The teacher believed that Principal Lewis had created an environment where the athletes’ interests were more important than other students, which was not fair in his opinion.

Another male teacher at the school did not share all of the other teacher’s opinions about Principal Lewis’ influence on the school’s climate and culture. He believed that the biggest challenge to the school’s culture was the community because, “I think that they appreciate school, but I don't think they understand the importance of education.” However, he agreed with the other male teacher that athletics was more important at times than academics both in the school and the community, which set students up to have unrealistic future goals. He explained that he wished he could share the following information with students and the community:
I hate to crush people's dreams, but everyone has dreams about going to the NBA or being a professional football player, and the chances of that happening are very slim, especially the NBA. There are only five starting spots and ten people on a roster and a certain number of teams. You've got to be the top, top, top, and when you put all your emphasis on that and a little bit on the education aspect, I think it's a little misleading. I think a lot of parents in the community push the athletics and push the sports more than they value the education behind it. I see that a lot. The second male teacher believed Principal Lewis did not do enough to help the community and students understand that academics was more important than athletics and demonstrated this every time she gave the athletic director, her husband, privileges no other staff member enjoyed such as leaving early or constantly needing classroom coverage to run errands.

While both male teachers spoke negatively about Principal Lewis’ influence on the school’s culture and climate, a female teacher did not share their opinions. She considered the school to be “a nice environment to work” because the school had “no gossip” and “everybody helps each other when [they] need it”. The female teacher said that, “We work together quite good. If I have a problem - I have had several family problems - this school really supported me. I don't have any complaints or [would] say, ‘Oh, no, this school is terrible to work at.’ No. It's a very good environment to work in.”

When Principal Lewis was asked about the conflicting views teachers had about her impact on the school’s culture and climate, she described both in terms of how students treat each other or others and the cleanliness of the school. Principal Lewis stated the
school had a “good culture” because “our students are polite” and “the school is clean”.
Principal Lewis believed that students took pride in their school, which was evident
because during lunch time trash “does not end up going everywhere” and when you
“walk into the media center or cafeteria 30 minutes after lunch, you don’t see food
everywhere” and “it is cleaned up”. Principal Lewis thought that one reason that students
kept the school clean was because she and the staff had taught the students how to “code
switch when they come here.” When asked to explain what she meant by “code switch,”
she replied:

We've tried really hard to teach them that this is a place [where] you act a certain
way, and sometimes when I have students that use profanity or say things that are
offensive, I talk to them about how when you're not here with your friends, there's
a certain way that you can talk. [This is] the same when I'm with my adult friends.
There's a certain way that I can talk, but when we're here, this is like our business,
so you have to treat everybody respectfully. You don't use profanity. You have to
act a certain way.

Principal Lewis believed that students needed to learn that certain behaviors and language
were inappropriate in a professional setting like a school. She addressed student’s
behavior and language in terms of the skills students needed to know in order to be
successful in a typical work environment later in life. Principal Lewis saw “code
switching” as, “…a skill that they're going to need to learn in life is that you have to act
the way the setting demands” and not act based on “how you feel at that moment.” She
commented that students did not feel disrespected by this discussion as evidenced by
them coming to school well before the time the school was open and staying well pass the end of the school day.

**Theme 5: Managing the Organization**

The fifth theme, Managing the Organization, examined how Principal Lewis ran the school on a daily basis based on participant information. Four subthemes emerged from this theme: Finances, Staffing, Instruction, and Vision and Mission.

**Finances**

The first subtheme Finances investigated where money came from to run School B, funding shortfalls and the actions Principal Lewis took to overcome funding issues. Since funding for public schools in North Carolina is based on property taxes and School B is located in a rural county that lacks businesses or industries, the tax base is small, which impacted the school’s funding.

As the only high school located in a rural town in North Carolina, School B was funded like a traditional high school based on enrollment. Students did not have to pay fees and athletics were funded by the county yearly as part of the school’s operating budget. Most funding for the school’s laptops, CTE program and several teacher positions came from multiple grants written by Principal Lewis. Her efforts to match funds to the school’s needs garnered accolades from all School B study participants. Principal Lewis detailed the process she took to secure the school’s grants:

I started four years ago when (the funding agency) came to our county to do the community assistance initiative grant, and various counties were eligible for $1M to go in the community, and so I was the only principal in my county that attended
all the meeting. [Afterwards] people in the community were eligible to write a grant to request that, and they had maybe ten [proposals] to choose from, and the community had to select a committee to review the grants. I was fortunate that I was elected to be on that committee, which was helpful. And then we had to take our grant proposals and present them to the foundation board, and they selected which ones would receive funding.

Principal Lewis’s personal initiative paid off for her school as she was one of four projects the foundation funded that year. Principal Lewis pointed out that all money had to be spent within a 12-month period, so she spent the money on renovating the school, hiring a teacher and securing equipment to start the school’s CTE program. Since each project the foundation funded had to be self-sustaining at the end of the grant cycle, Principal Lewis wrote a second grant to secure continuous funding for the CTE program through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Once the foundation saw how its money was spent, they encouraged Principal Lewis to apply for more funding, which she did during the foundation’s open grants period. The foundation’s second grant had recurring funds that paid for the school’s laptops, their maintenance and professional development so teachers would know how to effectively use them. The addition of the school’s laptops was welcome, especially since all college classes at the school are provided using distance education with their partner community college. Principal Lewis achieved another milestone when the grant was expanded recently to include the middle school. She explained, “I decided to expand it to the
middle school, because I knew that for us to really be able to continue to move forward at the high school, I needed better prepared students hitting my door.”

**Staffing**

The second subtheme Staffing referred to how School B was staffed and challenges the school faced because of staff shortages or turnover. One School B teacher commented that neither their school nor the neighboring middle school had assistant principals, but they had one last year. The teacher explained that the position “went away to pay for two teachers” and that now all the discipline “fell on Principal Lewis’ shoulders” while testing and scheduling “became the guidance counselor’s job”.

Principal Lewis believed that principals that worked at schools with more students had it easier than she did because those schools had numerous assistant principals and guidance counselors. She explained:

People that have 2,000 students, some of them in a lot of ways have it a lot easier than I do, because they have four and five guidance counselors, and they have four and five assistant principals, and the assistant principals either are in charge of a grade or are in charge of the alphabet, and they don't go to everything. Even schools a little bit bigger than me, when I go to ball games, sometimes I meet the principal and sometimes it's one assistant principal, and sometimes it's another assistant principal.

The lack of an assistant principal this school year had impacted Principal Lewis’ personal life and schedule. Principal Lewis said that being short-staffed was most evident during
game days because there were no other administrators available to help with game duty. She shared a story about a principal about having to attend a game at her school:

A guy came here the other week on a Tuesday and he's like, ‘I hit the jackpot because Friday was supposed to be my game and the Friday person wanted to switch with me so I get the Tuesday game, and my AP is doing the Friday game, so Friday I'm taking my wife out to dinner.’ I'm like, ‘Well, that's nice for you, because I get the Tuesday game, the Thursday game, and the Friday game because there's only me.’

Fortunately, Principal Lewis seemed to have a lighthearted attitude about taking on extra duties this year. While Principal Lewis knew she did not have to attend every game her school participated in, but she believed her “presence was really important” and “people would want to know where I am” especially since she was married to the school’s athletic director.

**Instruction**

The subtheme Instruction described the various programs, strategies and professional development Principal Lewis enacted to promote student achievement. School B did not have as many programs and professional development trainings as School A, but participants reported several interventions that helped promote student learning.

One class several students believed helped them was a college-level seminar class all freshmen were required to take upon arrival at the school. One student didn’t believe he needed the class since “I was really good at math” but did not mind because “I got a chance to serve as a peer tutor and help other students” that were not doing as well.
Students also reported that their high school teachers provided valuable support for their college classes especially since, “We don’t have our professors with us all the time to help explain things.”

When teachers were questioned about the added responsibility of helping students with both their high school and college classes, one teacher explained that he did not mind helping the students with their college classes. He commented:

I facilitate one young man in a physics class because I’m a science teacher. I give him opportunities to come talk to me about his labs or his assignments, and I keep an eye on him. I can't speak for everybody else, but if they need help with anything, that's why we're here. Your first year of college isn't that much different than your last couple years of high school, so we can still give them that support and familiarity with the people they know care about them. We support them almost in a family-like way as well as an academic way.

This teacher saw helping students with their college classes as a responsibility all teachers should embrace especially since students were already familiar with them.

School B had an advisor-advisee program. One teacher commented, “I get 10 to 12 kids as freshman, then I follow them throughout their entire four years of high school.” Another teacher expounded about the program:

I'm privy to their report cards, and all of my advisees, even though they're not kids that I teach, they're on my PowerSchool, so once again, I can look at every one of their report cards, every one of their grades, and I do. My kids are sophomores now, so I kind of have a handle on them, and I know the three or four that need a
little extra looking at. Then we become very familiar with their parents, because we're one on one with them at least two or three times a year.

Principal Karen Lewis explained that one reason she implemented the advisor-advisee program was because she wanted all students to have an advocate at the school. She replied:

When I was a middle school principal, I saw with the national middle school philosophy there has to be an adult in the building for every child. I've always believed that and carried that with me to the high school, knowing that for every kid here, when they get upset or something goes wrong, there's got to be somebody here that they can turn to. For some of them, that's occasionally, but for some of them it's every day. I've got teachers that have a kid that they tutor after school, because they know that kid needs a lot of extra help, and it may or may not be a student they teach.

Principal Lewis emphasized with her teachers that all students needed an advocate and someone that could speak up for them on academic or personal issues, which was there reason why she started the advisor-advisee program. She commented that she also served as an advisor for a student that “I just kind of fell into working with” and now the student comes to her office daily. That student now says to her, ‘It's not your office; it's our office’ and her desk is right there (pointing at a desk in a corner across from the principal’s desk).

Another intervention Principal Lewis used to promote student learning was staff development with a state consultant on math practices that could be taught across various
curriculum areas. Since many students at the school lack math skills and are testing well in math, Principal Lewis believed it was important to train teachers on the latest math interventions and strategies for raising student’s performance. She described the staff professional development on math:

We invited an expert in STEM and mathematics to come and do a presentation for our entire faculty and the middle school faculty on eight mathematical practices. Then, we talked about how we do literacy across the curriculum and reading is integrated across the curriculum, and that our reading scores were good, so we wanted to integrate math across the curriculum. Sometimes they look at me like I’m a little crazy, but I told them I wanted us to be a model for the state in doing this, and I wanted other people to want to emulate what we do in the future.

Principal Lewis set a goal that she wanted her school to serve as a model for integrating math across the curriculum and recently was recognized at the state level for those efforts. Principal Lewis explained that the first step in the program was to “ban negative math talk” and that it was no longer okay, “…for any teacher to say I’m not a math person or I’m not good at math because a teacher would never say I’m not an English person.” School B teachers now have monthly meetings to plan and share how math will be implemented across the curriculum and how all teachers can support math teachers build student’s foundational math knowledge.

**Vision and Mission**

The fourth subtheme, Vision and Mission, discussed what participants believed Principal Lewis’ vision and mission or purpose was for School B.
Again, School B participants had various responses when it came to discussing this topic.

School B parents and students believed that Principal Lewis was motivated by the students. One parent said, “She wants to see the students achieve, do well and move forward in life.” A female student shared, “I think she loves us like her kids so she wants to make us better.”

Although teachers agreed that Principal Lewis loved the students and wanted to see them do well, they believed her vision included having high expectations about her school’s performance including scoring an A on the state report card so she could show others that, “…one of the poorest counties in the state had one of the best schools in the state.” One teacher replied, “This is going to sound cheesy, but I think she is driven to provide the best education that she can for her students. She wants students to see other things outside of (the town) and know they can succeed anywhere.”

When Principal Lewis was asked about her vision and mission for the school, she explained that the students were her biggest motivation and the reason for any actions she took at the school. She explained:

I want our kids to be successful. I have always wanted the quality of the education that they get not be about where they were born or the community they live in. I've always wanted our kids to feel like -- and our parents to feel like -- their kids get a top quality education here that's comparable to any other school in North Carolina or in America, and not to feel like I was born in (the town), so my education is not going to be any good, because I go to this little tiny school in this little tiny place. I want them to feel like when they leave here that they're prepared to do whatever job
they want to do to and compete with anybody out there on equal footing because they feel prepared.

Principal Lewis’ vision and mission centered on student’s achieving and going anywhere in the world knowing they are prepared academically despite where they went to school or their socioeconomic status while growing up.

**Theme 6: Building Authentic Relationships Within and Outside the School**

The sixth and final theme, Relationships, described how Principal Lewis worked with stakeholders outside and inside the school to promote student learning.

**Inside the School**

The subtheme Inside the School referred to the relationships between Principal Lewis, teachers and students.

**Principal –Teacher Relationship**

Two male teachers offered differing views about the relationship between Principal Lewis and teachers at the school. One male teacher stated that “teachers don’t feel supported” and when it came to the athletic program, “…she gives athletes special treatment and that has everything to do with nepotism because her husband is the coach.” The male teacher continued, “I don’t hate the lady…I just wish she would tighten up in the discipline area and be a more assertive administrator. If she did that she’d be awesome.”

The other male teacher, however, offered a completely different view of Principal Lewis’ leadership. He believed she supported teachers and was available if teachers needed assistance. He shared a story about his relationship with the principal:
She doesn't call it an open door policy, but she does have one where if you have any issues or concerns, you just go right down and talk to her. Anything I've ever requested or asked about it's almost always been a yes or no because this is why. She does serve as a go between with us and the parents sometimes, too. I had one student earlier this year that was just causing all kinds of disruptions in my class, so I'd sent him out a couple times, wrote him up a couple more, and then I finally said, ‘Ms. [Lewis], he's starting to hinder my students' learning, and that can't happen.’

She told me, ‘Go set up a meeting with his mom, you and I and we'll meet and discuss it.’ So we met, we talked about it, and we put him in a different classroom, so I she always has my back. There was never once where I said, ‘Man she could have done more.’

Since relationships are a part of a school’s culture, the same disparity in discussions about how Principal Lewis supported teachers appeared in the current theme. While one teacher believed she had a horrible relationship with teachers, another disputed this portrayal.

At the time of the study, School B had received a C on the state report card grade. Principal Lewis, however, said she told teachers they should be proud of their student’s growth, especially considering the group of students they worked with daily. She provided a summary of the words she said to teachers during the previous day’s faculty meeting to help boost their confidence:

I told the teachers that they should be really proud because most of the schools that outperformed us had much different demographics. Our demographics are very high
poverty and very low college-going population, and to have the graduation rate and the overall scores that they have, they should be proud of that, and I wanted them to be knowledgeable about what that report card embodied. I also told them that when they got asked questions about it that they could articulate ‘we did really well here, here, and here. We're struggling a little bit here, but this is what we're doing about it.’

Principal Lewis stated that the reason she gave teachers a pep talk was because she had “walked the walk” of being a teacher and knew how it felt to work hard with a challenging group of students, but an outside group “tell you you’re not doing enough – you failed” but you knew that was not true because you could see their growth. She said that she had a former professor’s quote about principals and teachers represented how she felt about the principal-teacher relationship. She said:

I had a professor who said to me, that you should always reflect praise and absorb criticism as a principal. That if something is wrong, it's on me. It's my fault, and if something's right, it's because you guys are doing such a great job. So that any praise that your school gets, you immediately reflect to the teachers, ‘This is what you're doing. You're awesome.’ If anything's wrong, ‘It's my fault. I'm the principal. It's my job.’ He said that if you do that that you develop such credibility with your staff because I'm not blaming them for the wrong things that happen. I accept accountability for anything wrong on me, but anything good happens, I give credit to the teachers.
**Principal – Student Relationship**

School B participants offered varied thoughts about the quality of the principal-student relationship at the school. The liaison and two teachers believed that the relationship was too friendly at times while another teacher thought Principal Lewis did a good job supporting the students and they respected her. One male teacher stated:

It's good, but it's almost too good. It's almost too much nurturing. There's almost too much love there and not enough authority in her administration. Let's say that. The kids -- She's a pushover to these kids, and that's okay. It's good for them to feel really, really loved and welcome, but on the other hand, there's boundaries and there's a big inconsistency with that.

Another male teacher and the early college liaison agreed that even though students respected the principal the relationship was problematic at times. The second male teacher said, “…she tries to help out too much when she should be, ‘You’re a young adult; let’s do this.’ She has a big heart and maybe sometimes that gets in her way.”

School B students described Principal Lewis as “caring,” “energetic,” and “fashionable.” A female student that was pregnant at the time of the study said that Principal Lewis was caring because checked on her daily to “make sure I’m okay” and continued to encourage her to remain in and complete the college classes she was enrolled in. One student reported that the only reason they were allowed to wear hoodies at school was because Principal Lewis advocated at the county level to change the district’s ban on the clothing item, which had caused numerous unnecessary referrals and write-ups. The student said, “She also cares about our personal experiences because the
only reason why I'm wearing this (the hoodie) is because of her. She literally called for the Board of Education to allow us to be more open with clothing, because if not, we wouldn't be able to wear these things.”

Students believed Principal Lewis was energetic because, “…she’s always happy and bouncing around,” and fashionable because, ‘she’s always wearing cool earrings and clothes.’

Students admitted that Principal Lewis advocated for them with teachers and tried to get teachers to not punish students as harshly. One student stated:

She's willing to compromise with you as well, so if you and a teacher have a fallout, she's willing to listen to both sides and see whether the student was incorrect in what they may have done, or whether the teacher was a little too harsh on the student, because maybe the student perceived it in a different way. She also targets certain students that just want to slack off and pulls them in to talk to them and make deals with them, like’ I'll do this if you do that.’

Overall School B students said they could not imagine the school without Principal Lewis or her husband and any person that replaced her would “need to be someone like her – her copy”.

**Teacher – Student Relationship**

School B students and teachers believed that the overall relationship between the two groups was good, especially since the school was so small. One student commented, “…some teachers are more dedicated than others, and we can see that, but for the most part they stay on us to get our work done and are helpful.”
Another student stated that a Biology teacher at the school was her favorite because he was highly energetic and figured out unique ways to hold their attention. She shared the following story:

He really acts out things, and he jumps on the table and one time we had to learn about electrons, and he proceeded to jump on a table, because electrons get excited during this process or whatever and was like, ‘…get all excited like the electrons.’

Oh, my God, he was funny, but it helped me remember what he was talking about.

Since School B students take classes at a distance from the partner college, many teachers at the school help them with their college classes and understand when students arrive late to class because a college test might have lasted beyond the college class time. A male student said, “If you have to finish a test and you're a couple minutes late for class you don't get counted late, because you were doing a test in your college class and they understand that.”

One male teacher believed that the teacher-student relationship was “tight” and that, “Every teacher knows every student and every student knows every teacher because we only have 150 students.” He said, “…much to the chagrin of the kids we keep an eye on them like they’re our own. We follow them from class to class and look at their grades in all their classes and talk to them about grades even if they aren’t on our roster.”

School B also utilized an advisor-advisee program that started when students were freshmen, which seemed to have a positive impact on the teacher-student relationship.
Outside the School

This subtheme explored the relationships between and among Principal Lewis, other school members, the partner college, the parents and the community.

School – Partner College Relationship

The liaison reported that she came to the school once a week and taught a class that was broadcast from the high school back to students at the partner college. She admitted that in the past students did not approach her for assistance with college-related issues possibly because she was not on campus daily. Another reason they did not interact with her because most students did not know her and would go to the school’s guidance counselor instead. She said, “They’re getting more used to me, but it’s taken awhile because this is a small town and they’ve grown up together. They know these students for a little while, and here I come in and they don't know me. I’m from the area, though, so that did help a little.”

The liaison believed that the relationship between School B and their partner college was so good until college professors volunteered to drive 90 minutes once or twice a month to teach classes on the campus that normally would be broadcast at a distance to the high school students. The liaison explained:

We've had people that do the blackboard training. We've had them come over, and the more we can do that, the more we can have people come from there over here, it's good. We've had instructors come, because the students take broadcast classes, so we had the public speaking and the psychology instructor come this semester and sat in there and did their class like I do face-to-face.
The one complaint the liaison had about the relationship between the school and the college was their different perspectives on student accountability:

Sometimes, I have to remind them I’m coming from the college and you can't make excuses for them. We have to hold them accountable. I'm still working on that one. (Laughs) We have to hold them accountable. Yes, we can give them chances, but there's only so much we can do.

School B students said that even though they received their college classes at a distance, “…we can still email our professors and ask questions or have tutoring using the webcams.” One teacher and Principal Lewis shared that there were problems between the school and the partner college was at the beginning when the early college program started. Principal Lewis explained:

The relationship was strained when we first started the program because a vice president at the college did not want us to have the program and thought that it would inconvenience the college too much. He blocked a lot of our efforts during the first two or three years, which is why we didn’t have a lot of students at the beginning. They also would not give us the classes we needed and did not encourage professors to work with us to provide the classes at a distance.

Principal Lewis said the relationship improved greatly after the vice president left and now everyone works in unison to make sure the partnership works and the school had what it needed for the early college program.
School – Parent Relationship

Both School B parents work for the school and believed that Principal Lewis did a great job communicating with parents about any issues or concerns. Both parents thought that Principal Lewis, “…don’t get paid enough for all she does” and saw that she worked 12 to 16 hours a day. One parent said, “She ain't got nobody to help her. She's straight getting it done right by herself most of the time, so that's pretty great in my book.”

On the other hand, Principal Lewis believed that the relationship between the school and parents could be stronger, especially when it came to pushing and having high expectations for the students. She commented:

Parent involvement at the high school level is tough. When they’re in elementary school parents come to the plays and do fundraisers, but as they get older most parents stop. Only the parents that think they have an expertise to contribute are involved here. Those also usually are the parents that push their kids, ‘I expect your personal best. No, you can't drop that college class. It's not too hard for you to get in there and stick it out.’ But we still struggle with sometimes parents who say, ‘The class is too hard, my child wants to drop it, why do they need to take that class?’ I say to parents at the beginning of the year, ‘Don't take anything less than an 85. You shouldn't -- 70 is not the bar. 85 should be the bar’ and I'm really worried next year they're going to think it's 60 because of the new law in North Carolina that we're going to a 10 point scale.
School B teachers agreed with Principal Lewis that parents did not have high expectations, which they thought was a direct reflection of the town’s rural setting and lower-income families. One teacher stated:

I think that the lack of education in families is a key factor in this lack of motivation for students to be better students or to be better professionals because they don't have that motivation. They see their parents working in fast food places 30 minutes away or cleaning houses or they see parents not working at all, so I think that’s mainly the values they receive from their family and it's something that is very hard to get rid of and out the student’s mind.

Despite the lack of parent support, Principal Lewis and teachers hoped that the early college program would change how families viewed education as they watched their children gain a free college education and hopefully decide to further their education after high school.

**School – Community Relationship**

Principal Lewis believed that the school was perceived positively in the community, especially since the school was marketed as a place to earn college credit for free. Most people in the community barely have a high school diploma and most residents live at or below the poverty line, so any program that will help students gain more education that will hopefully lead to better paying jobs was welcome in the community. Principal Lewis commented:

We have made a lot of presentations to the area civic organizations. Last spring a teacher and I did a presentation to the Chamber of Commerce where we told them
about what we were doing, about our one to one laptop initiative, how that would provide more literate students for businesses, for employees, and asked them what kinds of things they wanted from our students. We’ve also got a CTE advisory council that attends semi-annual meetings that has business leaders that come and look at what's going on in our school. We've also done an outreach project for the community.

Principal Lewis said that the last way she involved the community was through soliciting donations from the few businesses that were in the county for the school’s graduation project.

**Summary of Principal Karen Lewis’ Leadership and the Six Themes**

Chapter 5 examined the practices and actions Principal Lewis takes to promote the success of her students. Theme one revealed that Principal Lewis believed she was living in her father’s shadow since he was a highly successful principal at a rural school in North Carolina just like her now. Despite all the successes Principal Lewis has enjoyed at the school, she still believed she would never live up to her father’s legacy. This might explain why she works countless hours to make sure students have every opportunity she can provide for them to be successful.

The first way she does this is by providing open, equitable access to the early college program. Students that want to participate do not have to complete an application or go through a strenuous admissions process. Even if students do not pass the placement exam to take college classes, she still makes sure students can take college classes that are less reading or writing intensive so they leave the high school with as many college credits as
possible. This shows that she is dedicated to the true mission of the early college high school initiative, which is to increase access to and opportunities to participate in high education for students that have traditionally been underserved and underrepresented.

Principal Lewis defines her school’s success not based on standardized test scores or state report card grades. While she would like to have high test scores and an A on the state report card, she believes that student growth and an increased number of students choosing to enter the early college program or stay for a fifth year are better measures of her school’s success.

When it comes to managing the school, one of Principal Lewis’ biggest challenges is balancing teacher’s expectations on student discipline and school rules with making sure students are treated equitably and view school as a supportive, caring environment. Principal Lewis wants students to have advocates in the building, so she started an advisor-advisee program. While it is true that she places student needs at the center of her decisions or actions she takes in the school, this has not had a completely negative effect on her relationships within and outside the school. Most participants reported that they respect the sacrifices Principal Lewis makes for the students and the community and could not imagine what the school would be like if she were not the principal. Even though Principal Lewis does not believe she measures up to her father’s successes, she will be remembered as a principal that gave her all for her students.
Principal Karen Lewis’ Leadership and the Conceptual Framework

Examining Principal Lewis’ leadership in relation to the conceptual framework provided a picture of her actions and practices promoting the goals and purpose of early college high schools. Figure 5.1 shows that she valued access, innovation and opportunities for all students over test scores and achievement.

Figure 5.1

Principal Karen Lewis’ Leadership based on the Conceptual Framework

Note: Principal Lewis is an example of a democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leader that comes up with innovative solutions to provide access and opportunities for students to gain the knowledge they will need to be successful. She does not allow the school’s rural, impoverished location dictate the school’s or student’s success.
Principal Lewis demonstrated characteristics and behaviors of a democratic leader when she sought to hear all sides of issues between students and teachers before making a decision. Her “open door policy” encouraged teachers, staff and students to be participatory, which helped everyone, see their voices included in decision-making processes (Rusch, 1995). Although one teacher believed his concerns were ignored and not addressed satisfactorily, most teachers believed Principal Lewis made just decisions.

Principal Lewis showed she was an advocate for students both within and outside the school. For example, she spoke on behalf of students at the district-level in relation to the hoodies students wanted to wear. When teachers came to her with discipline concerns, she did not automatically side with teachers and instead tried to hear both sides of the problem before making a decision. Her approach to discipline frustrated teachers that were used to principals emphasizing compliance over democratic practices (Conley, 1991), but her approach helped students know she was on their side and had their best interests at heart.

Principal Lewis demonstrated socially just leadership through coming up with creative solutions to overcome funding and programming deficits at her rural school. She was responsible for bringing the early college program to the high school and for consistently researching and writing grants for materials and programs to help further student learning (Freire, 1970). Principal Lewis was determined that her students would receive an education equal to every other student in the state and that the school’s location would not dictate student’s success or future (Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Larson & Ovando, 2001). Students considered her to be caring, respectful and emphatic.
especially because she worked to make sure they were not marginalized and promoted inclusion for *all* within her school.

Finally, Principal Lewis possessed many qualities of a culturally responsive leader. She believed that the early college program would help prepare students to leave the town’s rural area and become a force for change in the world. Principal Lewis also emphasized high expectations for students, an ethic of care and commitment to the community where she raised her own children from childhood to the adults they are today. Even though she did not come from the same cultural or economic background as many of her students, she still valued their success and challenged deficit thinking among teachers about student’s current abilities and future.

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter 5 presented the second case in the study, Principal Karen Lewis. Six themes emerged from the data that showed that she valued access, innovation and opportunity over test scores and state report card grades. Like Principal Robinson, Principal Lewis set high standards for her students including the goal that all students achieve a diploma and 2-year degree. Principal Lewis, however, set reasonable goals when she encouraged students to stay for a fifth year to earn a college degree instead of pushing them to finish in four years. Principal Lewis put students at the center of all her actions and practices, which at time caused conflict between her and some teachers. Despite these conflicts, all participants said that the school was better under her leadership, especially with the grants, programs and professional development she has brought to the school.
When examining Principal Lewis’ leadership in relation to the conceptual framework, she demonstrated being a democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leader. When she spoke with students about code-switching, she did not do this because she sought to change who they were or assimilate them. Since she considers the students to be like her own children she spoke with them like a mother correcting her child. She explained to students that in certain environments some behaviors or language might be viewed as inappropriate and they needed to understand this before going into the workforce. Finally, she served as an advocate for students inside and outside the school and made sure her teachers did the same through the advisor-advisee program. Overall, the six themes coupled with the conceptual framework paint a picture of a principal that values access, innovation and opportunity over test scores and state or federal measures of success.
Chapter 6 included findings from the data analysis process for School C Principal James Washington. Data was collected from Principal Washington and participants to create themes that described his leadership. The first section offered details about the research context for School C. The second section provided an introduction to School C’s study participants. The third section presented the findings on Principal Washington’s leadership arranged by overarching themes and subthemes. The fourth section provided a summary of Principal Washington’s leadership based on the themes. The fifth and final section provided findings on Principal Washington’s leadership based on the conceptual framework. A summary of case three rounded out the chapter at the end.

Research Context

School C is located on a community college campus in a North Carolina town with approximately 15,000 residents. The demographics of the city are 64% Black, 27% White, 6% Latino and 1% Asian and 2% multiracial. The median family income of the city’s residents is $26,000 and 36% of the city’s population lives below the poverty level. While many of the city’s residents have a high school diploma (74%) approximately 15% have a bachelor’s degree or higher.

The county where School C was located has a history of high dropout rates and an unstable economic base. The county used to be a former textile and agricultural center and was once able to accommodate uneducated and unskilled workers in large numbers.
After numerous plant closings and agricultural consolidations over the last twenty years, the county ranked in the top ten on the state's unemployment list.

School C serves approximately 200 students. The demographics of the school are 56% Black, 30% White, 12% Latino/a and 3% multiracial. The gender breakdown of the school was 57% female and 43% male and free or reduced lunch rate exceeds 60%. Approximately 90% of School C students are classified as first generation students.

Study Participants

**Principal James Washington.** Principal Washington, who was in his early 60s, has been in Education for the past 40 years ever since he graduated with an undergraduate degree in Music. Principal Washington started his career in Education as a Band Director and has also served as a school counselor working with students that were classified as behavioral-emotionally handicapped. Principal Washington holds a master’s and educational specialist degree in School Administration from a local university. Principal Washington has served as principal since its inception eight years ago and was responsible for helping secure the grant that started the school. The only job Principal Washington has held outside of Education was business owner when he and his cousin opened a sandwich shop in Arkansas back in the 1980s. The shop was open for four years before it closed and Washington returned to work in Education afterward.

**Teachers.** Five teachers with one to seven years of experience working at the school participated in the focus group. The focus group included one White woman, one Latina woman and three White men. All the teachers that were interviewed ranged in age from the late 30s to late 50s.
**Students.** The student focus group included five students that were 18 or 19 years old and classified as fifth year students at the school enrolled only in college classes. Three of the five students were first generation students. The demographics of the student focus group were four females and one male. The student focus group was diverse with one Latina student, one White student and three Black students.

**Parents.** The parent focus group included one White male, one Black male and two Black females. All the parents were in their 40s or 50s. Two female parents took classes at the partner community college and one parent served as a guard at the local prison while the fourth parent was retired. Two parents classified their child as first generation students.

**Liaison.** The liaison had worked at the school for the past seven years and was responsible for working with Principal Washington to write the grant that started the school. Once the school opened, the liaison served as a Math teacher before assuming her current job four years ago. The liaison, who is Black, was in her early 40’s at the time of the study. Table 6.1 provides a summary of School C’s participants.

Table 6.1

*School C Participants*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
<th>Yrs at School</th>
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<th>Yrs current White</th>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>Students</td>
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PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Findings about the actions and practices Principal James Washington took to promote student success point to a principal that has worked many years in Education with students of color, lower-income students and students with disabilities. Principal Washington lived and worked during segregation in the Deep South and has taken numerous risks to provide equitable opportunities for his students and others in the community. His desire to see all students be successful and obtain a first-rate education is what led him to help write the grant that started School C.

Despite limited district support and low student retention rates for ninth and tenth grade students, and high teacher turnover during the programs first four years, the school’s success includes numerous graduates leaving the school with a diploma and 2-year degree. The school can also boast having some of the highest achieving Black males in the state. Numerous participants reported that if it were not for Principal Washington’s leadership, then the school would not be so successful or in existence. Findings on Principal Washington’s leadership are divided into six themes based on participant’s answers and researcher field notes.

**Theme 1: Leadership that Combats Racism and Educational Inequality**

The first theme that emerged from the data referred to the prior and current roles Principal Washington assumed both inside and outside the school and how those multiple roles impacted her leadership. This theme also examined Principal Washington’s personal, educational and professional background and what impact his background had on his current leadership.
Principal Washington considered his family to be “below low income” growing up in Arkansas. His father was in the military and his mother worked at a factory, but after his parents divorced his father left and never maintained contact with the family. Principal Washington admitted that he had more “compassion and empathy” for children that did not have fathers because of his situation growing up. He said that he could also relate to his students because he didn’t know what he wanted to be when he was growing up. He explained:

Nobody from our family had ever gone to college. I remember my counselor coming to me somewhere around the last week or two of high school and saying, ‘You've got to make a decision on what you're going to do. If you're going to college, I need to know which one.’

Principal Washington said he had spoken with the counselor in the past about going to college because he was really good at music and was one of the top horn players in the state. He even had scholarship offers from three different colleges for music and really wanted to go to school and major in music, but his family discouraged him. He shared the following story about his family’s expectations for his education:

I had family members saying, ‘No, you're smart in math. You ought to go into engineering or some kind of thing like that.’ I could have gone into engineering, but I would have had to have paid for it myself, so finally I just said to him (the counselor), ‘Well, just put me down for music at this school, because it's the best school for music in the state’ and that's what I did. That's how I ended up getting on that road. When I graduated I said, ‘I'm never going to deal with education again
because I couldn't stand teachers, and school, and all the authoritarian part of it -- I didn't like it'.

Principal Washington did not start out liking the Education field, so after graduating with a Music degree, he and his cousin opened a restaurant in Arkansas. He spent four years running the restaurant with his cousin, but grew tired of the business because it consumed all his time and was no longer fun. He decided to return to Education working as a band teacher in a poor, rural town in the South.

Professionally, his first teaching experience over forty years ago in that town had a great impact on his desire to work with his current students. He commented:

It was an interesting place. I'd never been to a place like it since. It was 80% Black. I would take kids home, and I remember one time taking this kid home, and he goes, ‘That's where we get our water from.’ It was a community well and I had to go down a dirt road about half a mile to get to his house, and he said, ‘You just carry it.’ They didn't have a car and they carried their water from the community well.

Principal Washington’s first teaching job was in one of the most impoverished areas of the South where people still used outhouses and most roads were not paved. Working in that environment helped him see that his lower class upbringing was still not as bad as the homes and communities his students came from. Principal Washington said that since the town was segregated during this time period, even trips to the doctor’s office proved to be memorable. He shared the following story:

I went to the doctor's office and saw a parent that I started talking to, and a nurse kept giving me evil looks. I was kind of like what's going on? Then finally one of the
parents I was talking with said, ‘[Do] you know you're in the wrong place?’ I said, ‘what?’ They said, ‘This is the colored side.’ I said, ‘What are you talking about the colored side? This is the middle ’70s.’ (Laughs) They said, ‘The Whites go over there.’ I went, ‘Okay.’

Principal Washington seemed initially oblivious to the racism that surrounded him perhaps because he was White and segregation’s rules did not apply to him. That experience, however, raised his awareness about the inequality in the town and he vowed to do all he could to undo the racist, segregated practices that existed throughout the town including at the school where he worked. Principal Washington shared a story about combatting segregation when he went to his school’s band to an away game near the school. He commented:

It was a strange place. When we went to go to a ball game the football field wasn't next to our school. We had to take buses over there and they would have four buses. There were only like 80 kids, so I asked, ‘Why do you need four buses?’ I looked and saw that they had the Black males on one, the Black females on another, the White males, and the White females. I'm going like, ‘No, we ain't doing that,’ so I put 9th and 10th grade [students] on one and 11th and 12th [grade] on the other and said, ‘Let's go.’ The kids told me, ‘You couldn't do it.’ I said, ‘Bull crap. Get on the two buses.’ The two bus drivers are going like, ‘Well, what are we going to do?’ I said, ‘You can come with us, I don't care. I ain't paying you. The school is paying you. I don't care but we ain't doing this four bus thing.’
Principal Washington said that his decision to integrate the buses infuriated the district superintendent, who requested to have a meeting with him the next day. When he arrived to the meeting he said, “The superintendent was mad as crap. He yelled at me [the whole] the time. He didn't like me and I didn't like him and we knew. He fired me after I did that.

Principal Washington said that he still does not regret the decisions he made that day because the practice of segregating students by race and gender was wrong and needed to stop. After he was fired Principal Washington decided to continue working in Education, but in a different capacity. He realized that he enjoyed working with students more than he did teaching them, so he returned to school and earned a master’s in counseling degree.

Principal Washington commented that working as a school counselor gave him invaluable experience working with students in the Special Education program. His experiences working with Special Education students informed his leadership practices when he became an assistant principal then School C’s principal in his current school district.

Finally, Principal Washington’s early career experiences with people’s racist behavior left him with memories that inform his current practices and the decision to work with county officials to start the early college high school. He saw the early college high school as a way to help students of color have better educational outcomes in an environment where they would not experience daily hatred and inequality.
Theme 2: Streamlined application process provides open, equitable access to students that want to attend

The second theme showed that even though Principal Washington implemented an application process at School C, the process did not limit access to any student that wanted to attend the school. Principal Washington’s decision to streamline the application and remove the requirement for parents to come talk with him before their child is admitted shows that he wanted to make admission to the school as open and equitable as possible. The second theme was supported by three subthemes: Target Student Population, Streamlined Application Process, and Special Education and ESL Students.

Target Student Population

The subtheme Target Student Population examined whether School C served the population early college high schools were designed to help. School C has had few problems admitting the target student population. School C’s teachers reported that their school has, “95% free and reduced lunch” and that “The vast majority of our kids come from households where there was no parents have gone to college.” Teachers also reported that, “A lot of our kids have had moments with law enforcement. It's the same problems that you hear about all the time at any urban school, it's just that we happen to be in a slightly more rural setting.” Teachers believed that one reason so many of their students had problems with law enforcement was because students lack stable housing situations and, “A lot of our students sometimes bounce around, bounce in and out of the district or from one relative to another relative, so that is also a problem. Many kids say
well, ‘I wasn't home last night. I didn't get a chance to get to the homework,’ so that's a problem.

Like School C teachers, School C Principal James Washington acknowledged that his school had many first generation students especially since, “Most of our parents are didn't graduate high school. Half of them didn't graduate high school, so they [certainly] didn't graduate college.” Principal Washington said that even though the high school diploma rate in the county was 74%, many parents of color do not have their diploma or a college degree, which is why the early college high school was so crucial for the area.

Application Process

Principal Washington reported that his school does use an application process, but that over the years the process has been simplified so more students would apply and be admitted. The liaison explained the process School C used:

They have to apply and fill out the application. There's a written part to it, even though there's no value to that - we just want to see what they have to say. We don't look at grades, but they have to have two or three recommendations from their [middle school] teachers. Whatever their recommendations are, if a teacher says do not recommend then we don't take them.

Even though students are required to apply for admission to School C, the process only involves completing an application and a writing sample. What was surprising was that letter or number grades and behavior do not factor into admission decisions. The most important part of the application process are middle school teacher recommendations because if those teachers do not believe students will not do well at the
school or lack the ability to rise to the school’s rigorous work standards, then those students are rejected. The liaison explained that the teacher recommendation form consisted of a checklist on a Likert scale from 1 being poor to 10 being the best in relation to the student’s communication skills, grades and attendance. The school’s goal for admission was 60 to 70 students in the freshmen class every year.

Principal Washington added that once all applications were submitted to the school, then the selection committee used a lottery system to determine who would attend the school, however, just about every student that applied to the school was accepted because he wanted students to have an opportunity to prove they could rise to the school’s high expectations. Once students are admitted, Principal Washington has a mandatory meeting with students and their parents. He described what happens at those meetings:

One thing they [the parents] do is sign a contract saying they will make sure [to provide] a place where their child can study, and they make sure that [students] have time to study at least two hours a night, because we told them it'd probably going to be around two hours a night of studying.

Principal Washington said that this first meeting was crucial because it provided him and the staff an opportunity to let parents and students know what was expected of everyone. Principal Washington stated that the application process he used was the one all early college high schools should use because it increased access and provided more equitable opportunities for the students the schools were designed for. He commented, however, that he knew principals that used more rigorous admissions procedures and justified their decisions because they were admitting more first generation students, but not as many
lower-income or students of color. Principal Washington explained why he did not support their practices:

My mission here is to give the kid who doesn't have that opportunity. We do have some that did make all A’s or they did have perfect attendance, very few, but we do have some. You can't have the whole school just of all C students because that wouldn't be good. That's like tracking. You've got to have the high end and low end all together to make things work, but the main mission is to give those children an opportunity.

Principal Washington believed that it was his mission to make sure first generation, lower income and students of color had the opportunity to attend the school, but acknowledged that the best schools were those that struck a balance between admitting all high-performing or all low-performing students.

Principal Washington admitted that application at his school used to be more stringent when the school first started seven years ago, but over time he discovered that the process was not practical. One reason was because of the amount of time it took to meet with individual students and parents prior to admission. He explained:

The process took from the middle of April to the end of May to get all those kids in, and the parents, and talk. It was really time consuming. We've amended the application, too. When we started our application was four pages long, but we realized the kids we want to get are not going to fill out four pages. So, we amended it to where the front side is the parent side and the back side is the kid’s side. Now it's simple and easy.
Instead of continuing a practice that restricted access to his school, Principal Washington simplified the application to attract students and families that might have seen the longer application as a deterrent. The effort to streamline the application appeared to work since School C appear to be admitting the target student population when comparing the school’s demographics to the demographics in other high schools throughout the district.

**Special Education and ESL students**

One finding subtheme that arose from the study related to how School C accommodated the Special Education and ESL students they admitted, especially since Principal Washington has a background working with these students. According to one parent, Principal Washington and staff did not do a good job providing accommodations for one of his children. He expounded:

They wouldn't accommodate her. She had an IEP, but they wouldn't follow it. We struggled with the teachers, but now she is being homeschooled by my wife and is a senior who’ll graduate in May. This was a nightmare that started in middle school when we moved here and it never got better. That is the only ill feelings that I have toward the school.

Despite this parent’s frustration, he still supported the early college program and was, “very thankful that [his other daughter] is now the program.”

While the researcher was collecting data, Principal Washington was observed providing accommodations for an autistic student that attends the school. The student came to Principal Washington’s office to eat lunch, but was sent to a nearby classroom to eat privately. Principal Washington explained, “He's an autistic kid that we have and a lot
of times during lunch he'll come and sit here because he feels safe in here, and so I give him -- Usually I'm doing lunch duty right now, so I give up my office.” This incident showed that Principal Washington was willing to accommodate students with special needs even if it meant giving up his office space to a student.

**Theme 3: Success defined by Number of Students that Stay and Successfully Complete the Program not State Grade Reports or Standardized Test Scores**

The third theme described the academic achievements or milestones the school has achieved under Principal Washington’s leadership. Since Principal Washington worked with other stakeholders to write the grant that started School C, he can solely take credit for the successes or failures that have occurred over the past eight years. The third theme was supported by four subthemes: Retention Rate, Standardized Tests, Graduation Rates/Degrees Earned and “The 5th year”.

**Retention Rate**

An examination of School C’s retention rates depicts a mixed picture of success. Two years ago, 70 students started their freshmen year at the school, but because of students dropping out or returning to their base school, only 45 students made it to their senior year and graduated. Last year another 70 students started their freshmen year, but only 33 graduated from the school. Participants offered insight into the various reasons for the retention rates at the school.

Even though students that come to School C could return to their base high school to play sports, School C students reported that many of their friends chose not to come to the early college because they could not play sports. Even when their friends came to the
early college, students reported that retaining the students all four years was difficult because many of their friends were more interested in athletic opportunities than academics. One student explained that, “If you [want] a scholarship, [then] you have to leave your 11th grade year.”

Students at early college high schools that return to their base school are not eligible for college athletic scholarships unless they play at the base high school during their senior year. Another student explained that even if students at the early college completed their senior year and returned to their base school for a fifth year they still would not be able to play sports because, “A lot of students lose their athletic eligibility in the 5th year, that takes away the opportunity for the scholarship, because they won't be able to play that year, so they have to leave so they can finish out their playing time at their base school so they can get their scholarship.”

When these concerns were addressed with the liaison, the liaison pointed out that students leave the school on their own and not because they were not performing up to expectations. She elaborated on the school’s retention rates:

I tell people, very rarely have we sent people back to home school… if they haven't passed the placement test by the end of their second year, then they have to go back to their home school. That's only happened in my years of being here maybe five students. Usually at some point get to the point where they score high enough and they can at least the developmental classes. If they get to the point where they take the highest developmental class, then they can stay, but if they never get to that point
then we can't offer them enough college classes for them to get a degree, so then they have to go.

The practice of allowing students to take developmental classes that build their skills before taking regular college classes demonstrated that Principal Washington and staff were doing all they could retain students that wanted to stay. The liaison explained that the school tutors students on passing the placement test and even included a practice test on their school website. Other students left School C because, “…they're not progressing academically; they're not passing the classes whether it's college or high school or a combination.” A third factor as it related to retention was the number of credits a student had to have to be classified as a sophomore or junior. The liaison elaborated on this point:

Obviously in their freshman year they have 6 credits to be a sophomore, 13 credits to be a junior, so after that second year if they don't have 13 credits, that's another reason why they have to leave, because there's no if you stay here, if you're not going to leave moving forward, because it's only going to get harder, so then -- And again, that's been a low number, too. It's probably that same handful. I would say maybe two handfuls of those that just had to leave because of their choices. Either they moved or they thought it was too hard.

According to the liaison, a fourth factor that impacted retention at School C was students that desired to graduate high school in four instead of five years. Many students that leave the early college after four years say, “All my friends are getting ready to graduate. I want to graduate with my class.” The liaison and principal explain to students, “This is your class. The ones at the other high schools; they're not your class anymore. Your class
is [here] now.” Despite those explanations, some students that come to the early college do not understand that the graduating class at their base school has nothing to do with the graduating class at School C. The liaison concluded that helping students understand this has been a difficult sell to students.

Principal Washington reported that he and the liaison were addressing retention issues by making sure potential students and parents understood the school’s increased rigor and higher expectations. Despite those discussions, Principal Washington admitted that he had students that he was currently concerned about. He explained:

If they don't make it during the 9th grade year, [then] they don't make it. The first semester we had about eight that I'm worried about, and I'm waiting until next week we have the six weeks, and I'm going to wait and see what those grades are, see if they're making any difference. If not, we're calling parents and explaining that if they continue doing this, they're not going to make it here. Are they studying at home? I know they're not.

Principal Washington said that he believed the school’s student support systems were adequate, but potential students and parents had to understand that they needed to do their part in promoting the student’s success at the school. Principal Washington elaborated:

It's going to be harder than what they did at their other schools, and it is. It's just harder. We're preparing them -- One, we're making up for lost ground, because they're not ready, and so we're going to be pushing them hard, and the parents -- And I had one parent this last summer, she goes well, ‘I know this is not for my kid then.
you all need to put somebody else in his spot.’ I said, ‘Well, I appreciate the honesty.’

Principal Washington said that despite the school’s retention issues, he was pleased with students that took advantage of all the opportunities the school provided. He also was pleased with the success of students that remained at the school over a four or five year period and completed a diploma and 2-year degree.

**Standardized Tests**

The subtheme Standardized Tests referred to School C’s performance on state and national standardized tests based on participant narratives and data from newspapers, state report cards and state accountability databases. At the time of the study, School C’s SAT average was 150-200 points below the national average, but the principal was pleased with his school’s participation rate of 100% of seniors taking the test. School C also achieved a milestone when Principal Washington wrote a grant three years ago so students could receive laptops. Finally, Principal Washington reported that his school’s Black male performance on state tests exceeded state and county averages. He commented:

> Our Black males beat the crap out of everybody else on some EOCs last year. You go to any school out here. Black males could be the lowest. At our school they were the highest and it's not because we’ve got high achieving Black males, it's just [that] they are treated with respect. They're treated like everybody else. They're not looked at as the kid who causes the problems all the time.
Despite his success with Black males at the school, School C still received a “C” rating on the state report card and did not meet or exceed growth. Principal Washington admitted that he and the staff had a great deal of work ahead of them but he believed the following:

We're having more success with kids passing the [college] classes. Sometimes there’s a lot of freedom here, and kids don't know how to handle it sometimes. More and more kids are figuring out how to handle that quicker than we did when we first started. That's a good thing, too. We were having kids dropping classes. They were flunking classes and stuff. Now we do not have those issues as much.

Instead of focusing on the negative Principal Washington chose to remain optimistic about his student’s performance and the school’s future.

**Graduation Rates/Degrees Earned**

The subtheme Graduation Rates/Degrees Earned explored School C’s high school graduation rate if the school was achieving one of the goals of early college high schools, which is to increase the number of students graduating with a diploma. This subtheme also looked at the number of college credits and 2-year degrees students earned upon graduation. This information is important because another goal of early college high schools is to increase students’ college readiness and one factor that aids with this goal is making sure students graduate from high school with transferable college credits or a 2-year degree if possible.
According to the liaison, the graduation rate and degrees earned at the school has produced a mixed picture. The school’s first graduating class in 2013 had 45 students earn a high school diploma. The school’s first graduating class also saw 20 students earn a 2-year degree and one student earn two 2-year degrees. Last year’s graduating class had only 27 graduates because many students returned to their base school before the senior year or did not finish in four or five years. Of those 27 graduates last year, seven earned both a high school diploma and a 2-year degree. This year, the liaison reported that 37 students should graduate from the school with 17 students earning both a diploma and a 2-year degree and three students earning two 2-year degrees. Despite the retention issues discussed above, students that remain at the school through their fourth or fifth year appear to be achieving the school’s intended goal of earning a high school diploma and a 2-year degree.

“The 5th year or 13th grade”

The 5th Year” referred to the fact that some early college high schools, including School C, allowed students to continue taking college classes for free once they completed the requirements for a diploma during what has been termed “the 5th year or 13th grade” by many early college high schools. All students that participated in the focus group for the current study were 5th year/13th grade students. School C classified their 5th year students as ‘super seniors’ and encouraged more students to take advantage of this option. One student reported:

Last year they had a meeting in the [auditorium], and had people that didn’t get their associate's degree while they were here talk to us to encourage us to stay. It's
a good opportunity, so that encouraged us to stay. [The school] said that even if we didn't receive the degree in the end, it still benefitted us and if we were to go to a four year college those credits from our college classes would follow us.

Students reported that there were 36 super seniors at the school this year, a huge improvement from the past two years. The liaison admitted that the fifth year concept had not caught on at many of the larger early college high schools, but she believed there was a huge benefit for students that could not complete the 2-year degree by the end of their senior year. While Principal Washington was happy with the number of students that stayed at the school for the 5th year and earned a 2-year degree, his vision for the school was to improve the number of students that graduated in four years with a diploma and 2-year degree. He explained:

What I really want is for our kids to really come in here and just knock the lights out. I want more of the kids graduating in four years [with a 2-year degree] than what we've had. We have just a minimum amount, four or five kids a year graduating in four years. There's a four year rate and a five year rate, but our kids who graduate in five years, if you look at it at the state level, it says four years even though they're here five years it says four years, so they're graduating on time.

Despite the 5th year not counting against the school’s graduation rates, Principal Washington wanted his school to produce more four-year graduates with a diploma and 2-year degree, which he admitted was how the early college model was originally designed.
Theme 4: Creating a Culture of Shared Leadership and a Family-Like Climate with High Expectations for All

The fourth theme described how School C dealt with safety and discipline issues, which also comprise a school’s culture and climate. Two subthemes supported the fourth theme: Safety/Student Discipline and School Culture and Climate.

Safety/Student Discipline

The subtheme Safety/Student Discipline referred to safety concerns that existed at each school, particularly School C because it sits on a college campus, and how those concerns were addressed. School C participants had mixed opinions about safety and discipline at the school. One reason for this might be because the school has been open for seven years, but only Principal Washington, the liaison and one teacher have been at the school the whole time. Participants shared their perspective based on experiences they have had while attending or working at the school.

School C parents believed that their child’s school was safe, but did have initial concerns about their children intermingling with adults on a college campus. One mother, who has a daughter at the school, shared that it was a parent’s responsibility to teach their children how to act while at the school. She commented:

I'm quite sure everybody else can agree; it depends how you raise your child. Your child goes in there being respectful of herself or himself, and you probably don't have to worry about that. When [Principal Washington] had orientation for the first time, he said, ‘Don't send your child to school dressed like she's going to a club or something, because she will be going to classes with adults.’ Once she's
out of my eye sight, I don't know where she is or how she is, but I have to trust and believe that I raised her and brought her up to respect herself as well as others, so I haven't had any problems with that.

This mother’s comments show that Principal Washington was not afraid to have candid, honest conversations with parents about student’s behavior while at the school or moving around on the college campus. Another mother shared that, “It depends on what you're teaching your child at home as well because I guarantee you nothing goes on in that adult class that's not going on in high school right now.” This parent showed that she trusted Principal Washington and the staff to keep her child safe and was not concerned with the adult conversations or situations her child encountered at the school.

The School C liaison said that the school had fewer safety concerns than what existed at other schools in the county. She said, “It was nothing for us to see two or three fights a day” at the other schools. The liaison stated that School C and the partner college had a zero tolerance policy when it came to those types of issues. She expounded about initial discipline issues that no longer exist at the school:

We've had a few fights, but they've not been anything like what I've seen before, and then they were very early on, and when those students realized that it's more than just a 10-day suspension because [the community college] kicks in and says, ‘You know what? We don't allow that on our campus. You can't come back here so students get the picture quickly.

Principal Washington, staff and the partner college work together to make it clear to students that discipline issues will not be tolerated and can result in expulsion not only
from School C, but also from the partner college. The liaison explained that fighting does not always result in a permanent ban from the community college campus but this, “…depends on where it is and the severity of it.” She shared a story about a group of girls that got in a fight not too long after the school opened and what happened to them:

I know this one group of girls got into a fight in the lounge. If it had happened up here, they might not have expelled them from the campus, but because it happened in the lounge, in the area where other [community college] students were, then they were affecting not just the early college but also the campus so they were permanently banned.

Students that are permanently banned from the college campus cannot attend the early college and must return to their base high school. The liaison said that the incident served as a teachable moment for other students at the school about the potential consequences for fighting and not obeying the school’s discipline rules and procedures.

School C students agreed with the liaison that the school was safe and was better than the two high schools they were supposed to attend. Students shared that their friends at the other schools were always talking about the fights and drug dealing they witnessed all the time, but those types of behaviors did not exist at School C.

School C teachers believed that one reason students felt safe at the school and on the college campus was because the students, “…feel like they are family and there’s not a lot of bullying, name calling or picking. Most of the students really get along.” Teachers said that ninth and tenth graders are usually the ones that have the most “rocky” time, but once they make it through those two years, “they tend to be a pretty tight group and
everyone feels safe and secure.” The teachers did point out that the school, “…gets a lot of visitors because of the elevator” and the fact that the school is located close to the college’s administrative building and library.

When discussing safety and discipline concerns at the school, Principal Washington commented, “We don’t give tags. They just come and go and we have people coming and going all the time and that’s okay.” He admitted that getting the early college students to attend the college classes and get good grades in those classes was at the front of his concerns. Principal Washington said that he let potential parents know that he and the staff had high expectations for the students, so students needed to be motivated. He told parents that they should not send their students to School C as a way to avoid safety issues at the other two high schools in the county. He commented that he said the following to parents at the initial meeting:

We're always trying to get better as far as kids attending class and making better grades. We're always trying to push hard to parents that this is not easy. Don't send your kid out here just because you want them to be safe because if they're not going to work, they're going to flunk out and still end up going back to their home school, because they weren’t motivated to stay here.

Principal Washington said that ever since he had started having this frank discussion with potential parents and admitted students, motivation and commitment to the program had increased and more dedicated students were enrolling.
School Culture and Climate

The subtheme School Culture and Climate denoted how participants viewed Principal Washington’s leadership based on the culture and climate or “feeling” he created within the school. Similar to other themes in the case, School C participants offered a range of opinions about the culture and climate Principal Washington had created.

School C parents shared that Principal Washington had created the type of environment where parents “feel free to contact him, discuss issues and he would address them.” One parent admitted that the principal may not handle a situation “the way that I would have liked to have had him address [it], but at least he made the effort.”

School C teachers believed that the school’s culture was “evolving” and everyone seemed to be “more focused and more dedicated” than when the school first opened. One reason the staff seemed to be more “committed” was because half of the teachers that helped open the school seven years ago were no longer work at the school and Principal Washington did a good job making sure that anyone that was hired at the school “understood the mission of the school was to push kids to do the best they can.”

School C’s liaison believed that “everyone is supportive of each other” and that she did not “see a lot of picking or cliques” among teachers or students. The liaison admitted that there “were instances of bullying” because students had spoken with her about them, but “it’s not as widespread as we see in the larger schools.” She believed that “by the time the students got to that fourth and fifth year” most had formed “a kind of tight knit group”. The liaison also believed Principal Washington had created a culture and climate
where students were held accountable for their own actions, especially in relation to the work in the college classes. She explained:

I've gone to the professors and said ‘…can I get an extension?’ or whatever, and things happen, but things shouldn't happen every week, every day. You shouldn't be asking for extensions every week. So at some point there's got to be a level of accountability so that when they get out to the next level and they're not given all those chances, then they understand and know how to deal with that.

The culture of high expectations for students in the college classes was also created by Principal James Washington. He stated that he had tried to create a diversified culture where “everyone blends well together” – the students “get along regardless of race, class or whatever” and “everyone helps each other” because “respect is a huge thing we push here.”

He also believed his school’s climate was one where teachers were empowered to make many decisions, which did not always please or work for all teachers. He commented:

I only had four teachers to start off with and I had lots of push back from them, because we were doing -- I empowered the teachers to make decisions. It wasn't just me making all the decisions, and they liked that, and then they didn't like it when it put responsibility on them. They liked it when they got to choose what they wanted to choose, but then when they had to make the hard choices, they didn't like that so much. But then they got to where they went too far with it, and they were making decisions without even asking me. No, we're not doing that.
Principal Washington pointed out that the school’s culture was one where students where used to visitors coming and going – something he believed all early colleges, especially the students, had to deal with even though students had told him this made them “feel like they were animals at a zoo or aquarium”. The principal said he had taught students to “be cordial and check and see if they have a tag” but other than that “nicely ignore people” when they come to visit.

**Theme 5: Managing the Organization**

The fifth theme, Managing the Organization, examined how Principal Washington ran the school on a daily basis based on participant information. Four subthemes emerged from this theme: Finances, Staffing, Instruction, and Vision and Mission.

**Finances**

The first subtheme Finances investigated where money came from to run School C, any funding shortfalls and how Principal Washington worked with other stakeholders to overcome funding issues. School C is located in a small town that is slightly rural and the district has faced numerous cuts in funding, particularly since major industries and businesses are non-existent in the county. The budget cuts impacted everything from staffing to programs at School C.

The School C liaison explained that all early college high schools were once funded through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, but now all schools receive money through the Department of Public Instruction in Raleigh, NC. Since assistant principal allocations to schools were based on enrollment numbers, School C did not have an assistant principal.
School C liaison pointed out that one way their partner community college increased its funding was through partnerships with early college high schools in several counties. The state pays the community college classes that all early college high school students take. School C liaison explained that when early college high school students started attending college classes, many faculty members frowned at the idea. The liaison said the community college’s president painted a picture for staff that explained the importance of embracing these students:

[The college president] said, ‘We're not shunning them away because that's why we're getting FTEs, because these students are here, and that's why some of you all have jobs.’ They didn't say anything. They just said early college is here to stay, and did not waver on that.

Principal James Washington commented that his school received “very little funding” from the county. He shared the following story:

When we first started the school, we said we're going to get this much from the state. And the board says, as long as it doesn't cost the county anything. I'm going like, okay so now we do get a little bit for however many kids we've got coming to this school. That's pretty much it. The rest of it is just what money we get from the state.

Principal Washington said that funding was an issue that he, the county, the state and the community college revisited yearly. Like all early college high schools in North Carolina, agreements about funding for each school are included in a document called a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU is a yearly contract that is unique for
each early college high school in the state and spells out each funding entity’s responsibility. At times, the MOU can be a source of tension between all parties according to Principal Washington:

There are certain fees that the college charges that I refuse to pay because my budget goes -- There are certain fees I do pay. I'll pay lab fees. I'll pay technology fees. But activity fees I'm not going to pay because the president of the community colleges in the state said that community colleges should not charge the schools or kids any money for activity fees. Well, (their partner community college) does anyway. So I said, ‘Well, I'm not paying. The head of these colleges says don't do it.’ I told the superintendent, ‘When we have the MOU, it's not coming out of my budget. If you want to sign that piece of paper because it's in the MOU, that's on you all to pay for it.’

Despite the MOU, funding disagreements happen yearly. Principal Washington quipped, “…every year, he (the superintendent) gets all upset about it, having to pay for the stupid thing. I said, ‘Well, quit paying it. It's not in the MOU.’ He said that the biggest reason students do not pay the activity fee was because his students did not use the resources the fee funded like parking or clubs and organizations at the community college. Principal Washington stated that the county paid for books students needed for their college classes, but they always tried to save by renting instead of buying:

We have to buy some, rent some, because we can't afford just to buy all of them.

There are some early colleges that do. Some -- I know a good friend of mine --

Every one of her books comes from the book store, and she just has to pay a
dollar above what they have to pay for them, which is good. That's a deal. So they're making a dollar off her. They've got steady business and those books coming in. Our bookstore won't do that. They'll give us a -- I think it's a 10% discount. We can get a $150 book with only $15 off or rent it for 15, or 20, or 40 dollars, which is better.

Although the funding concerns persist at School C, Principal Washington said that he will continue to advocate at the district and state level for increased funding, especially since his school continues to outperform other high schools in the county and schools statewide with similar demographics.

**Staffing**

The second subtheme, Staffing, referred to how School C was staffed and how Principal Washington dealt with staff shortages or turnover. Out of all the schools in the study, School C had experienced the most teacher turnover. At the time of the study School C had ten teachers for the school’s 150 students, but most teachers had been there four or less years. Only one teacher that was present when the school opened eight years ago still taught at the school.

School C parents said that they were not concerned about the teachers that left and considered it to be “a positive” because the teachers that replaced them were “an upgrade” from the original teachers. The parents said that the former teachers “did not understand the program or the students” and were not easy to work with, but the teachers they had now “really seemed to care about the students” and were approachable.
School C teachers believed that one reason teacher turnover was a problem was because teachers “had a lot of hats to wear” and sometimes it was overwhelming. One teacher that had taught at the school for six years commented:

I think that there's so much going on in the school and we ask a lot of our teachers, and I think the students also put a lot of pressure on the teachers. I know when I came here, in the very beginning it was kind of like I came in the second year, and it was kind of like the students owned the school and if they didn't want you here, then they would let you know.

Another teacher shared that as the school has grown the student situation had improved but, “…for a time it was kind of like the students took ownership over the school and until you kind of paid your dues, they were willing to kind of make things a little frustrating.” All teachers thought that student behavior had improved and that the tension between teachers and students that former teachers may have experienced no longer existed.

The School C liaison, who had worked at the school since it opened, explained that many parents and students “were confused about her role” within the school. Like School B, School C did not have an assistant principal; so many responsibilities fell on the liaison’s shoulders, which was problematic. All early college high school liaisons are college employees, and are not considered to be a part of the school’s staff. The liaison said parents continue to “call me and ask about buses” and she tells them “that’s not my job” and directs them to the school. The liaison stated that she was responsible for
making sure students registered for the right college classes, securing their books and other materials and checking student’s progress in the college classes.

The liaison believed that one reason students were confused about the role she played in the school was because she was a former teacher at the school before becoming the liaison and parents and students were used to her in the former role. Another reason for the confusion was the fact that Principal Washington considered her to be a ‘quasi-administrator’ since she was working on her administrative license at the time of the study:

When he's out at other early college and new school project events, he's stretched thin, and some things that he's off campus for, and we need someone else, and my office is right there when you come in. I feel like I get roped in, but I don't have any authority when it comes to certain issues, and the kids listen to me. I'm not saying they don't hear when I'm asking them to do something, but when it comes down to it, if something really needs to be done, I've still got to call him on the phone and say, look, we've got this issue going on. What do we do about it? I feel like that leaves us hanging if it's something serious.

The liaison believed that School C did not have much support from the district in terms of funding or staffing, but believed that their success with less staff made the district think extra help was not needed.

Principal Washington stated that the school started eight years ago with just four teachers in the ninth grade and added teachers as students progressed through the grade levels. He admitted that when he and the four teachers looked at which teachers to hire
they decided to hire teachers that said they would care about the students, but this did not translate into those teachers being effective at the school:

When I first started, that's what I hired was people who cared, and still were confident, but they cared. That was the first rule, and I got away from that because I started letting teachers hire, so it was me along with everybody else, and we got to where we were hiring who we thought would be most competent and away from who would still be able to do different things in the classroom. They'd be open to change and that kind of stuff, but some of them we hired did not. They didn't care one bit about the kid. It was about their kid and it was about their subject. I'm into teacher empowerment, but we're not doing a good job of hiring teachers the way I want to hire teachers and so this last hire I did the hiring by myself.

Principal Washington said he had interviewed teachers alone for the past three years and did not follow the interview script the district provided to principals because “that was not his style” and he did not want “canned answers or speeches” from potential teachers. He explained, “I can find out more about you by doing this (talking) then I can by you answering ten or fifteen questions on a sheet.”

Principal Washington commented that not having an assistant principal also meant that his school sometimes missed valuable information during district-sponsored assistant principal meetings. In order to combat this problem, he took the initiative to attend an assistant principal meeting, which surprised district personnel, but provided him with information he would not have received otherwise had he not attended the meeting:
I went the other day to an AP meeting, because I'd never been to one. So I show up, and they weren't ready for me. They handed out all kinds of good material that was cool, that I could use, and our teachers could use, and so I thought, man, I'm going to start coming to these more often. Then I find out they're giving them information that I didn't know about because they’re expecting assistant principals to go tell the principals. We found out part of our evaluation now for North Carolina is coming from a final test and from EOCs (end-of-course tests). Well, if you're like a Spanish teacher, or a coach, or band director or something like that, they do this other measurement. It's called a ASWs or analysis of student work. They had a meeting in December and said my Spanish teacher needed to come to that meeting. Principal Washington said that if he had not attended the meeting then he would not have known about the additional assessments or the fact that his teachers were supposed to attend training to learn about the assessments and to validate rosters. Principal Washington believed that district turnover has caused new district personnel to overlook his school. He commented, “Sometimes we're out here and they forget about us. Sometimes that's a blessing, but sometimes I really do wish that they wouldn’t. They're just not used to us, even though we've been here seven, eight years now.”

**Instruction**

The subtheme Instruction described the various programs, strategies and professional development each school used to promote student achievement. School C participants reported many interventions that to promoted student learning. According to Principal Washington, all School C students take a college-level seminar class during their
freshmen year and teachers offer tutoring to help students with their high school or college classes. School C’s partner college also moved their student support center across from the school last year, so students can readily receive additional tutoring, use the writing center and speak with college counselors if needed. Principal Washington admitted that students, “…did not take advantage of the support center as much as we’d like, but we encourage them to go in order to take the workload off our teachers to do all the tutoring.”

Students reported that their teachers were, “…pretty good at answering questions if you go by their class and say that you need help, they'll either take you then or say well, come during my lunch time, or come after school.”

School C also utilized an advisor-advisee program where teachers were required to follow the academic progress of 20-25 students in their high school and college classes. The liaison said that each college professor completed weekly progress reports for each high school student that asked about the student’s attendance, behavior and general academic progress. Since professors cannot provide the school with information about student’s actual grade because of FERPA laws, the progress report simply asked was the student progressing well or not in the class. Any students that receive negative reports are required to attend a mandatory study hall until they received a positive report.

School C participants did not share any information about teachers or staff receiving additional professional development beyond district-mandated training.
Vision and Mission

The fourth subtheme, Vision and Mission, discussed what participants believed was the vision and mission or purpose of their schools, particularly as these terms related to Principal Washington.

School C participants provided varied responses about Principal Washington’s vision and mission for the school. School C parents and the college liaison thought that Principal Washington’s vision was “focused on the student’s future” because, “…he really cares about the students and their success.” One teacher commented:

I think he genuinely cares and has the best interest of the kids at heart. I don’t think that he or the teachers are in it for the money - I know that, so it is their desire to see a child have that ah-ha moment and just continue to grow. I think that's what drives him.

Like the parents, School C students believed that they were the people that motivated Principal Washington. One student shared the following story:

I can't really explain it, but he just cares about us so much, and he knows everything we do. If we didn't come to school one day, he notices it. One day I didn't come to school and he's like, ‘Shelly, where were you at? I missed you.’ He notices everybody.

School C teachers also thought the principal’s mission and vision centered on the students. One teacher replied:

He really just wants them to do well. His vision is when they leave here that they can be thinkers. He wants them to be challenged and contribute. I don't think he
necessarily wants them to leave with an associate's degree - I don't think that's the end all for him. He has said grades don't matter to me, which makes us cringe sometimes, but I know that grades are not the final determination of whether you're a success or not. In his mind, he really just wants the kids to be successful, make progress and be happy because it’s like they and us are his kids and he’s like the patriarch of our school family.

School C teachers commented that when test scores come out that Principal Washington does not look at the scores; he looks at a student’s growth. Another teacher said, “I think that's why he challenges everyone all the time, because I think he sees potential in the kids and I hope he sees potential in us.”

Principal Washington agreed with all the comments about his vision and mission, but also shared what drives him:

Kids. Kids. I care about the kids. They need to see there are other things out there, and these kids don't know. They don't even know what they don't know. They think this county is everything. It's all they know. Half of them have never been to Raleigh or Durham. The only time they ever go out of the county - most of them don't ever go out of the county unless it's on a field trip somewhere.

Principal Washington believed that his goal was to provide students with the tools and skills they would need to be able to do well no matter where they went later in life.
Theme 6: Fostering a Nurturing, Patriarchal Relationship with Students and Teachers while Seeking to Improve the Parent Involvement and Engagement

The sixth and final theme described how Principal Washington worked with various stakeholders outside and inside School C to promote student success.

Inside the School

The subtheme Inside the School referred to the relationships between Principal Washington, teachers and students within the school.

Principal – Teacher Relationship

School C had a staff of only ten teachers at the time of the study, which meant the quality of principal-teacher relationship would have a huge impact not only on the school, but also the success of the program. The teachers said their relationship “was like we’re related sometimes” and like they and the principal were “like brothers and sisters sometimes” because they had times where they fought like siblings over issues, but always resolved the issues and did not hold grudges.

One teacher stated that Principal Washington, “…makes sure we’re doing what we’re supposed to be doing, but he might do it in a joking manner.” Although the early college liaison thought that teachers got frustrated with the principal because of the “lack of discipline” he had with the students, none of the teachers complained.

Principal Washington said he tried to be “hands off” with the teachers because, “They know their subject area and what they need to teach, so me hovering over them all the time wouldn’t help.” He believed that part of his job was to prepare teacher leaders that could have a bigger voice and impact in the school.
Principal – Student Relationship

Upon entering Principal Washington’s office, a sign hung above his desk that said “Mr. Washington was tha’ bomb.com.” The researcher asked Principal Washington if he knew what the sign meant and he said not exactly. The researcher explained that the words meant that he was an awesome person (loosely translated) and he explained that the sign came from a Latina student that he allowed to use his office while working on her pharmacology homework. The sign also served as a symbol of how most School C students participants felt about Principal Washington.

One female student stated that Principal Washington, “…is involved in our lives and pushes us try our best in school and our colleges classes.” A male student, whose father worked at the school said, “He always lets us sit in his office if we need a quiet place to work and always available if we need to talk to him about anything.” One School C teacher joked that the principal-student relationship was so strong until, “If they’re in trouble, they go to him. We’re the bad guys and they’re more afraid of us than him. They still listen to him though and respect him a lot.”

Teacher – Student Relationship

Students at School C do not have their teacher’s personal phone numbers. One male teacher believed that being at a small school helped the relationship between teachers and the kids seem more family-like. He said:

I think we have for better or worse almost become their surrogate families, I guess. They are with us for five years for the most part, and they're with us all day, and whether we're in our advisory capacity where we meet with them individually, or
whether in the classroom, and it's just the rapport I think we have with them I think we take the place of some of the parents. They tell us things that they won't tell their parents.

Another male teacher agreed said, “I had three students come talk me personally about issues that were going on outside of school and they wanted some advice so after I listened to them and gave my best suggestions they thanked me and seemed relieved by what I said.”

All teachers admitted that having a small staff meant that they had doubled or tripled their responsibilities, this was not overwhelming. One female teacher shared the following thoughts:

It's not mentally taxing for me. It's not like I mind listening. The only part, sometimes it's hard for me to wear so many hats, to be the counselor, the therapist, the surrogate parent, while still having to fulfill my obligations as a teacher, so that part is taxing. How do I get it all done, but as far as the listening and that -- no, that doesn't bother me at all. I don't find that particularly draining.

As 5th year students, the School C students that participated in the study had little contact with the school’s teachers since all their classes were on the college campus. Students did share stories, however, about the relationships they built with many of the school’s former and some current teachers.

One student commented, “Since we’re such a small school all the teachers know our names even though we aren’t in their classes, so we end up starting a relationship accidently and talking to them anyway.” Another student added:
I think that's one of the reasons a lot of people are successful here because the teachers and principal both realize that we are more responsible because we're taking on more responsibilities and they don't necessarily baby us along the way.”

**Outside the School**

The subtheme Outside the School explored the relationships between Principal Washington and stakeholders outside the school including the partner college, the parents and the community.

*School – Partner College Relationship*

School C participants had mixed views about the relationship between the school and their partner college. The biggest complaint from School C parents was the fact that the college would not share their child’s grades with them because of FERPA laws. Students can waive the right to have grades withheld, but only two parents reported their child signing the waiver agreement. One mother said:

I agree with the law, but at the same time, I disagree with it, because we're dealing with minors. Let's just say a student decides, ‘No mom, I don't want to disclose that. You could say, ‘Well, I feed you and clothe you.’ Yeah, that's true, but she or he still says, ‘No, I don't want to disclose that.’ You could pull them out the early college and send them where you don't want them to go, but if you do that now you have hurt them in a sense, because the mission for coming to the early college was to give them a better education.
A School C father believed that since early college high schools are so new that rules needed to be written that reflected the reality that minors, not adults, were attending the college classes. He explained:

Since this is a new program and because of the rules and regulations on the campus when it comes to a college student, something should be implemented about college students that are minors. This is a new program, so this is the time where new rules need to come in place. If the school wants the child to succeed, then that's why they need to do something differently. I've been in that boat where you don't know about the F or close to F until at the end or at the very end. We could have been much more proactive earlier had we known.

School C parents said that at the time of the study the liaison was the only person they could with that had knowledge about how their children were performing in the college classes, which was fine, but they believed new regulations needed to be implemented.

School C teachers reported that one activity that helped strengthen the relationship between the school and their partner college was two meetings they held with the college’s Math and English faculty last year. The purpose of the meeting was to reach an agreement about the level of rigor both sides needed to provide in their classes so the students could perform at their highest level. One teacher explained:

I teach English, so the way they grade their papers is different than the way I grade my papers, but we have had meetings to where we've kind of been able to hash that out. We had a big meeting between the math faculty and the English
faculty of both schools and we all came together and talked about this is what we need you all to focus -- They were telling us basically we want you to do this, and it will help us do what we have to do.

The meetings were so successful until both sides agreed to continue holding quarterly meetings in order to work out curriculum issues.

**School – Parent Relationship**

One area of improvement Principal Washington identified at his school was a need to increase parental involvement and engagement. He admitted, “We had a hard time just getting four parents to come talk with you (the researcher).” Principal Washington thought that one reason high school parents were less involved was because many had negative views towards educational institutions. He commented:

Any time I've been in any high school, it's hard to get parents involved unless you're doing a program like a band concert or music something, or art program.

Here, parents are even harder to get to or get to come to things because they see us as taking care of their kids. Plus, half of our parents didn't graduate high school and they sure didn't graduate college so they're uncomfortable here.

The early college liaison reiterated Principal Washington’s thoughts on parent involvement. She responded:

They haven't been in the situation of going to college and maybe not have had successful school experiences. Sometimes we don't have a lot of parents that come out when we have events or meetings. At the end of every school year I try to have a meeting with all the parents so they could see and know where their kid
stands when it comes to the associate's degree, because the liaison before me never did that, so when we had our first graduating class, there were some kids that didn’t get associate's degrees and parents didn't know, so they were upset. They were like, ‘Oh, I thought.’ -- It was almost like they thought it was going to be a given that they would get an associate's degree when that’s not the case, but the parents didn’t understand that.

The School C parents that participated in the study were pleased with the school-parent relationship for the most part, but admitted that the school does not have an active parent-teacher organization (PTO) because the parent that used to run it left after her child graduated from the school three years ago. Since that time, no other parent had agreed to take on the responsibility. One mother replied:

Most parents around here work full-time jobs where they can’t take off work to plan dances or do fundraisers or whatever. Some parents don’t have cars to come to the school so that means that students don’t have dances or anything like that because there isn’t enough participation.

All parents agreed that starting the PTO would be a step in the right direction for the school, but admitted that until someone took the initiative then nothing would ever get done.

School – Community Relationship

School C participants had differing thoughts about the quality of the school-community relationship. One parent believed the community had “mixed views” about
the school because many believed that only top students enrolled at the school. A teacher explained:

I think that part of it is due to some misconceptions. I think that we have -- You were talking about the disconnect, but I think there's definitely some misconceptions between what people in the community and perhaps central office think that we get as students and what we actually get. A lot of people believe that we only get like the smartest, brightest kids, but we actually do a lottery system, so we take pretty much anybody, so I think there is a lot of misconception.

The early college liaison believed disconnection existed between School C and the community because of two reasons. First, education was not valued and second, “They don’t understand the early college or realize its value.” Principal Washington conceded that the school needed to do a better job involving the community in the school. Principal Washington stated, “In the past I’ve gone on the radio and talked at local Rotary Club meetings or answered questions when people come up to me while I’m in the grocery store or out running errands.” Despite those efforts, the community continued to not understand School C’s purpose and remained largely uninvolved on the campus.

Summary of Principal James Washington’s Leadership and the Six Themes

Chapter 6 examined the practices and actions Principal James Washington takes to promote the success of his students. Theme one revealed that Principal Washington’s early childhood experiences growing up in a low-income, single mother home helps him be emphatic with students that are in similar situations. His first teaching experiences in a segregated southern town led him to be a leader dedicated to combatting racism and
educational inequality. This was evident in the streamlined application process at School C. Principal Washington structured the application process with open, equitable access in mind versus trying to screen students out that truly needed to be at the school.

Although Principal Washington had high expectations for his teachers and students, he did not allow a test score or state report card grade to define success at his school. He did not focus on negatives like the school’s low retention rate or high teacher turnover. Instead he was optimist when describing School C’s success based on the number of students that stayed at the school and graduated with a diploma and a 2-year degree in four or five years.

Principal Washington’s optimism and assurance about actions he takes within the school to promote student success that has created a culture where stakeholders inside and outside the school feel included in decision-making processes. A culture of shared leadership combined with a family-like climate all help Principal Washington foster relationships where participants see him as a father-figure that has their best interests at heart and not as a tyrannical, selfish, uninvolved leader. It is those authentic relationships that help Principal Washington effectively manage the school despite low parent involvement and engagement.
**Principal James Washington’s Leadership and the Conceptual Framework**

Examining Principal Washington’s leadership in relation to the conceptual framework provided a picture of his actions and practices that promoted the goals and purpose of early college high schools. Figure 6.1 showed that he valued access, high expectations and opportunities for all students over achievement, exclusion and test scores.

**Figure 6.1**

*Principal James Washington’ Leadership based on the Conceptual Framework*

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*Note: Principal Washington is an example of a democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leader that valued providing access, having high expectations and giving students opportunities to participate over achievement, exclusionary practices and test scores. The school’s location and lack of resources nor student’s challenging circumstances do not dictate future successes.*
Principal Washington demonstrated the characteristics and behaviors of a democratic leader. Teachers and students felt empowered to participate in running the school and knew that their voices were included in the decision making process (Rusch, 1995).

Principal Washington showed that he was an advocate for students both within and outside the school. He advocated seven years ago to bring the early college program to the school because he wanted to challenge the status quo for how students of color and lower-income students were educated in his county. Students at Principal Washington’s school come to him with problems or concerns before they go to teachers because they know he will listen to both sides of the issue before making a decision. Although this approach to discipline frustrated teachers at times, his approach helped students know he would advocate for them even if it meant upsetting his colleagues (Conley, 1991).

Principal Washington was determined that his students would receive an education equal to every other student in the state and that the school’s location and lack of resources would not dictate student’s success or future (Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Larson & Ovando, 2001). Students considered him to be loving, caring and respectful because he worked to make sure students felt valued.

Finally, Principal Washington possessed many qualities of a culturally responsive leader. He believed that the early college program would help prepare students to be productive citizens. Principal Washington also emphasized high expectations for students, an ethic of care and commitment to making sure students knew he was there for them. Principal Washington also challenged deficit thinking among teachers about student’s current abilities and future, which was why so many teachers left within the
past four years. Despite this turnover, current teachers believed that Principal Washington was a good principal because his purpose and mission was all about the students and their success.

**Chapter Summary**

Chapter 6 presented the third case in the study, Principal James Washington. Six themes emerged from the data that showed he valued access, high expectations and opportunity over test scores and state report card grades. Like Principal Washington set high standards for his students including the goal that all students achieve a diploma and 2-year degree. Principal Washington set reasonable goals when he encouraged students to stay for a fifth year to earn a college degree instead of pushing them to finish in four years. Principal Washington puts students at the center of all his actions and practices because he wants to see students have an opportunity to be successful no matter their race/ethnicity of socioeconomic status. Teachers at his school trust Principal Washington to do what is best for the students and them.

When examining Principal Washington’s leadership in relation to the conceptual framework, he demonstrated being a democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leader. He advocated to start the early college high school years ago and has done all he can to give students the best education possible even if that meant dismissing and hiring teachers that would better serve students.
CHAPTER SEVEN
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative, multi-site, multi-case study was to examine how early college high school principals promote the success of the first generation, students of color and low-income students they serve. The study examined three early college high school principals in North Carolina through two lenses: the traditional role of principals and a conceptual framework of democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders. The current chapter was organized into four sections: discussion of the findings using existing literature and supported with tables depicting an analysis across the three cases, a cross-analysis of the findings for the three principals through the lenses of the conceptual framework, the research questions answered and implications for policy, practice and recommendations for future research.

Discussion of the Findings using Existing Literature

Theme 1: Principal Identity Cross-Case Analysis

The first theme Identity referred to the prior and current roles principals assumed both inside and outside the school and how those multiple roles impacted their leadership. A cross-case analysis of the theme Identity follows (see table 7.1).

According to Notman et al (2008), “Some principals influence their schools by means of their personality while others demonstrate leadership capacity through the strength of their convictions,” the current study’s focus on identity and principals provided valuable insight into the personal and professional experiences that led these principals to serve at early college high schools.
The current study supported assertions that the majority of principals and teachers of culturally diverse students do not come from the same cultural backgrounds as the students they serve (Ladson-Billings, 2002; Johnson, 2007 and Saifer & Barton, 2007). All principals in the study were White while the schools they led had over 50% students of color. Additionally, all principals were transparent about their values, beliefs and actions they took within their schools to promote student success (Drysdale & Gurr, 2011), but that is where similarities among the principals ended. While two participants were female and raised in middle class families, the male participant was raised in a family he described as living “below low income,” which caused Principal Washington to have a propensity to want to work with traditionally disadvantaged students.

Principal Robinson seemed to struggle in relating to students as evidenced by her saying she needed to “dig inside of myself and try to find it” when working with students of color. Her efforts appeared to not work since students said she was “abrasive” and parents and teachers reported she “lacked interpersonal relationships” at the school. Part of the reason Principal Robinson seemed to have problems relating to students was because she never challenged the status quo when she became principal five years ago (Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford, 2007). She inherited a school that was doing well academically, but was not admitting Blacks or many males. Instead of working to change that trend or seeking ways to rectify the situation, she continued the same exclusionary practices the school has had for the past ten years.

Another finding about Principal Robinson was her drive to ensure the school followed the early college model. Her motivation was caused by her prior experience
working as a director for the state support network for early colleges. Part of her responsibilities while serving as a director was to train other principals in how to use the model effectively. The problem was that she operated based solely on the model, not the context of the school, and the model has changed over the past five years (Leithwood, et al, 2008). The old model required early college high schools to have the following characteristics: time for teachers to collaborate, schools be located on college campuses; integration of technology, students finish in four years with a diploma and 2-year degree and schools have 400 or less students (Jobs for the Future, 2013).

Today, early college programs have expanded to operate in traditional high schools, are not all on college campuses and allow students to finish school in five instead of four years. The future of early college high schools in North Carolina resemble the design that existed at School B, not Schools A or C, yet Principal Robinson did not seem to be aware of these changes.

Principal Lewis was the only principal in the study that had educator parents. She attributed her current leadership practices to lessons she learned while watching her father’s principalship as at a small, rural school similar to one she leads now. Despite all participants commending her for bringing resources and programs to the school, Principal Lewis was highly critical of her own leadership and believed that nothing she did would ever measure up to her father’s success as a principal. This finding supports Day’s (2011) belief that leaders are continuously learning and developing their leadership through socially constructed life and professional experiences.
Principal Washington seemed to have personal and professional experiences that mirrored the struggles many of his students faced. He grew up without a father, was a first generation student and experienced racism in the segregated South at the beginning of his career. These early experiences seemed to support what Johansson (2006) called “mental maps that guided individual actions and thoughts and served as the foundation for those processes” (p. 623). Even though School C experienced the worse retention rates in the study, Principal Washington pointed out that all 36 seniors decided to stay for the fifth year so they could graduate with a diploma and their 2-year degree, which had never happened at the school.

In conclusion, an examination of principal identity provided a humanistic view of the principals in the study and why they chose to practice at a school that was designed to change traditional outcomes for first generation, students of color and lower-income students.
### Table 7.1

**Cross Analysis Theme 1 – Identity**

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<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joan Robinson</td>
<td>Karen Lewis</td>
<td>James Washington</td>
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<tr>
<td>• White female; late 30’s</td>
<td>• White female; mid-50’s</td>
<td>• White male; late 60’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Raised in lower middle class family</td>
<td>• Raised in middle class family</td>
<td>• Grew up in family that lived “below low income”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Father – music minister; mother – computer programmer</td>
<td>• Mother - preschool teacher; father - principal</td>
<td>• Father – military; mother – factory worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Both parents had master’s degrees</td>
<td>• Father first influence on her current practices</td>
<td>• Father left after family divorced and never returned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Family was religious</td>
<td>• Doesn’t believe she’ll ever measure up to father’s principalship</td>
<td>• Had “compassion and empathy” for fatherless students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participated in mission trips to Chicago when younger</td>
<td>• Related to families as a mother of three sons that attended and graduated from current high school</td>
<td>• Was a 1st generation college student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tried to relate to students based on roles in personal life as someone’s sister and daughter</td>
<td>• Her children were athletes when they attended the school</td>
<td>• Went to college on a music scholarship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Undergraduate ed prepared her to be a Science teacher</td>
<td>• Didn’t major in Education; earned Biology degree then was certified laterally</td>
<td>• Ran a restaurant with a cousin for four years before going into education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ed leadership program trained her to be a servant leader</td>
<td>• Enrolled in doctoral program at time of study</td>
<td>• 1st career experience – band director in a poor, segregated town in the South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Biggest impact on current practice – served as a director at the state support network for early colleges</td>
<td>• Took actions against segregation at his school and was fired</td>
<td>• Earned counseling degree and became school counselor before moving in to administration later in his career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Graduated with doctorate in May 2015</td>
<td>• Earlier racist experiences in his career impacted current practice</td>
<td>• Earlier racist experiences in his career impacted current practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme 2: Access and Equity Cross-Case Analysis

Early college high schools are public high schools usually located on or near 2- and 4-year colleges that target first generation, students of color, and low-income students that have traditionally been underserved in traditional schools or are underrepresented in higher education (NC New Schools, 2012). The goals of early college high schools are twofold: to increase the number of students that graduate with a diploma while easing their transition from high school to college by enrolling students in college classes while in high school. The theme ‘access and equity’ are terms usually associated with higher education institutions because students must apply for admission to those schools. Since early college high schools are schools of choice that blend K-12 and higher education, parents must also apply for admission to these schools. The current study supported claims that one way some early college high schools achieved success was through having a rigorous application process and lottery system, which contradicts the goal of increasing access for traditionally underserved and underrepresented students (Hemmer & Uribe, 2012).

On the surface, schools in the study appeared to enroll the target student population. According to Principal Joan Robinson, School A targets first generation students then students of color and lower-income students while Schools B and C target lower-income families. After examining the demographics where each school is located School A is not enrolling an adequate number of Black students, male students or students with disabilities that should be benefitting from the school’s program based on the purpose of early college high schools. The demographics of the city where School A is located are...
70% White, 14% Black, 11% Latino and 3% Asian and 2% multiracial yet School A’s demographics are 49% White, 21% Asian/Pacific Islander, 20% Latino/a, 6% Black and 4% multiracial and the gender breakdown is 64% female and 36% male.

Upon being questioned about these disparities, Principal Robinson deflected questions and listed several reasons why this trend existed at her school – “they don’t apply” “we don’t have football” “we tried churches to recruit”. She did not seem concerned, however, because she was enrolling the “80% first generation students” that the state required so her school could continue to receive funding. Since School A enrolled 80% first generation students this means that approximately 70-80 students admitted yearly were not from the target student population. If the school’s population matched the community makeup then the percentage of Black and male students would be greater. Principal Robinson has been able to avoid admitting students from the community that could be attending the school by targeting and admitting Asian and homeschooled students from outside the city limits while Black and male students that live in the city are overlooked.

Attitudes towards admission at School A were evident in parent’s belief that attending the school was an “honor” since “it’s a really sought after position.” This type of mentality runs counter to the purpose of early college high schools, which is to counter the tradition of first generation, students of color and lower-income students being underrepresented and underserved in higher education. According to Goldring & Greenfield (2005), principals should serve as stewards and challenge the anti-intellectual belief that academic learning is useful only for a few and not needed by all, yet Principal
Robinson refused to entertain any suggestions that the application process at her school coupled with her and some study participant’s elitist attitudes towards educational attainment for everyone regardless of race, disability or gender might be a problem.

When it came to serving students with disabilities, the current study supported claims that early college high schools are not serving students with disabilities (AIR & SRI, 2006). Schools A and C enrolled 5% and 20% students with disabilities this year, but participants at both schools expressed concerns about how well both schools served these students. Principal Robinson demonstrated deficit thinking when she explained why her school did not have many of these students: “They don't typically apply to come here, because they know they're going to get Fs in the classes on the college side….so we typically don't have a ton apply. The ones that do come here are high functioning.” Principal Robinson’s views about students with disabilities matched what Valencia (1997) and Gorski (2010) said about educators speaking about students “based on their weaknesses rather than their strengths” and that these students could not “add value” to the school because they were destined to “get Fs”.

School C also had issues related to serving students with disabilities. One parent reported the following about his daughter that used to attend the school: “They wouldn’t accommodate her…they wouldn’t follow her IEP.” Early college high schools are public schools funded with state and federal money, which means they are possibly violating the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a federal law ensuring children with disabilities throughout the nation receive services.
Even though both Principals Robinson and Washington pointed out that their schools did not have certified special education teachers on staff since their school districts did not fund that position, this does not excuse them from providing disabled students with services they are required to have based on federal laws. According to Santamaria and Santamaria (2011), today’s schools need critical leaders that recognize and understand critical issues, convince others that there are issues and create safe spaces for conversations, reflections and actions. Principals Robinson and Washington were not demonstrating critical leadership when they did not advocate at the district level for appropriate staff and funding to accommodate the special education students that might apply or were currently enrolled at their schools.


Table 7.2

*Cross Analysis Theme 2 – Access and Equity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Principal Joan Robinson</th>
<th>Principal Karen Lewis</th>
<th>Principal James Washington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target Student Population</strong></td>
<td>• 360 students</td>
<td>• 150 students</td>
<td>• 200 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Targeted 1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; generation students before considering race or socioeconomic status</td>
<td>• Targeted lower-income families</td>
<td>• Targeted lower-income families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Targeted students that performed in middle 60% on a scale of 100 while in middle school</td>
<td>• Principal so interested in making sure ECHSs serve the initiative’s target population that she serves on the student selection team with the state support network for ECHSs</td>
<td>• Student population: first generation college and high school graduates; some students had criminal records, unstable housing situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School located in a diverse area, but lacked Black students (6%) and had more Asian students (21%), which did not mirror the community</td>
<td>• Principal believed not admitting the target student population weakened the initiative</td>
<td>• 30% White and 70% students of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 64% Female/36% Male</td>
<td>• 45% White and 55% students of color</td>
<td>• 57% Female and 43% Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Application Process</strong></td>
<td>• 400 applicants for 100 slots yearly</td>
<td>• No one was excluded from enrolling in the school’s ECHS program</td>
<td>• Application process included essay, teacher recommendations, (a checklist that asked about student’s communication skills, grades and attendance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Used lottery system</td>
<td>• Junior and senior participation – 80%</td>
<td>• If teacher doesn’t recommend for admission, student was not admitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rigorous application process (application, 3 letters of recommendation, supervised on-site student essay)</td>
<td>• Freshmen and sophomore participation was 100% this year</td>
<td>• Former application was modified because it was impractical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 80% of student body was first generation</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Principal saw admitting target student population as part of his mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Parents saw admission as an honor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 7.2

Cross Analysis Theme 2 – Access and Equity (continued)

| Subtheme                        | Principal Joan Robinson                                                                 | Principal Karen Lewis                                                                                   | Principal James Washington                                                                 |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Special Education and ESL Students | • Special Ed and ESL students enroll                                                 | • Special Ed and ESL students are in the school and early college program                               | • Special Ed and ESL students enroll                                                                 |
|                                 | • No district-assigned Special Ed or ESL teachers                                       | • School had Special Ed and ESL teachers                                                                  | • No district-assigned Special Ed or ESL teacher                                                                 |
|                                 | • Principal thought these students didn’t apply because they would not do well in the college classes | • Principal directed teachers to work with students regardless of disability or perceived ability           | • One parent unhappy with how school did not accommodate his daughter’s disability                        |
|                                 | • Did not seek funding at the district level to have a Special Ed or ESL teacher at the school |                                                                                                          | • Observed autistic student using principal’s office during lunch                                    |
|                                 |                                                                                         |                                                                                                          | • Did not seek funding at the district level to have a Special Ed or ESL teacher at the school         |

Theme 3: Academics Cross-Case Analysis

The third theme, Academics, described the academic achievements or milestones each school in the study had achieved since their inception. The theme Academics was strengthened by four subthemes: Retention Rate, Standardized Tests, Graduation Rates/Degrees Earned and “The 5th year or 13th Grade”. The subtheme Retention Rate referred to the school’s success at retaining students from 9th grade to 10th grade and from 10th grade to 11th grade. The subtheme Standardized Tests referred to each school’s performance on state and national standardized tests. The subtheme Graduation Rates/Degrees Earned explored the high school graduation rate at the three schools to see if schools were achieving one of the goals of early college high schools, which is to
increase the number of students graduating with a diploma. This subtheme also looked at the number of college credits and 2-year degrees students earned at the three schools upon graduation. This information is important because another goal of early college high schools is to increase students’ The subtheme “The 5th Year or 13th grade” referred to the fact that some schools, including two in the current study, allowed students to continue taking college classes for free once they completed the requirements for a diploma during what has been termed “the 5th year or 13th grade” by many early college high schools. A cross-case analysis of the theme Academics follows (see table 5.2).

Once students are admitted to early college high schools, the push shifts to retaining and helping them advance to graduation with a diploma and transferable college credits. A comparison of the three schools reveals an array of issues each school had retaining students. Some issues that impacted retention at these schools included: student’s desires to participate in athletics, students no longer wanting to participate in the program, students not passing placement exams and students not earning enough credits to continue in the early college program.

Schools A and B do not have a retention problem, which aligns with findings from Webb & Myka (2011) that over 85% of early college high school students stay after their first year. Over the past four years, both schools have lost approximately 4-5 students yearly during the transition from 9th to 10th grade or 10th to 11th grade. School A parents believed attrition happened because students wanted to play sports or they missed their friends at traditional high schools in the area. School B participants thought students left their program because they could not pass the placement exams or because their grades
were not adequate to continue in the early college program. School B could not send students back to a base school because it is the only high school in the town. Students that leave the early college program at School B are automatically placed into the school’s CTE program, which is similar to what happened in the early 1900’s when students were placed on one of two tracks – college preparatory or vocational training – based on standardized tests (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Today, the standardized test that keeps students from progressing at early college high schools is the COMPASS or ACCUPLACER test.

The findings at School C support findings from Edmunds (2010) that showed leave rates at some early college high schools were as high as 40% while the national average is 10% annually. Principal Washington acknowledged his school has had problems retaining students to graduation. Almost half of the students that are admitted to his school in 9th grade do not graduate from the school. Over the past four years the school decided to change the number of newly enrolled freshmen from 70 to 60 using the rationale that staff could provide better support to a smaller number of students. This tactic does not appear to have worked, however, since only 33 out of the 60 students that were admitted as freshmen four to five years ago were scheduled to graduate this year.

The findings in Edmunds’ study (2010) also showed the biggest reason students leave early college high schools was because they wanted to participate in extracurricular activities at the traditional high school, which aligned with what School C participants said about the reason for the school’s retention issues. School C participants believed that athletics and student’s desire to play sports and possibly earn athletic scholarships was
the driving force behind many students leaving after their freshmen or sophomore years. An examination of the North Carolina High School Athletic Association (2015) handbook provides insight into why students that are interested in sports might be less inclined to attend or remain at early college high schools:

Students cannot participate in sports if they turn 19 on or before August 31, 2014.

Students must also be a regularly enrolled member of the school’s student body and participate at the school to which he/she is assigned by the local board of education.

A student transferring from a member school to another member school within the same local education agency (LEA) must sit out 365 days for athletic participation.

These rules impact current or future early college high school students in a variety of ways. First, students that complete three years at an early college high school and then transfer to their base school to play sports would not be able to play because they would have to sit out their senior year in order to fulfill the 365-day participation requirement. Second, some LEAs allow early college high school students to play sports at their base school, but those students are not eligible for scholarships based on the “regularly enrolled member of the school’s student body and participate at the school to which he/she is assigned by the local board of education” part of the rules. This appears to be the problem at School C – students are allowed to play sports at their base school, but are not eligible for athletic scholarships.

The role of athletics on student participation or attrition at early college high schools appears to be a unique finding within the current study. While it is true that not all traditional high school students desire to or are eligible to play sports, the fact that the
terms “sports” and “athletics” came up at all three schools signals that this finding bears further investigation.

At the time of the study, principals had received their school’s grade on the state report card which included information about student achievement, class size, school safety, school technology, and teacher quality at all the schools in North Carolina. While School A received an “A” on their report card, Schools B and C received C’s. The way Principals Lewis and Washington handled disseminating and discussing these results demonstrated what Wasonga (2014) and the Wallace Foundation (2011) said about leaders being resilient and balancing competing interests while managing accountability expectations and data. Although neither principal was happy with the report card’s results, neither placed blame on the teachers or minimized their work. Instead Principal Lewis pointed out that students had grown from the previous year while Principal Washington touted the fact that Black males at his school performed better than the state average. Both principals showed “transformational and instructional qualities” that “motivated and supported staff” to come up with ways to continue improving teaching and learning without demoralizing them (Moos, Johansson & Day, 2011).

Early college high schools were designed to increase graduation rates and help students that earn college degrees, so an examination of each school’s performance on both measures showed differences. According to Webb & Myaka (2011), 24 percent of students that graduated from early college high schools earned a 2-year or Associate’s degree and 44 percent earned at least a year of college credit nationally. School A beats these statistics with a 100% graduation rate for the past two years and a 90% HS/2-year
degree rate over the past four years. These statistics show why School A is ranked as one of the top schools in North Carolina. These numbers, however, mask that School A’s academic success might be linked to the school not serving the student population early college high schools were designed to help.

A popular quote attributed to management consultants Peter Drucker and Tom Peters sums up academics at School A and many schools across the nation, “What gets rewarded (or measured) gets done.” North Carolina is a state that tested student’s achievement in core subjects long before the No Child Left Behind legislation, so principals are accustomed to receiving feedback on the success or failure of their schools based on test scores. Principal Robinson’s focus on excellence combined with her desire to make sure students graduate in four (not five) years with a diploma and a 2-year degree showed her desire to ensure she’s doing what is rewarded and measured.

Two schools in the study took advantage of a unique statewide policy that allows early college high schools to utilize a 5-year high school option so students can achieve their 2-year degrees. Principal Robinson was quick to point out, however, that her school does not utilize this option because the practice “does not follow the model.” This pointed back to the fact that even though Schools B and C are held to the same state and national accountability measures as School A, Principals Lewis and Washington did not forsake targeting and admitting the type of students early college high schools were designed to help over academic achievement.
Table 7.3

**Cross Analysis Theme 3 – Academics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Principal Joan Robinson</th>
<th>Principal Karen Lewis</th>
<th>Principal James Washington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Retention Rate</strong></td>
<td>• 4-5 students leave after 9&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; grade to return to base school</td>
<td>• Being only high school in the town impacted retention rates</td>
<td>• Retention was a problem at the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Parents blame athletics and students not being around friends they’re used to</td>
<td>• Students that can’t pass placement exams are enrolled in school’s CTE program</td>
<td>• 2 years ago: 45 students graduated, but 70 started as freshmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Others might leave because parents forced them to come, but they didn’t really want to be at school</td>
<td>• Students that don’t pass placement exam can take classes that are not math, reading or writing intensive</td>
<td>• This year: 33 students will graduate, but 60 started as freshmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Athletics played role in student’s decision to leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Failure to pass college placement tests other reason students leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Standardized Tests</strong></td>
<td>• SAT average surpassed national average three years in a row</td>
<td>• SAT average 100-150 points behind national average for past two years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Received an “A” on state report card</td>
<td>• Received a “C” on state report card</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduation Rates/Degrees Earned</strong></td>
<td>• 100% HS graduation rate</td>
<td>• Graduation rate four points above state average past two years</td>
<td>• 2013: 45 students earned HS diploma; 20 earned 2-yr degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 90% average HS/2-year degree rate over past four yrs</td>
<td>• Last year: One student earned HS diploma/2-yr degree</td>
<td>• 2014: 27 students earned HS diploma; 7 earned 2-yr degrees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• This year: 65 out of 75 graduates received 2-yr degree</td>
<td></td>
<td>• This yr: 37 will earn HS diploma and 17 a 2-yr degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“The 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Year or 13&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; grade”</strong></td>
<td>• Does not utilize a 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; year option</td>
<td>• Encouraged students to take advantage of 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; yr option because classes are online</td>
<td>• Encouraged students to take advantage of 5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; yr option</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Students desiring to move on to community college after HS encouraged to stay</td>
<td>• Had alumni return to reinforce this point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Students called “super seniors”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Principal wants to increase no. that earn 2-yr degree in 4 yrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

234
Theme 4: Culture and Climate Cross-Case Analysis

The fourth theme Culture and Climate described each school’s culture and climate or the “feel” of the school based on participant information and the researcher’s observations. Two subthemes supported the third theme: Safety/Student Discipline and School Culture and Climate. The subtheme Safety/Student Discipline referred to the safety concerns at each school, particularly schools located on college campuses, and how those concerns were addressed. Safety/Student Discipline also explored how principals and teachers dealt with student discipline within the school or when students were on the college campus. The subtheme School Culture and Climate denoted how participants described the culture, climate and “feel” of the school based on their experiences within the school. A cross-case analysis of the theme Culture and Climate follows (see table 5.3).

According to the Wallace Foundation (2011) and Leithwood et al. (2006), one of a principal’s key functions is to provide a safe, cooperative climate that builds trust, equity, care and achievement. Participants at all schools reported their principals performing this function, but with varying degrees of success. While all participants believed their principals created safe environments, each school had their share of incidents that challenged this safety.

One safety issue at Schools A & C was the fact that principals cannot completely control access to their schools because they are located on public college campuses. Principals Robinson and Washington pointed out that they work with college security to ensure their students’ safety, but sometimes incidents were out of their control. For
example, two years ago School A was placed on lockdown because a man with a gun was on the college campus. School A participants reported that despite this intense situation they were confident Principal Robinson and staff members had the situation within the school building under control and that students were safe. Participants at Schools A & C seemed to agree with one teacher that said “safety issues are a part of the early college model” because most are located on college campuses. Despite these thoughts, the current study showed that safety at early college high schools on college campuses remains an issue, especially when a total stranger (i.e. the researcher) could walk through a school with no one questioning her presence, asking for identification or restricting access to the school.

     Principals Robinson and Washington also explained that they constantly informed students that if they behaved poorly while on campus, then they could be removed and banned from the school, which supported findings from Cravey’s study (2007) that showed early college high schools have a zero-tolerance policy towards discipline. Despite speaking with students about their behavior while on campus, Principals Lewis and Washington did not constantly speak with students about compliance or discipline, which contradicted Blasé’s (1991) findings that the biggest communication within schools emphasized compliance and non-confrontation instead of democratic practices. Blasé’s findings were supported at School A because many students reported that Principal Robinson was “overly involved” in their lives especially when she held monthly meetings to talk about behaviors or attitudes students should have while attending the school.
One finding in the current study was students reporting that their schools were safer than traditional high schools because of the lack of fights which aligned with Cravey’s (2013) and Morrow and Torrez’s (2012) findings that showed students desired to attend early college high schools because of their perceived safety and academic culture.

Although School A had an incident involving a man with a gun on campus two years ago and Schools B and C had problems with fights initially at their schools, most participants reported that they felt safer and secure at their current schools than at the traditional school they could have attended. This finding points to closer examination about the perception that fighting and disruption are commonplace at most traditional high schools’ and how these issues impact the culture and climate at those schools. Also, since early college high schools are perceived as being safer than traditional high schools, further examination of this claim is warranted.

Usually when most students arrive on college campuses as freshmen they typically go through an orientation where safety and how to protect yourself while on campus are discussed. Principals Robinson and Washington both stated they spoke with students at the beginning of the year about coming to them if they had negative experiences on the college campus or if someone bothered them, but when one School A female student felt uncomfortable while on an elevator with a man by herself she did not report her concerns and now walks around with a Taser daily. This finding supported what Born (2006) found about students needing to adjust from a high school culture to a college culture shows that more constant discussions with students about their safety and how to respond to or avoid uncomfortable situations might be warranted at Schools A and C.
Finally, participants reported that their school’s climate was “high-functioning,” “like a family,” “collaborative,” “peaceful,” and “focused,” which supported previous findings that early college high schools had a family-like climate that encouraged collaboration and team-work to increase student’s success (Ongaga, 2010; McDonald & Farrell, 2012 and Carter, 2012). Although School A teachers pointed out that being in the “bullpen” had not always been a positive experience,

Principal Robinson received credit for changing the climate from one where teachers were “cliquish” and “contentious” to one where the “bullpen” works together and gets along. Principal Washington also received credit for “upgrading” and getting rid of teachers that did not work well with others or promote the type of teaching that was needed at the school. Principal Robinson’s and Washington’s actions support findings that successful principals transition from leadership models that are bureaucratic and non-inclusive to models that are adaptive, democratic and inclusive so others are empowered and not controlled (DuFour, 1998; NASSP, 2007).
Table 7.4

Cross Analysis Theme 4 – Culture and Climate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Principal Joan Robinson</th>
<th>Principal Karen Lewis</th>
<th>Principal James Washington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety/Student Discipline</td>
<td>• Located on college campus</td>
<td>• Traditional high school campus</td>
<td>• Located on college campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No locked doors or security located at either of two entrances</td>
<td>• Enter through front door, show ID and sign in before going anywhere</td>
<td>• No locked doors or security located near the building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• College campus security provided only security</td>
<td>• Exterior doors unlocked between buildings</td>
<td>• College campus security provided only security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Admitted random people wandered through building and had to redirected</td>
<td>• School resource officer on campus, but shared with the elementary and middle school on same grounds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students told not to fraternize with adults on the campus</td>
<td>• Fights sometimes broke out</td>
<td>• Admitted random people wandered through building to reach library or student support services nearby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Participants thought safety issues were inherent in the ECHS model</td>
<td>• 2 teachers reported being verbally or physically assaulted by students</td>
<td>• Students told not to fraternize with adults on the campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2 yrs ago: Locked down because man on college campus with a gun</td>
<td>• Teachers blame student’s attitudes on principal’s lax discipline enforcement</td>
<td>• Females warned about attire they wear while on campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Parents claimed they felt students were protected and school did all they could</td>
<td>• Principal acknowledged not following district policies/procedures for discipline</td>
<td>• When school first started: Fights broke out; fights non-existent now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One female student carries a Taser daily because concerned about safety on college campus</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Students know they can be charged as adults and banned from high school and college campus if violate college campus safety policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Principal and liaison don’t always agree on discipline</td>
<td></td>
<td>• No participants expressed concerns with principal’s discipline policies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.4

_Cross Analysis Theme 4 – Culture and Climate (continued)_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Principal Joan Robinson</th>
<th>Principal Karen Lewis</th>
<th>Principal James Washington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>School Culture and Climate</strong></td>
<td>Overall positive</td>
<td>One teacher: religion played too big a role in the school</td>
<td>Parents: feel free to contact principal or teachers anytime to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family-oriented</td>
<td>One teacher: nepotism a problem because athletic director was principal’s husband</td>
<td>Teachers: culture “evolving” “more focused”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High-functioning</td>
<td>Teachers: athletes receive preferential treatment</td>
<td>Liaison: everyone supports each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peaceful</td>
<td>Principal: students show they respect the building by keeping school clean</td>
<td>No cliques or picking among teachers or students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students: school lacked spirit</td>
<td>Principal: taught students to “code switch”</td>
<td>Students are a tight-knit group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers: bullpen was contentious, tension-filled, cliquish; now – collaborative, supportive</td>
<td>Principal: school established “community norms”</td>
<td>Principal: empowered teachers to make decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal: school established “community norms”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students feel like they’re at the zoo because people keep coming in and observing them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Students taught “be cordial and check and see if they have a tag”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme 5: Managing the Organization Cross-Case Analysis

The fifth theme, Managing the Organization, examined how principals ran their schools on a daily basis based on participant information. Four subthemes emerged from this theme: Finances, Staffing, Instruction, and Vision and Mission. The first subtheme Finances investigated where money came from to run the schools in the study, what shortfalls existed in each school and how the principal and other stakeholders worked to overcome funding deficits. The second subtheme Staffing referred to how each school was staffed and challenges all faced because of staff shortages or turnover. The subtheme Instruction described the various programs and strategies each school used to promote student achievement. The fourth subtheme, Vision and Mission, discussed the short-term and long-term goals and purpose principals and participants reported for their schools. A cross-case analysis of the theme Managing the Organization follows (see table 5.4).

Goldring and Greenfield (2005) posited that principals must often make moral decisions about the allocations of resources such as time, money, materials and staff which presented a unique challenge. The current study supported this claim as all principals had challenges balancing availability of finances with staffing and material decisions, although these concerns were not equal across the schools. While School A was located in a small city with an average tax base Schools B and C are located in more rural areas of North Carolina with less tax support. This allowed School A to provide resources above and beyond what Schools B and C had.

Principal Robinson was the only principal in the study that received funding for an assistant principal, whereas Principal Lewis lost her assistant principal because district
officials decided to allocate funds for two teacher’s salaries. This led to issues at Schools B and C for their guidance counselors and liaisons that were acting as “quasi-administrators” and taking on duties normally reserved for assistant principals. This issue appeared to be a unique finding among early college high schools and bears further examination.

The funding disparities at the three schools support findings that inequities in schools with the highest population of students of color and lower income students continue particularly in relation to school funding and resource allocation (Evans, 2005; Gardner, 2007). One way Principal Lewis mitigated her school’s lack of resources was through grants. Many programs and materials at School B such as the laptops, the CTE program and the new math program existed because Principal Lewis wrote grants and won funding for her school. This leads to an answer about what principals in similar situations, particularly principals at rural schools, can do to overcome funding disparities at their schools.

The findings that neither School A nor C had special education or ESL teachers matched Cordes’ (2012) findings that schools with high concentrations of students of color and lower-income students experienced reduced teaching staffs and inadequate services, which greatly impact the school’s ability to serve their students. Since School B began as a traditional high school before starting an early college program, the school was the only one in the study funded like a small high school with a full staff and district-funded athletics program. The only way School A was able to fund its athletics program was through charging fees per sport and fundraisers. These disparities in funding and
staffing supported Leonard’s (2013) findings that finances and funding for early college high schools must be considered for sustainability.

While Schools A and B enjoyed district support for their continued operation, School C’s district seemed to have a “hands-off” or “out of sight out of mind” approach toward the school, which translated to the district ignoring School C’s financial and staffing needs. These findings raise issues about the impact of the district’s support, particularly in relation to finances and staffing, to the success and sustainability of early college high schools, especially as more early college high schools open across the country.

Principals in the current study used various instructional strategies, professional development and programs to promote their student’s success. While other studies (Born, 2006; AIR/SRI, 2010; Oliver et al, 2010 and Alaie, 2011) revealed that early college high schools used strong academic supports to accelerate student’s learning, most studies have not provided a detailed examination of these supports. The availability and type of support each school provided was directly tied to each school’s funding, number of staff members and principal’s perception of what would work in their schools. All schools in the study had an advisor/advisee program, required students to participate in a college-level freshmen seminar class upon arrival at the school and used teachers as tutors for college-level classes, which supported Born’s (2006) findings that early college high schools used these interventions to increase student success. School A was the only one in the study to talk about specific instructional strategies such as single-sex freshmen classes and mastery-based learning to promote student success.
According to Principal Robinson both programs “helped students achieve more and increase their learning,” but no evidence pointed to these claims. School A has enjoyed ten years of academic success as evidenced by their test scores and other quantitative data, but single-sex classes and mastery-based learning were implemented two years ago. Principal Robinson claimed that student’s performance increased since the implementation of both programs, but there was no statistical evidence to support her assertions. No School A participants mentioned mastery-based learning having any impact on student achievement. While parents and teachers said that single-sex classes helped “remove distractions” and “girls can share their ideas especially in math,” students did not report that single-sex classes impacted their learning.

Another reason claims that single-sex classes increased student achievement were suspect is because girls outnumber boys two to one at School A; therefore, girls could feel safe to share their ideas because they are the majority at the school and not because of the single-sex classes. Further examination about the impact of both programs on student learning at School A and other schools that use single-sex classes and mastery-based learning is warranted.

An examination of principal’s vision and mission for their schools and students provided insight into the values participants believed their principal’s held. While School A participants, including the principal, thought Principal Robinson’s vision was “to excel and be on top,” “the model,” “to win” and “to make sure students are college ready,” participants at Schools B and C believed their principals were motivated by love and care for their students because Principals Lewis and Washington wanted to make sure students
had a better future. This difference in vision and mission spoke volumes about Principal Robinson’s leadership.

While it’s true that all principals had a vision of academic success for their students (Wallace Foundation, 2011), Principal Robinson seemed to place achievement over concern for students and discussed them in terms of statistical data, but not as people. During the two days the researcher spent at the school, no students ever interacted with Principal Robinson neither in the office nor in the halls. Students came back and forth to the office to see the secretary and teachers or spoke with teachers and staff members in the hall, but as the researcher received a tour of the building from the principal she did not interact with students nor did they interact with her even to say hello.

This was not the case at Schools B and C – as the researcher walked around with Principals Robinson and Washington, students came up to talk, said hello and genuinely looked happy to see their principals. This finding further supports information about School A’s climate and might help explain why the school lacks what one student called “spirit.” The school might lack spirit because Principal Robinson seemed to place greater value on achievement and “the numbers” than she did student’s experiences while attending the school.
### Table 7.5

**Cross Analysis Theme 5 – Managing the Organization**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Principal Joan Robinson</th>
<th>Principal Karen Lewis</th>
<th>Principal James Washington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finances</strong></td>
<td>Money for school comes from recurring budget of the General Assembly</td>
<td>County funded school like a regular small high school based on enrollment numbers</td>
<td>County funded school like a small elementary school based on enrollment numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funding happens because school serves at least 80% first gen students</td>
<td>Students do not pay fees for anything including athletics</td>
<td>No assistant principal or athletic funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County funded school like an elem school based on enrollment</td>
<td>School does not have assistant principal because money used to hire two teachers this yr</td>
<td>MOU spells out who pays what in the partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asst principal paid by county funds</td>
<td>Principal wrote multiple grants for school</td>
<td>Principal: school pays student’s books and some fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No athletic or music/band funding</td>
<td>Grants funded 1:1 laptop initiative, CTE program and PD and staffing for math program</td>
<td>Principal: school cuts costs by renting books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents that want students to participate in sports must pay $125 fee per sport</td>
<td></td>
<td>Principal wrote grant for school’s 1:1 laptop initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staffing</strong></td>
<td>24 teachers and staff</td>
<td>20 teachers and staff</td>
<td>10 teachers at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School has an AP Teachers: staffing used to be a problem but principal has done better job hiring</td>
<td>School has no AP (as of this year; money used to hire two new teachers)</td>
<td>High teacher turnover 4 yrs ago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A teacher: people think working at school will be easy</td>
<td>Principal – thinks larger schools had it easier</td>
<td>Parents: teachers that replaced other ones were an “upgrade”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers: ideal ECHS teacher is open-minded, not willing to fit into a mold, not afraid to change or fail</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parents: teachers “wear a lot of hats”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Liaison: used as a quasi-administrator; people confuse her role</td>
<td>Liaison and principal believed district did not support the school in funding or staffing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Principal blamed high district leadership turnover for school being overlooked</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 7.5

**Cross Analysis Theme 5 – Managing the Organization (continued)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Principal Joan Robinson</th>
<th>Principal Karen Lewis</th>
<th>Principal James Washington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instruction</strong></td>
<td>• PAA (personal adult advocate) acted as “school parents” and “liaisons between parents and school”</td>
<td>• College-level freshmen seminar required from all students</td>
<td>• College-level freshmen seminar required from all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• SAS (student academic support)</td>
<td>• Teachers help tutor students on college-class work</td>
<td>• Teachers help tutor students on college-class work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Single-sex classes</td>
<td>• Advisor-advisee program</td>
<td>• College moved student support center closer to school to help students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mastery-based learning</td>
<td>• PD – state consultant came to train teachers on effective math practices</td>
<td>• Advisor-advisee program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• PD – Ruby Paine’s training on poverty</td>
<td>• No negative math talk allowed in building</td>
<td>• College professors complete weekly progress reports for each high school student that asked about the student’s attendance, behavior and general academic progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teach students to “style shift”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vision and Mission</strong></td>
<td>• Teachers: Principal’s vision is the model and students to be college-ready</td>
<td>• Parents and students: Principal motivated by students</td>
<td>• Parents and liaison: Principal “focused on student’s futures”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Parents: Principal “driven to win” and “be a rock star”</td>
<td>• Teachers and students: Principal loves the students</td>
<td>• Students: “He cares about us so much… If we didn't come to school one day, he notices it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students: Principal wants to be a winner</td>
<td>• Teachers: Principal wants an “A” on state report card</td>
<td>• Teachers: Principal not interested in test scores; wants to see how much students have grown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Principal: Strives for excellence and to be on top</td>
<td>• Principal: Students are her biggest motivation; doesn’t want location to determine quality of education students receive</td>
<td>• Principal: Cares about the kids; students need to see other things out there besides where they are now</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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247
Theme 6: Relationships Cross-Case Analysis

The sixth theme, Relationships, described how stakeholders worked together to promote student success. This theme consisted of two subthemes: Outside the School and Inside the School. The subtheme Inside the School referred to the relationships between and among principals, teachers, students and the early college liaison within each school. The subtheme Outside the School explored the relationships between and among stakeholders outside the school including parents, the surrounding community, businesses or organizations and the international community. A cross-case analysis of the theme Relationships follows (see table 7.6).

Numerous studies on early college high schools (Born, 2006; Aviles-Reyes, 2007; Watlington, 2008; Kanuika & Vickers, 2010; Ongaga, 2010 and Woodcock & Olsen, 2013) showed that relationships matter and successful principals build or maintain relationships including professional learning communities that connect home, school and community (Harris, 2002). The current study delved deeper into the relationships between and among stakeholders within and outside the schools that impacted the school and student success.

All schools in the study did not support the claim that leadership is distributed since contributions from teachers, parents and students are valued because principals did not value stakeholder’s input equally (Ylimaki & Jacobson, 2011). School A teachers believed Principal Robinson was their “professional leader” that “supported their personal endeavors” and “offered constructive feedback after observations,” but admitted that she did not have “many interpersonal relationships at the school.” School B teachers

248
offered contradictory views on the principal-teacher relationship – one believed the principal did not support teachers while others thought Principal Lewis was supportive and had “an open door policy” that encouraged teachers to seek her advice and knowledge when needed. School C participants had the most positive thoughts about their principal when they described the principal-teacher relationship with Principal Washington as “it’s like we’re related” and “brothers and sisters.” Perhaps one reason for disparities in the principal-teacher relationships at the study schools was because of staff size. Whereas School C had ten teachers total on staff, both Schools A and B have over 20 teachers, which makes not only for diverse opinions but also a decreased likelihood that everyone will like each other or get along.

Another reason for the disparities might lie with whether teachers feel empowered. Whereas Principal Washington admitted that he empowered teachers to make decisions and School C teachers said they felt included in decisions, none of the teachers at Schools A and B had similar feelings. School A teachers believed Principal Robinson consulted with them on most decisions, but she ultimately made all final decisions. School B participants also did not mention being included in the decision-making process, but they did say that Principal Lewis had an “open door policy” and they believed they could bring issues to her and they would be dealt with in a timely manner. The diverse principal-teacher experiences supported claims that principals face challenges working with teachers because they believed their voices were silenced in school affairs (Johnson, 1988; Conley, 1991 and Wasley, 1992).
The current study also examined the principal-student relationship at each school, which is an under-researched area on successful schools and early college high schools. Overall, students described their principals as “more interactive than most principals,” “caring,” “energetic,” “involved in our lives” and “tha’ bomb.com.” While principals generally were thought of positively, some students at School A described Principal Robinson as being “abrasive” and “overly involved” in student’s lives. Student’s comments at Schools B and C showed that they trust their principals and believed Principals Robinson and Washington had their best interests at heart at all times.

While students offered positive views on the principal-student relationship, teachers and liaisons at Schools B and C believed there were times when the relationship was “too friendly,” “too nurturing,” and “too loving,” because Principals Lewis and Washington “lacked authority/discipline.” Since Schools B and C have diverse student populations, these findings support previous studies on culturally responsive leaders that emphasized high expectations for students and an ethic of care instead of focusing on disciplining and trying to control students (Reitzug & Patterson, 1998; Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; and Lomotey, 1989). Since early college high schools were designed to help students with college-going process learning how to act like adults instead of being treated like children all the time should factor into how students are treated, so principal’s lack of focus on discipline made sense.

The current study supported claims that the teacher-student relationship was one key reason students succeeded at early college high schools (Trevino, 2006; Ongaga, 2010; Thompson & Ongaga, 2011). Student participants at all three schools reported that their
teachers were “awesome,” “approachable,” “wanted us to achieve,” and “they know all our names.” While most comments about the teacher-student relationship were positive, School B students acknowledged that “some teachers are more dedicated than others,” which showed that early college high school principals need to make hiring nurturing, culturally sensitive teachers a top priority if the school’s mission are to be completed realized (Born, 2006; Cravey, 2013).

The current study supported claims that the school-college partner relationship was rife with tension and confusion at times, but when the partnership worked well both sides benefitted immensely (Williams & Southers, 2010; McAdams, 2012; Howley et al., 2013). School A appeared to have the most controversial relationship with its college partner. While study participants believed college administrators were receptive to the school’s presence on campus, they also believed that not all professors or community college students were happy to work or attend classes with high school students. The liaison disclosed that some professors fed the antagonism when they pointed out to other students that “these kids are in high school and they’re outperforming you.” School A teachers admitted they had to advocate for their students because many were “singled out and turned in for everything” when they really were not causing disruptions.

Additional findings showed that tension between Principal Washington, the district and the community college occurred yearly when the school’s memorandum of understanding was discussed. This leads to questions about how college faculty and other college students respond to early college high school students and why animosity between the groups exists. The findings also point to a closer examination of
memorandums of understanding across early college high schools to gain a sense of what parts of the contract cause the greatest disagreement and how that could impact the school’s sustainability and success in the future.

While School A had problems with college faculty welcoming their students, college faculty at Schools B and C demonstrated they wanted to work with the early college high schools in various ways. Although classes at School B are offered at a distance, professors are now willing to drive 90 minutes to the school once a month as a show that they support the students. Professors at School C’s partner college plan quarterly with teachers across the English and Math curriculum, a practice many early colleges hope to start and maintain (Howley et al., 2013).

The current study also supported findings that many educators believe students of color and low-income families do not value education or want their children to be successful like white parents and families (Valencia, 1997; Brandon, 2003; Weiner, 2003 and Yosso, 2005). Even though parents have to apply for their children to attend early college high schools, participants thought the school-parent relationship overall was poor, especially when it came to parents contributing time at the school. Schools B and C did not have active parent-teacher organizations (PTO) at the time of the study. Principal Robinson mandated parent participation by threatening to withhold student’s opportunity to march at graduation if parents failed to volunteer four hours yearly at the school. Although School A had the highest parent participation among the three schools, forced participation should not be a requirement at any school, especially a public school. Many parents of color and lower-income parents face challenges when it comes to participating
in school events including work schedules, transportation, a feeling that the school would not value their opinion and prior bad experiences when they were in school (Conley, 1991). Based on the findings in the current study, further examination of parent participation and parent engagement at early college high schools is warranted.

Finally, the school-community relationship showed that part of a principal’s job is to guide and develop the public’s understanding of and support for the role public education plays in developing a more socially just and democratic society (Goldring & Greenfield, 2005). While Schools A and B held mostly positive perceptions within the community, Principal Washington admitted that the community where his school is located still did not understand the value or purpose of the early college high school. This finding suggested that Principal Washington needed to do a better job helping the voting public understand that today’s schools must ensure that all students learn regardless of race or location and that accomplishing this goal requires changes in how schooling occurs, which is why early college high schools exist. While it might be true that some community members might not value education, as several participants asserted, principals and teachers must advocate for public education as the best way to ensure that all students acquire the skills, dispositions and knowledge they will need to be culturally competent and productive citizens in the future (Ladson-Billings, 2004).
Table 7.6

Cross Analysis Theme 6 – Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th>Principal Joan Robinson</th>
<th>Principal Karen Lewis</th>
<th>Principal James Washington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inside the School</td>
<td>• Teachers: principal was “professional leader”</td>
<td>• Teacher didn’t feel supported</td>
<td>• Teachers: Relationship with principal “like we’re related”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Parents: principal doesn’t have many interpersonal relationships at school</td>
<td>• Another teacher: Principal was supportive and had “open door policy”</td>
<td>• Liaison: Teachers think principal ‘lacked discipline” but teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Principal provided teachers with constructive feedback after observations</td>
<td>• Principal: Tried to encourage teachers after “C” on state report card</td>
<td>did not agree with this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Principal supported teachers’ personal endeavors</td>
<td>• Liaison and teachers: relationship between principal and students</td>
<td>• Principal: “Hands off” with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Teachers comfortable to tell principal they’re looking for another job</td>
<td>&quot;too friendly” “too nurturing” “too much love” “not enough authority”</td>
<td>• Student note: “Mr. Washington was tha’ bomb.com”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students: Principal “more interactive with students than traditional HS principals”</td>
<td>• Students: Principal “caring” “energetic” “fashionable” “cares about our personal experiences”</td>
<td>• Student: Principal involved in their lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Monthly grade level meetings</td>
<td>• Students: Principal advocated on our behalf with teachers and at the district level</td>
<td>• Teachers: Students go to principal if they’re in trouble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student: Principal “abrasive” and “overly involved” in their lives</td>
<td>• Students: Some teachers more dedicated than others</td>
<td>• Teachers: Serve as student’s surrogate families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student: Criticism of principal not warranted</td>
<td>• Teachers: Relationship with students “tight”</td>
<td>• Teachers: Students talk to us about personal issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students: Teachers “awesome” and approachable</td>
<td>• All teachers know students’ names</td>
<td>• Teachers “wear many hats”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students: Teachers want us “to achieve and rise to the top”</td>
<td>• School had advisor-advisee program</td>
<td>• Students: All the teachers know our names</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students: Some teachers don’t embrace EC concept</td>
<td>• Students: Video conference with professors for help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.6

_Cross Analysis Theme 6 – Relationships (continued)_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme</th>
<th><strong>Principal Joan Robinson</strong></th>
<th><strong>Principal Karen Lewis</strong></th>
<th><strong>Principal James Washington</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outside the School</strong></td>
<td>Relationship between school and college strained at times</td>
<td>Liaison: Students don’t bring questions to her</td>
<td>Parents: Frustrated college won’t share child’s grades because of FERPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professors treat students unfairly because they don’t want students there</td>
<td>Liaison: Relationship with college improved; professors visited campus monthly to teach face-to-face in addition to distance classes</td>
<td>Parents: Rules need to change to match situation where minors are taking the classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professors cause tension between students and college adults when students pointed out for outperforming adults</td>
<td>Parents: Low parent involvement</td>
<td>Teachers meet with professors quarterly to align instruction in Math and English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers: Professors singled out students behaviorally</td>
<td>No active PTO</td>
<td>Principal and liaison: School-Parent relationship needed to improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liaison: Professors and college students resent that students receive free college</td>
<td>Principal: Relationship with college improved after a vice president left</td>
<td>No active PTO for past three years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liaison prepared students to know they might not be welcomed at college</td>
<td>Principal: Community thought positively about school and saw school as a place to earn free college credits</td>
<td>Liaison: Community doesn’t value education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students make sure professors grade them fairly</td>
<td>Liaison: Relationship with college improved</td>
<td>Liaison: School-college relationship positive and college moved student support services near the school to support students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liaison thought relationship with college admins good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal visited parent’s workplaces and businesses</td>
<td>Principal and liaison: School-Parent relationship needed to improve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents required to volunteer four hours yearly or child doesn’t march at graduation</td>
<td>No active PTO for past three years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Principal: PAA program strengthened school-parent relationship</td>
<td>Liaison: Community doesn’t value education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Active PSO org</td>
<td>Principal and liaison: School-Parent relationship needed to improve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No active PTO for past three years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Liaison: Community doesn’t value education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Liaison: School-college relationship positive and college moved student support services near the school to support students</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Cross-Analysis using Conceptual Framework

A cross-analysis of principal’s leadership using the conceptual framework shows that all three principals demonstrated the qualities and characteristics of being democratic leaders, but varying practices that related to being socially just, culturally responsive leaders (see Table 7.7).

An analysis of the findings using the conceptual framework shows that early college high school principals must balance several competing interests such as access, relationship building, management of the organization and school accountability. The purpose of early college high schools are to increase college access and high school completion rates for first generation, lower-income students and students of color (NC New Schools, 2013). At times this purpose conflicts with federal mandates specifying that principals must show that all students are successful and achieving as measured through standardized tests that have been mandated at the state and federal levels. Examining how principals navigate these competing interests using the conceptual framework provides insight into each principal’s beliefs and values about access and opportunity for students that have been traditionally underserved and underrepresented.

All three principals demonstrated democratic leadership, but in different ways. Principal Robinson encouraged collaboration among teachers using weekly planning meetings every Wednesday. School A also arranged teacher’s desks in a common area called “the bullpen,” which supported daily teacher interaction. Principals Lewis and Washington had open door policies where teachers and students felt welcome enough to use the principal’s offices for homework or as a place to escape from the school’s
environment as was shown when an autistic student came to use Principal Washington’s office during lunch.

Principal Robinson sought student voices during monthly grade level meetings, but not because she was taking their opinions or desires into consideration. School A student participants did not report that Principal Robinson included them in school decisions. Principal Robinson also was not an advocate for her students. Principals Lewis and Washington advocated for students at the school level as evidenced by them constantly working with teachers to help them understand that discipline should be administered based on student’s individual cases not through blanket, zero-tolerance policies that exist at most schools. Although both principal’s actions at times conflicted with teacher’s beliefs that student behavior should be controlled, Principals Lewis and Washington thought that treating students with respect and valuing them as individuals was more important. Principals Lewis and Washington did not believe that students should lose access or the opportunity to attend the early college high school because of minor disciplinary issues that the students might have had while in middle school or while they were in high school.

Many educators say that they want all students to succeed, but words without deeds or actions changes nothing. A socially just leader, however, acts upon their belief that all students should have access to a quality education so they will have the opportunity to obtain an education that will benefit their future. Socially just leaders challenge the status quo and create change within their schools. Since many students of color and lower-income students continue to languish in America’s schools, having principals that
practice socially just leadership is imperative if our nation is to alter the educational trajectory of students that have been traditionally disenfranchised and underserved. Since early college high schools are designed to change the educational experiences of first generation, students of color and lower-income students, an examination of how principals demonstrate socially just leadership is warranted.

Principal Robinson did not demonstrate socially just leader because she valued achievement and having the top test scores over ensuring that traditionally disenfranchised students had access to her school. For example, only 5 out of 400 students that applied for admission last year were Black yet neither Principal Robinson nor the teachers and parents seemed to be concerned about this fact. School A participants believed that gaining access to the school was a privilege and that only select students should have the opportunity to attend the school, which runs counter to the beliefs and actions of a socially just leader.

Principal Robinson also did not exhibit the qualities of a socially just leader because of her deficit thinking about students with disabilities and ESL students and their ability to be successful at her school. Principal Robinson valued following the early college model over coming up with creative ways to lead her school based student needs. Principal Robinson maintained the status quo when she did not alter the school’s 10-year application and admissions process so more Black and male students would attend the school. Finally, Principal Robinson’s requirement that teachers attend the Ruby Paine training on poverty reinforced stereotypical beliefs about how lower-income and students of color learn and achieve in school. Instead of seeking professional development that did
not encourage deficit-thinking among teachers, she sought out and used outdated strategies for working with traditionally underserved students.

Principals Lewis and Washington personified socially just leadership, which is the type of leader early college high schools need based on the school’s purpose. Both principals wrote grants that started their schools and then allowed open access because they believed that historically underserved and underrepresented students should have the same education and services that more affluent students received. Neither principal wanted the location of their schools to dictate a student’s success or failure. Study participants also reported that both principals showed that they loved, respected and cared about their students, which helped students be more willing to take risks and participate in each school’s rigorous early college program.

Each principal demonstrated culturally responsive leadership, although Principal Robinson’s actions painted a contradictory picture about cultural responsiveness. All three principals had high expectations of their students and worked to create a family-like environment within their schools, but this is where the similarities between the three end.

Principal Robinson’s requirement that teachers participate in training on Ruby Paine’s teaching about poverty showed that she was aware of student’s culture but did not encourage them to maintain their cultural and ethnic identities. Principal Robinson’s push to establish “community norms” about everything from what people could warm up in a microwave to what type of perfume or clothing a person could wear and her teaching students about code-switching showed that she expected students to assimilate into the mainstream culture upon arrival at the school. Students reported that the school lacked
spirit, which was not surprising since a person’s spirit is the essence of who they are and Principal Robinson believes everyone should act the same this leaves little room for individual action or expression.

Principals Lewis and Washington exhibited cultural responsiveness when they challenged teacher’s deficit thinking about student’s behavior and achievement. Both principals also had an ethic of care and love toward their students and the communities where they served. Principal Lewis’ sons attended and graduated from the county’s schools, which gave her credibility within the school. Principal Washington gained credibility with parents and students when he fired and dismissed teachers that did not value the students or the school’s purpose and mission.
Table 7.7

Cross-analysis table of principals using conceptual framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Democratic Leadership</th>
<th>Principal Joan Robinson</th>
<th>Principal Karen Lewis</th>
<th>Principal James Washington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouraged teachers collaborate through weekly planning and structural changes in the “bullpen”</td>
<td>Open door policy encouraged participation and inclusion of stakeholder voices</td>
<td>Empowered teachers and students to participate in decision-making</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sought student voices during monthly grade-level meetings</td>
<td>Advocated for students within and outside school</td>
<td>Advocated for students inside and outside the school particularly in terms of discipline and providing opportunities for students to see life outside the town</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listened at multiple perspectives before making a decision</td>
<td>Approach to discipline less about control and compliance and more about respecting and treating students as individuals</td>
<td>Wrote grant seven years ago to start school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socially Just Leadership</th>
<th>Principal Joan Robinson</th>
<th>Principal Karen Lewis</th>
<th>Principal James Washington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not demonstrate this type of leadership</td>
<td>Demonstrated through her values and beliefs about education for traditionally marginalized and underserved students</td>
<td>Demonstrated through his values and beliefs about education for traditionally marginalized and underserved students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrated deficit thinking when she said special ed and ESL students would not be successful at the school</td>
<td>Came up with creative solutions to overcome funding and programming deficits</td>
<td>Wanted students to receive an education equal to every other student in the state</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in following the model more than taking risks and coming up with creative solutions for problems</td>
<td>Wrote grants to bring early college program to the formally traditional school</td>
<td>Did not want location to dictate student’s success or failure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintained status quo in application and admissions process, which had been in place 10 yrs</td>
<td>Wrote grants to bring laptops, the CTE program and math professional development and programming</td>
<td>Students considered him to be loving and respectful</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required outdated Ruby Paine training that reinforced stereotypes</td>
<td>Cared, loved and respected students and let them know that location would not dictate their future</td>
<td>Students felt valued</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced parent participation which is not emancipatory</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hiring decisions based on whether teacher valued the school’s purpose and mission</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Showed empathy for transgendered and gay students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.7

Cross-analysis table of principals using conceptual framework (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culturally Responsive Leadership</th>
<th>Principal Joan Robinson</th>
<th>Principal Karen Lewis</th>
<th>Principal James Washington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Demonstrated some of this type of leadership</td>
<td>• Believed early college program would prepare students to be a positive force in the world</td>
<td>• Emphasized high expectations, an ethic of care and commitment to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Set high expectations for herself, staff and students</td>
<td>• Emphasized high expectations for students, an ethic of care and commitment to the community</td>
<td>• Challenged deficit thinking among teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Created family-like culture among teachers and students, however, she lacked a true relationship with either group</td>
<td>• Raised her 3 sons in the community and they graduated from the high school she leads now</td>
<td>• Fired/dismissed teachers that did not value the students or the school's purpose and mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Required Ruby Paine training and speaking with students about code-switching showed she was aware of student's culture, but did not encourage them to maintain cultural and ethnic identities</td>
<td>• Challenged deficit thinking that existed among teachers</td>
<td>• Students felt free to learn and express their themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “Community norms” equal assimilation</td>
<td>• Valued student success and having opportunity to obtain higher ed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Yearly international festival only way culture was ‘embraced’</td>
<td></td>
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The Research Questions Answered

The two questions guiding the current study were:

1. **How do early college high school principals promote the success of the first generation, lower-income students and students of color they serve?**

   The answer to this question requires an examination of the six themes and how they speak to the purpose of early college high schools, which is to increase college access and high school completion rates for first generation, lower-income students and students of color (NC New Schools, 2013). The six themes reveal a difference in approaches each principal took to promote success. This difference exist around three issues: access, school management and leadership identity. The importance of relationships is found across these three issues with study participants expressing different beliefs about building and maintaining relationships at the three schools.

   In each school, principals faced issues centered on access as seen in theme 1 (Access and Equity) and theme 2 (Academics). The main difference in access existed over how each principal defined success. When success was defined as achievement, access was limited. When success was defined as access and opportunity, the target student population for the initiative was served.

   Principal Robinson had better test scores and the most students graduating with high school diplomas and 2-year degrees, yet she failed in her responsibility to open access to the school for students that have traditionally been underserved and underrepresented so that students from these populations
would have the opportunity to participate in the early college program. Principal Robinson believed that success was defined by measures of student performance and focused her efforts to recruit and retain first generation students.

Conversely, Principals Lewis and Washington placed achieving the goal of access to early college high schools over performance as measured by test scores and achievement tests. Both of these principals recognized that opportunity was achieved through access to the program and the introduction of rigor. Both leaders acknowledged the importance of achievement, but their focus was on the creating a school that was characterized by forming relationships and meeting individual student needs as a precursor of student success. Although Principal Washington’s school had retention issues, the students that remained until their senior and 5th year successfully earned their diplomas and 2-year degrees.

Principals promoted the success of their schools based on their individual definitions of success and the way they managed their schools. This is seen in theme 3 (Culture and Climate) and theme 4 (Managing the Organization). In School A, Principal Robinson focused on the use of the early college high school model when she took over the school four years ago. Further, she managed the organization the way a principal would lead a traditional high school. Teachers were required to plan together, communication with stakeholders was mandated and the success of the program was defined by student performance on standardized exams. Two innovations that existed in
School A was the use of single-sex classes and mastery-based learning, but there was no evidence that either intervention had any effect on student performance.

On the other hand, Principals Lewis and Washington created a climate within their schools where stakeholders felt welcomed and valued. Their creative and innovative approaches to managing the organization were guided by their desire to adjust the school environment to meet student needs. When questioned about instructional programs at their schools, both principals focused on relationship-building first. Principal Lewis wrote grants to secure technology for her students so that college instruction could be delivered online. Both principals used the 5th year strategy to achieve desired program outcomes.

Theme 6 (Identity) revealed differences in principal’s belief systems and their motivation to become an educational leader. Consistent with literature on school staffing, all principals in this study were White although their childhood socioeconomic backgrounds differed. Each principal had a strong desire to help students be successful, a strong work ethic and were committed to their respective schools. The differences the principals took in their approach to leadership centered on belief systems each had about how leaders should act. Principal Robinson believed that successful leaders create organizations that are based on existing model. She also thought she was a servant leader who was called to help her students succeed. In contrast, Principals Lewis and Washington exhibited an ethic of care and their leadership styles and beliefs
were heavily influenced by past personal and professional experiences and characterized in their empathy toward students.

Theme 5 (Relationships) spanned each of the three differences mentioned above; there were differences in each principal’s views about the value and use of relationships and how this impacted access, management and leaders’ identity. Principals Lewis and Washington were able to achieve the purpose of the early college high school because of their personal beliefs and values about building relationships within and outside the school while creating a safe and supportive culture. Both principals genuinely cared about their students, their teachers and the communities they served. Participants at both schools reported their schools were family-like and had a collaborative culture. Both principals valued empowerment, empathy, love and trust over personal recognition, control and success based on test performance.

Conversely, Principal Robinson did not achieve the purpose of the early college high school through relationship-building as evidenced by three events: her requirement that teachers contact parents every 15 days, her mandate that parents had to volunteer four hours every year and the requirement that students complete 50 volunteer hours yearly. These actions showed that Principal Robinson valued artificial relationships and control over organic relationships that fostered a creativity and innovation.
2. **How do early college high school principals demonstrate the qualities and characteristics of democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders?**

The second research question in this study was posed with the goal of adding to the literature base on successful school leadership. As described in the literature review, the role of the principal has been studied extensively. Findings from the literature suggest that successful school leaders set the vision and mission of their schools, manage the organization, develop the organization and focus on teaching and learning (Leithwood et al, 2008; The Wallace Foundation, 2011). Missing from this literature is an examination of leadership dispositions, especially in schools that serve a large percentage of students from historically underserved and underrepresented backgrounds.

Using the six themes found in the current study, principal beliefs and actions were examined according to the proposed theoretical framework of democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leadership. Findings suggest that early college high school principals demonstrate the qualities and characteristics of democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders based on actions they take within their schools to promote the success of the students they serve. The leadership framework that was proposed in this study was not found to exist in all three schools which has implications for student outcomes and the importance of leadership dispositions in achieving school goals.

Principal Robinson placed success and performance over increasing access and providing equitable opportunities for traditionally underserved and
underrepresented students, which runs counter to the purpose of the school. She did demonstrate democratic leadership because she believed in getting multiple perspectives on issues and allowing all stakeholders to voice their opinions on school-related issues.

Principal Robinson did not demonstrate socially just leadership because she maintained the status quo on access and admission to her school that had been in place ten years. Since the neither target student population nor students with special needs attend her school, the success and accolades she’s received for the school’s academic performance is minimized because most of the students that go to the school would likely have been successful regardless of the type of school that they attended. Finally, Principal Robinson was more interested in “sameness” and “community norms” than the students maintaining their individualism while attending the school. This led to the school’s identity being defined by performance, not based on how the school had made a difference or changed the life or educational trajectory of underserved and underrepresented students.

On the other hand, Principals Lewis and Washington demonstrated democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leadership, which is the type of leadership that is needed if the school’s purpose is to be successfully achieved. Both leaders challenged the status quo and teacher’s deficit thinking about how students of color learn and achieve. They pushed students to excel and implemented rigorous programs to make sure their students were as competitive
as students in more affluent school districts. Although they did not share the
same skin color as many students at their schools, students reported that they felt
loved, encouraged and safe to learn. Both principals led their schools based on
individual beliefs that access and opportunity should outweigh performance and
opportunity as measured in test scores.

Based on the findings from this study, each leader’s dispositions promoted
student success because they created organizations that were aligned with their
personal values, invested in staff development and built or maintained
relationships included professional learning communities that connected home,
school and the community (Harris, 2002). While Principal Robinson created an
organization that promoted student success as measured by standardized test
scores and performance, Principals Lewis and Washington created organizations
that that promoted access and opportunity over performance.

According to Goldring & Greenfield (2005), principals must act as
advocates for the students they serve by encouraging communities and business
leaders to elect officials that adopt policies and practices that improve life
circumstances that interfere with a student’s ability to succeed in school. All
principals in the current study advocated for their students at the district and
state levels or worked with businesses to provide the resources or programs their
schools needed.

Principals Lewis and Washington also served as stewards when they
challenged the anti-intellectual belief that academic learning is useful only for a
few and not needed for all. Both principals were more interested in providing students with access and the opportunity to participate in this innovative early college high school program whereas Principal Robinson and most School A participants believed the early college program should be reserved for the best students with no regard for ensuring that historically underserved and underrepresented students in the area that needed the program were admitted.

Finally, Principals Lewis and Washington helped their teachers understand that students of color and White students respond differently to engagement strategies, so schools must foster an environment where learning happens for all through culturally-responsive teaching and practices (Ladson-Billings, 2004). Both principals modeled the behavior and practices they wanted their teachers to adopt, particularly in relation to respecting students as individuals, having high expectations for students and not viewing students through deficit-thinking lenses.

Principal Robinson, however, did not model culturally-responsive leadership behaviors and practices. The school culture she created was one that did not value differences or student’s individuality and culture. Principal Robinson’s ideal school environment was one that followed the early college model verbatim, not one that was built around student’s needs and strengths. Her leadership runs counter to the way schools with a high percentage of students of color should operate.
Early college high school principals should be more interested in promoting access while creating equitable opportunities for students to succeed because the goals of the initiative are to promote access and opportunity. Early college high school principals must ensure that students that traditionally have underperformed in regular schools have the opportunity to receive a rigorous, accelerated education that will prepare them for more challenging college-level classes.

Most principals are focused on academic achievement and success as measured through test scores and school report cards, but the success of early college high schools and schools with a high percentage of historically underserved and underrepresented students centers on several questions: Are early college high school principals achieving the school’s purposes? Are traditional school principals creating environments that promote the success of the students of color and lower-income students in their buildings? If yes, how do you know? Is your definition of success centered on principals providing all students with access and the opportunity to be successful or are you defining success based on test scores? The answers to these questions will reveal a school leader’s dispositions and the true purpose for the actions they take within their schools.
Implications for Policy, Practice and Future Research

The current study provided insight into access and equity issues in early college high schools, specifically the admissions process, whether schools are enrolling the target population and how these schools serve students with disabilities and ESL students. For future research, a quantitative study on admissions processes for early college high schools across the nation would reveal the criterion schools use to admit or reject students and how the criterion impacts enrollment of the target student population. This line of inquiry would be helpful to policymakers in states that have early college high schools or are contemplating starting these schools. Further study on how early college high schools serve students with disabilities and ESL students would help districts see the potential problems many early college schools face trying accommodate these students. This study would help districts avoid potential lawsuits for failing to enforce IDEA laws or accusations of discrimination against people with disabilities in early college high schools.

A study of traditional high school male students of color would reveal factors behind why these students do not seek admission to or remain in early college high schools. This line of inquiry would be helpful to states that have early college high schools because Blacks males and Latinos are underrepresented in these schools. A study about retention in early college high schools would help schools understand the factors that cause students to leave and return to traditional schools or dropout. This information could help schools create interventions or enact policies at the district or state levels that increase retention.
A study on the impact of the 5th year/13th grade on degree obtainment at early college high schools would provide information for traditional and early college high schools that are contemplating using this as an option to increase degree completion and for underserved students. This study found that safety is a huge concern at schools located on college campuses, so a study on safety procedures at early college high schools across the nation would provide an abundance of information schools could use to increase safety. Funding for early college high schools was a source of concern at all study schools, so an examination of how schools are funded across the nation would provide a comprehensive look at this issue. This information would help states and districts see how money, funding and other resources could be allocated to ensure fair and equitable funding.

A study of early college high school guidance counselors would provide insight into the challenges and successes these employees have in this environment. Since many counselors act as quasi-administrators in the absence of an assistant principal, information from this study would highlight issues that come from using staff members in a capacity that differs from the training they received and could inform district staffing decisions for these schools.

The study revealed that the relationship between schools and their partner colleges could be fraught with problems or highly successful. A study on the steps schools and partner colleges take to eliminate or lessen problems would be warranted. This information could serve as a guide to other early college high schools in the nation. Also, a study on how traditional college students and college professors feel about and
accommodate high school students in their classes could provide information that leads to a better college-going experience for all groups.

The study revealed some participants believed that parent involvement and engagement were issues in their schools despite the fact that parents had to apply for their children to go to the school. A study on parent involvement and engagement in early college high schools would serve to either refute or affirm what prior research says about parents of first generation, students of color and lower-income students. Finally, the study revealed that identity plays a role in the actions and practices of early college high school principals. A study of traditional school principals at schools with high percentages of students of color and lower-income students would reveal if this finding applies to them also. This could provide information that college administration programs could incorporate as they train principals from a strengths perspective based on a person’s personal, professional and educational background.

All of the principals in the study were White, so replicating the study with early college high school principals of color would provide information to see if race/ethnicity of the principal changes how principals promote the achievement of the first generation, students of color and lower-income students in their schools. Additionally, a quantitative study using the same protocols with early college high school principals in North Carolina would provide information that could be used as comparison against the current qualitative study.

Finally, analyzing the data through the conceptual framework revealed that successful early college high school principals practice democratic, socially just,
culturally responsive leadership. A quantitative or mixed methods study that examined early college principals using this framework would further strengthen this claim.

**Conclusion**

This qualitative, multi-site, multi-case study examined how early college high school principals promote the success of the first generation, students of color and low-income students they serve. The study examined three early college high school principals in North Carolina through two lenses: the traditional role of principals and a conceptual framework of democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders. This study has been able to contribute to the body of literature on principals, especially those that serve at a school that is a part of a school reform initiative. The study also contributed to literature on the actions and practices principals can take while serving in schools that enroll predominantly students of color and lower-income students. Finally, the study contributed to literature on the skills, knowledge and dispositions early college high school principals need to be successful leaders in these schools.

**Final Thoughts**

When I first arrived at Clemson University, I knew that I wanted my dissertation to be about early college high schools. My interest in these schools came naturally. Like many students that attend early college high schools, I was a first generation college student, a student of color and had spent part of my life in a lower-income family situation. I believed that my personal and professional experiences prepared me well to speak about these schools. I also knew that I wanted my study to represent my beliefs, values and thoughts about education and opportunities for groups that are traditionally
underrepresented and underserved in public education. My desire to do a study that reflected who I am, where I come from and what I believe started well before I arrived at Clemson University – it started during my first experiences in higher education back in Robeson County, North Carolina.

When I arrived at UNC-Pembroke to start my undergraduate work in 1994, I had never stepped foot on a college campus. Since no one in my family had ever gone to college, I realized quickly that I was on my own and would have to figure things out the best that I could. Fortunately, I gained a wonderful and extremely helpful mentor named Mrs. Jackie Clark (now Dr. Jackie Clark). She took me under her wing and helped me make sense of a college world I truly did not understand. There were numerous times I wanted to quit and just continue working in my father’s janitorial business or do office work somewhere, but Mrs. Clark would not allow that to happen. Even after I lost my best friend and namesake, my grandmother Hattie Bell Hammonds, during my senior year, Mrs. Clark still would not allow me to give up. With many prayers and encouragement from her and my family, I became the first in my family to graduate in May 1998.

At the time I graduated, I did not have a job and spent the summer floundering from one job to another. Then, August arrived with the start of the new school year and Cumberland County Schools was looking for teachers because of a shortage in Education graduates. My mom encouraged me to apply for a position, but I thought that I could not because I did not have an Education degree. Well that roadblock was cleared because North Carolina started hiring people as lateral entry teachers. The lateral entry program
allowed people that had degrees in a content area (mine was English) to start teaching with a five-year window to take Education classes for full-certification after taking the Praxis II. Lateral entry teachers received mentors and were paid the same as any other beginning teacher in the state. With a teaching contract in hand, I started teaching in August 1998 at Lewis Chapel Middle School in Fayetteville, NC.

I wish I could say that I arrived at the school and quickly became a star teacher with top test scores and a natural ability to teach, but that could be no further from the truth. While I did have a natural ability to lead groups of people to do activities and learn thanks to my leadership work in high school and college, teaching 175 students Writing and Social Studies quickly wore me down. What I quickly discovered was that I liked most of the students and all of my 7th grade teammates, but I was not prepared for the paperwork, bureaucracy and endless meetings. After spending one year in the classroom, I decided to use my Journalism minor to secure a job as the first Black editor at a small weekly newspaper back home named The Red Springs Citizen.

Upon arriving in Red Springs, I was quickly thrown into a reality I did not know existed just 20 minutes from where I was born and raised in Lumberton. Even though the year was 1999, there were still people in the town that seemed upset that a Black named Hammonds was the head of the newspaper and the hatred started as soon as I went to get the key to my new office. The secretary thought I was kidding when I came to work before my first official day to get my key and introduce myself to the townspeople. Even the business manager thought there was a mistake surrounding my hiring as he said, “…but your last name is Hammonds and you went to UNC-Pembroke.”
Their confusion came from several facts: I was hired on the phone sight unseen, and my last name typically belongs to someone that is Lumbee Indian. While he was correct that I am Indian (1/8!), I identify as Black when given only one choice on forms and yes, I did go to the historically-Native American college, UNC-Pembroke! I’ll admit that I did not understand the confusion at first, then my sister that was with me said, “They thought you were Indian.” I thought about what she said and started laughing. After explaining (again) to the secretary and business manager (who was on the phone with the newspaper’s owner at this point) that I was the person they hired and showing identification for the third time, I finally received keys to the building and my office. Although I was happy to finally be able to get to work I still had no idea why these exchanges happened in the first place until I started visiting the townspeople on that first day and they informed me that I was, indeed, the first Black editor in the newspaper’s 104-year history.

My presence at the newspaper was more than an elderly white man that had owned a general store on Main Street for 76 years could handle. On a day when I was introducing myself to people in the town, I experienced a racist incident that etched in my mind the value (or lack thereof) some people placed on my life based on the color of my skin. I cannot remember everything he said that day, but I definitely remember the last words he uttered to me: “I don’t want that newspaper in my store anymore ever since your nigger ass got there.” To say that I was shocked is an understatement…I was used to people being “closet racist” – they may think I’m a nigger, but no one had ever said that to my face. As I stood there at a loss for words, my sister (who was still with me) wanted to
come across the counter at him, but I grabbed her arm and let her know that he looked
like he didn’t have much time left on Earth and we needed to let God deal with him. I
told him I was sorry he felt that way and to have a happy rest of his life and exited the
store.

That incident has informed many future events that happened in my life because I
know that no matter how much education I receive, how good I write and how articulate I
am, all many people see is another Black woman or “nigger”. During the year that I
served as editor in Red Springs, I met many people. Some people did not like me because
I put Blacks on the front of the newspaper and covered news about Black and Latino
owned businesses. Others did not like me because I refused to keep covering tea parties
and Civitan meetings when news was going on in the Black and Latino neighborhoods
that was equally as important. No matter what people had to say or thought about me, I
vowed to report the truth regardless of race, gender or socioeconomic status.

During my time as editor, the place I spent a lot of time visiting was schools. Red
Springs had two elementary schools, one middle school, one high school and a private
school in the vicinity. I visited all schools equally and hired a few high school students as
freelance writers for games and activities at their schools. I would visit the elementary
school and read stories with the kids and go to the high school and private school
Journalism classes to talk with the students about Journalism and Mass Communications
as careers. What I realized during these activities was that I secretly missed teaching and
after leaving the editor job a year later, I earned my master’s in English at East Carolina
University. I also completed classes for certification at UNC-Pembroke before taking and passing the Praxis II.

When August 2002 arrived, I was back in a 7th grade classroom at an IB magnet school in Durham, NC and preparing to start my doctorate at NC State University. Over the next eight years, I worked with students from all races and backgrounds at Title I schools in Alamance, Johnston and Cumberland counties. I also planned and took numerous field trips with students to college campuses throughout North Carolina. I wanted my students to learn two things from these field trips – higher education was a goal they could reach and the college-going process did not have to be scary or foreign, especially if people are around that are willing to encourage and help make the transition from high school to college smoother. I wanted my students to have bigger goals beyond playing sports in the NFL or NBA or doing hair or working in a factory. While I know there’s nothing wrong with having those plans, I wanted students to see higher education as a means to a better end. I also believed, at that time, in the upward mobility education could provide.

Then, in 2010, I made a decision that truly changed my life for the better. After living and working in North Carolina for 34 years, I moved from Fayetteville to the Lowcountry in Beaufort, SC and started working as the Dual Enrollment English teacher at the new Whale Branch Early College High School. I honestly had no idea that life in the Lowcountry was different than any other place I had lived. Although my students were sweet, highly spirited and bright, their test scores and reading/writing skills were abysmal. I discovered that the early college high school model was an awesome model
because it included an instructional framework designed to help teachers accelerate student’s learning.

With the instructional framework and my years of experience helping low-performing students grow and reach educational milestones, I set to work helping students become better readers and writers. I also spent a great deal of time helping seniors apply for college and learning about the college-going process. I was excited to do this with the seniors because I felt like all the work I’d done since 1998 was coming full circle as I watched our first generation, students of color and lower-income students apply for and be accepted to colleges in South Carolina, Georgia and North Carolina. I was excited to see the work teachers did at Whale Branch truly make a difference in the lives of students that normally would have been destined for prison, the streets or death were it not for the school’s interventions.

Despite all the positive work I was doing at Whale Branch, my desire to do more and be more quickly set in as I realized that teaching for another five or ten years in a K-12 classroom might not be the path I wanted to take. During my second year at Whale Branch, I started making plans to move back to North Carolina and work at a community college as an Instructor or in an Admissions office at a 4-year college. While I was making those plans, my seniors planted an idea in my head that thankfully I listened to – finish the doctorate I walked away from in 2008.

When my students made this suggestion, I thought they were kidding. When I left my doctorate program in 2008, it was not because I lacked the ability to finish. Life set several events in motion that caused me to wave the white flag and surrender just as I
started working on my dissertation proposal. Walking away from the doctorate program at NC State was one of the most difficult decisions I had ever made and the effects of that decision weighed on me greatly because I had never walked away from anything in my life. When I walked away in 2008, I’ll admit I was upset and defeated because all I kept thinking was: “I’m a finisher. I don’t quit. Quitting is for the weak,” but at the time I left I was weak physically, mentally and spiritually and honestly did not feel like fighting anymore, so I accepted the offer to graduate with a master’s in Higher Education Administration instead of the doctorate I truly wanted to receive and continued on with my life determined to forget about my previous doctoral experience.

My plan worked until the seniors at Whale Branch confronted me one day and said: “You’re pushing us to pursue our dreams and get out of our comfort zones. Well, you need to do the same and go back to finish what you started. You need to go finish your doctorate because you will never be happy until you do.”

I tried to ignore what they were saying, but I knew they were telling the truth: I needed to finish what I started because I’m a finisher. Even though I wondered if I would have enough energy and mental wherewithal to go through another doctoral program, I applied to three schools like I promised my students and started packing up my life in Beaufort, South Carolina to return to North Carolina. I did not think I would get into a program, especially after taking and receiving my GRE scores (I’m not the best test taker, especially math). Yet, after receiving a rejection letter from one school based on my scores and a letter from the other school stating they were not holding a class that year a letter arrived from Clemson University saying I was accepted.
I wish I could say I was thrilled, but I was more shocked than anything else. My seniors were happy for me, but I was terrified and instantly thought, “What had I done? I’m supposed to be moving back home to play with my future nephew and find a job.” Despite these thoughts, though, I contacted the Educational Leadership department at Clemson University and met Dr. Robert Knoepfel (Rob) over the telephone and scheduled a meeting face-to-face before I said “yes” on attending the college.

At our first meeting, Dr. Knoepfel informed me that I could call him Rob and answered all the questions I had with my biggest ones centered on finances: Did the department have fellowships or assistantships and if so, what did I need to do to obtain one? I knew after my NC State experience that working full-time and going to school part-time was not the route I wanted to take while studying at Clemson University. My greatest concern, however, was about my energy level: Did I really have the stamina to endure another doctoral program for the next 3-4 years?

After meeting with Rob two more times and him allaying my numerous concerns, I enrolled as a full-time student at Clemson University with an assistantship in August 2012. I arrived at Clemson knowing what I wanted to study – early college high schools – but I didn’t know what aspect of the schools I wanted to study. In an effort to learn as much as I could about early college high schools I made sure that papers I wrote in every class had something to do with my topic. As I moved from one semester to the next I still was no closer to a dissertation research question. Upon the suggestion of my former advisor, Dr. Hans Klar, I made a list of ten possible questions, but all of them sounded like a great potential dissertation.
As my coursework continued, I decided to reach out to Dr. Julie Edmunds at the UNC-Greensboro SERVE Center. Dr. Edmunds is a leading researcher on high school reforms including early college high schools. After a few emails and a one-hour long conversation I narrowed my topic down to researching principals at early college high schools. I chose this topic for two reasons. First, after conducting a synthesis of studies on early college high schools, I discovered there was a paucity of information on principals at these schools. Second, I knew that a school is usually only as successful and effective as the person sitting in the principal’s seat. I based this assertion on my ten years of teaching experience in public schools under the direction of numerous principals – some good, some bad but most were mediocre at best. I knew that having a dedicated, involved, sensible principal that knew what he or she was doing impacted the function and success of a school.

Based on the experiences I’ve had as a teacher I believe that principals set the tone and climate for the building. Teachers can work all day in the classroom with students and teach great lessons and students learn and achievement can rise, but if a principal is uninvolved or sees his/her position as a stepping stone to a higher position or has an unpleasant disposition or has preconceived ideas about the ability level of the teachers and the students in the building, then that school will eventually fail. I knew that the early college initiative was a relatively new school reform movement and I was curious to see if principals in these schools differed from the ones I’d known while teaching in traditional schools.
After working at the early college in Beaufort, SC, I knew that my teaching experiences there differed from any other place I had taught. I also knew that I had a principal that at times seemed torn between her duties and responsibilities as a regular high school principal that also had an early college high school program on the grounds. She had proven to be an effective principal in other school settings, but in the early college environment, she seemed inept and unclear about how to navigate both worlds.

With these thoughts in mind I conducted a pilot study to see how principals implemented and maintained the six core principles of early college high schools. The pilot study involved two principals – one at a charter school and the other a program within a larger high school. The pilot study was helpful because it led me to more questions and ideas for a dissertation on early college high school principals. Both principals spoke about their roles as leaders in the school. They also spoke about issues and concerns that I had not anticipated, but should have considering that early college high schools target first generation, students of color and lower-income students. Both principals spoke about making sure their teachers had the following qualities and characteristics: were culturally competent, thought of students as their own, believed students could achieve and desired the best for all students regardless of race, gender or socioeconomic status.

These pilot study findings coupled with teachings from Dr. King’s History and Philosophy of African American Education class led me to conclude that the principals in my pilot study exhibited qualities and characteristics of democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders. I finally knew what I wanted to discover in my dissertation:
How similar/different were principals at early college high schools from traditional high school principals and how do these principal’s actions or practices demonstrate their democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leadership?

I was excited to start working on my proposal because I believed I had a relevant topic that could impact policies and practices in early college high schools across the nation, especially as the initiative expands into traditional schools. Another reason I was determined to complete this study was because of events that occurred nationally while I was writing this dissertation. Trayvon Martin. Derrick Bell. Mike Brown. The list of black men and teenagers killed at the hands of law enforcement increased as I worked on this study.

As the list grew all I could think about were two other names: Kaleb and Aleshia. They are my niece and nephew and they are adorable, loved and wanted. They have value. They have worth. They mean something to their family. Yet, I know that the day will come when they too, may be called nigger or some other derogatory term to their face just like their aunt.

I know the day will come when people will look at Kaleb and not see a precocious, energetic little boy that is shy at first and helpful most of the time. They will see a big, black boy or a big, black man that they assume wants to harm them or commit a crime. They will assume he grew up in a single parent household, had little education, was not intelligent, got in trouble at school, and did not respect authority or some other incorrect characterization of his character.
I know the day will come when people will look at Aleshia and not see a quiet, introspective little girl with big eyes that is cautious around people she does not know. They will see a big, black girl or big, black woman with curly hair, nice hips and lips. They will assume she has an attitude, grew up in a single parent household with little education, and got in trouble for not answering when she was spoken to or not moving fast enough when she was told to move or does not respecting authority. They may say she’s “fast” and because she’s pretty that she’s going to end up a teen mom living on welfare or some other incorrect characterization of her character.

I know this will happen to my nephew and niece because I’ve had these incorrect, racist, classist characterizations happen to me. I also know this will happen because I taught in public schools for ten years and have witnessed the character assassination of students of color and lower-income students at the hands and mouths of the very educators that claim they believe all students can learn and become contributing members to society. I have seen people say they want what is best for those children or them, but in the same breath say they can’t wait to teach or work somewhere else to get away from those kids or them.

I see all schools, not just early college high schools, as a place where that kind of mentality should not exist towards anyone inside or outside the building. Rob finally gave me a name for that mentality – it’s called deficit thinking. People that teach students or lead schools should not have a deficit-thinking mentality. Unfortunately, my current study and fifteen years in Education reveal that this mentality coupled with people (including educators) claiming they don’t see “difference” (a.k.a. race/ethnicity)
continues to destroy any hope that school is a place that can have a positive impact on the lives of all students. There is nothing wrong with seeing color; the problem comes when people deny that a person is different from them or they treat everyone the same based on a person’s color. Denying that you see color is like denying who that person really is and asking them to accept how you want to define them because it makes you feel better. People should not try to recreate another person’s truth because someone is not comfortable with that person’s truth. That’s neither fair nor respectful.

I started data collection for the current study with all these thoughts from my past on principals, schools, race and the future of education for students of color and lower-income students in America on my mind. When I arrived at School A, I was eager to get started because I assumed that I was coming to see a democratic, socially just, culturally responsive principal that was running an award-winning early college high school in action. I spoke with her and the other two principals in the study before I arrived to make sure they understood that I was examining their leadership in two ways – the role of the principal and as democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders. All principal participants said they understood what I was studying and were excited to be a part of the study.

After spending a couple of hours at School A interviewing participants and observing Principal Robinson, however, I realized she did not match the image of the democratic, socially just, culturally responsive principal I had in my mind. She did not speak with or to the students as we walked around. She did speak with teachers, but showed little emotion or concern for them. During data collection, she structured my 2-
day visit down to the minute (literally…I had an appointment that started at 2:18 and had to end at 2:38 so teachers could return to class). I left School A after the first day of data collection distressed because I believed I had made a mistake including her in the study.

After speaking with Rob and writing in my research journal, I agreed to return the next day and prayed that my initial thoughts about Principal Robinson would not be confirmed as I spoke with more participants.

Unfortunately, my prayers were not answered. Students, parents and the liaison all had one common refrain – Principal Robinson was more interested in achievement, excellence and being on top than the students. I knew this finding ran contrary to the purpose of early college high schools as well as my framework of democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leadership, but I put those thoughts aside as I collected data at Schools B and C. After meeting Principals Lewis and Washington, however, I knew that my initial and final thoughts about Principal Robinson were not wrong. Instead of removing Principal Robinson and her school from the study because I did not find what I thought I would, I decided to leave her case in as a deviant case because she fit my initial criterion (40% free/reduced lunch, 40% students of color, principal for four years) and the since data was already collected I began analyzing to fidelity.

The findings on Principal Robinson did led me to an important conclusion – if early college high schools are supposed to help underserved and underrepresented students earn high school diplomas and college credits so they are better prepared for college, then steps must be taken to ensure these students have an equitable chance of gaining access to scarce seats in these schools. Early college high schools were not designed for students
that would have done fine or well in high school and college; they’re designed for students like many I had taught for ten years – students that would have been in prison or in the streets or dead if it were not for the school’s interventions.

In conclusion, I believe the current study has implications for traditional schools. If principals, teachers and policymakers continue to view students of color and lower-income students as deficient and incapable or unwilling learners, then the results schools have seen with these students for decades will continue unabated. Inequitable educational opportunities and insufficient educational outcomes will continue to lead people to protest and revolt against structures they believe were never designed with them in mind (i.e. schools, businesses, churches and politics). My hope is that my study will serve as a launching pad for a research and career agenda centered on these issues because I want this country to be more equitable, fair and respectful for the sake of my nephew, my niece and all America’s children.
APPENDICES
Appendix A
ECHS Principal Interview Protocol

Derived from ISSSP protocols and ECHS six design principles

Principal Biography

1. Years working in education
2. Years working in educational leadership
3. Years at the present school
4. List of educational leadership positions (chronological order)
5. List of prior work experiences outside of education (chronological order)
6. Education (location, degree/major, graduation year, highest degree obtained)
7. Highest level of education (parents/guardians)
8. Parent/guardian job(s) growing up
9. Socioeconomic status growing up (highlight the one that applies to you)
   Low  Middle  Upper Middle  High

Principal identity and leadership

1. Describe important people in your journey to being the current principal/director of this school.
2. How did/did not your previous experiences (personal or professional) equip you to work at this school?
4. On average, how many hours do you work per week? How do you relax and get away from it all? How often and does it help?
5. What are you doing to ensure that you continue to develop?
6. How difficult or easy has it been to manage this school (give examples)
7. What kinds of support have you had in your current job?

Perceptions of the school (Identify the key aspects/characteristics of the school (strengths and challenges; ask for examples)

1. School population and the community
   a. Student population (needs/strengths/challenges)
   b. Families of your students (needs/strengths/challenges)
   c. Parent involvement in the school
   d. Community where students come from (strengths/challenges)
2. Describe the school
   a. How would you describe the school culture?
   b. Is it a happy place for students and teachers? Why or why not?
c. How do you feel about the quality of teaching and learning and the academic results?

**Perceptions of the leadership and development of the school over time**

1. What actions have you taken to bring about success in this school?
2. What is still to be done? What is your vision for the school?
3. What changes have you planned to bring about to the school over the next two years?
4. How do you see your role in relation to:
   a. Parents/families
   b. Community connections
   c. Connections with other schools or principals
   d. Connections with the partner college/university
5. How do you see your role in relation to:
   a. Other Administrators
   b. School board
   c. Leadership/SIT team
   d. Other staff
   e. Curriculum
   f. The partner college/university

**Principals and diverse school communities**

1. What kinds of extra services and programs would you like to see at your school in order to raise student’s level of achievement?
2. What can we learn from you and your professional career to support beginning principals in diverse schools?
3. What can we learn from you and your professional career to support experienced principals in diverse schools?

**ECHS principals and five design principles**

1. How do you view your role as principal/director at this early college high school?
   *Most early college high schools are designed around five principles to ensure student success: ensuring college readiness, powerful teaching and learning, personalization, professionalism and purposeful design. With this in mind:*
2. What is your role in ensuring students at this early college high school are college and career ready?
3. What is your role in ensuring that high-quality, rigorous, and relevant instruction combined with ongoing assessment is taking place at this early college high school?
4. What is your role in providing close, personal relationships and academic support for first generation, low-income and minority students at this early college high school?
5. What is your role in ensuring staff receive ongoing professional development and have opportunities to collaborate at this early college high school?
6. What is your role in sharing leadership at this early college high school?
7. What is your role in ensuring the early college high school maintains a small school design and a relationship with the partner college?

**Preparation for Role**
1. How did or did not your previous educational training prepare you to work at this school?
2. What knowledge do you believe is needed to be a principal/director at an early college high school?
3. What skills do you believe are necessary to be a principal/director at an early college high school?
4. What dispositions do you believe are needed to be a principal/director at an early college high school?

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Appendix B
Parent/Guardian Focus Group Protocol

Tell me about your experiences in this school.

- Grade level of child/ren at the school
- Roles and extent of participation in school activities and events
- Why did you decide to send your child/ren to this school?
- What do people in this community think about this school?

Tell me why this is a successful school.

1. What are the major challenges this school faces or faced?
   - Issues with district or community resources/support?
   - Families or student needs? School safety or discipline?
   - Challenges with teacher quality/staffing
   - Challenges with curriculum or policies for accountability

2. What strategies have been successful for addressing these challenges?
   - Teacher quality (What? Evidence/concrete examples?)
   - Decision-making/management structures (e.g. distributed/shared/dispersed leadership)
   - Quality of student services of the school (What? Evidence/concrete examples?)
   - Teacher commitment?
   - Quality of the principal?
   - Quality of the leadership team in the school (What? Evidence/concrete examples?)
   - Quality of school-family connections (What? Evidence/concrete examples?)
   - Quality of school-university connections – with i) health and human services and ii) local (educational) authorities/policy makers in particular (What evidence/concrete examples?)

3. What has been the principal’s contribution to the success/change of the school? How do you know?
   - What has been the principal’s most important success in this school during the last few years? Why? How did s/he achieve that success? What evidence (examples) do you have?
   - What do you think is the principal’s vision for the school?
o How do you describe the kind of leadership in the school?
 o What do you think drives the principal in his/her job?

4. How have others contributed toward school success/change?

   a. Outside the school:
      i. Parents/families
      ii. Community connections (Local – educational – authorities, health and human services, et cetera)"
      iii. Connections with other schools or principals (e.g. Networks)
      iv. Connections with partner college/university

   b. In the school:
      i. Administration
      ii. Teachers
      iii. Leadership team
      iv. Liaison

   c. In the classroom: “How does the principal affect/influence teachers’ work in the school and in the classroom?

5. How does the school support students from different racial, social and cultural backgrounds and raise levels of achievement for all?

   a. Strategies in the school
   b. Strategies outside the school
   c. Strategies at the partner university
   d. Strategies at the classroom level

**Principal and 5 design principles**

ECHS principals and five design principles

1. How do you view the principal/director’s role at this early college high school?
   Most early college high schools are designed around 5 core principles to ensure student success: ensuring college readiness, powerful teaching and learning, personalization, professionalism and purposeful design. With this in mind:

2. How does the principal ensure students at this early college high school are college and career ready?
3. How the principal ensure that high-quality, rigorous, and relevant instruction combined with ongoing assessment is taking place at this early college high school?
4. How does the principal provide close, personal relationships and academic support for first generation, low-income and minority students at this early college high school?
5. How does the principal ensure that staff receives ongoing professional development and have opportunities to collaborate at this early college high school?
6. How does the principal share leadership at this early college high school?
7. How does the principal ensure that the early college high school maintains a small school design and a relationship with the partner college?

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Appendix C
Teacher Focus Group Protocol

N.B. Where possible, it is important to include teachers who have been in the school prior to the current principal, so that we learn something about how the school was before and how it has changed.

Tell me about your experiences in this school. How did you become a teacher here?

- Years of experience, experience at the present school, subject(s), roles at school
- When did you arrive at this school?
- What position were you appointed to?
- What is your current position in the school now?

Tell me about this school, especially about how it became a successful school.

1. What are the major challenges this school faces or faced?
   o Issues with district or community resources/support?
   o Families or student needs?
   o School safety or discipline?
   o Challenges with teacher quality/staffing
   o Challenges with curriculum or policies for accountability
   o Challenges with the partner college/university

2. What strategies have been successful for addressing these challenges?
   o Teacher quality (What? Evidence/concrete examples?)
   o Decision-making/management structures (e.g. distributed/shared/dispersed leadership)
   o Quality of pupil services of the school (What? Evidence/concrete examples?)
   o Teacher commitment?
   o Quality of the principal?
   o Quality of the leadership team in the school (What? Evidence/concrete examples?)
   o Quality of school-family connections (What? Evidence/concrete examples?)
   o Quality of school-partner college/university connections (What? Evidence/concrete examples?)
   o Quality of school-community connections – with i) health and human services and ii) local (educational) authorities/policy makers in particular (What? Evidence/concrete examples?)
3. What has been the principal’s contribution to the success/change of the school? How do you know?
   - What has been the principal’s most important success in this school during the last few years? Why? How did s/he achieve that success? What evidence (examples) do you have?
   - What do you think is the principal’s vision for the school?
   - How do you describe the kind of leadership in the school?
   - What do you think drives the principal in his/her job?

4. How have others contributed toward school success/change?
   a. Outside the school:
      i. Parents/families
      ii. Community connections (Local – educational – authorities, health and human services, et cetera)?
      iii. Connections with other schools or principals (e.g. Networks)
   b. In the school:
      i. Administration
      ii. Leadership team
      iii. Other staff (liaison)
   c. In the classroom: “How does the principal affect/influence teachers’ work in the school and in the classroom?”

5. Does the school support pupils from different social and cultural environment and raises levels of achievement for all? How? Why not?
   a. Strategies outside the school
   b. Strategies in the school
   c. Strategies at the classroom level

**Principal and 5 design principles**

ECHS principals and five design principles
1. How do you view the principal/director’s role at this early college high school?
   Most early college high schools are designed around 5 core principles to ensure student success: ensuring college readiness, powerful teaching and learning, personalization, professionalism and purposeful design. With this in mind:

2. How does the principal ensure students at this early college high school are college and career ready?
3. How does your principal ensure that high-quality, rigorous, and relevant instruction combined with ongoing assessment is taking place at this early college high school?
4. How does your principal provide close, personal relationships and academic support for first generation, low-income and minority students at this early college high school?
5. How does your principal ensure that staff receives ongoing professional development and have opportunities to collaborate at this early college high school?
6. How does your principal share leadership at this early college high school?
7. How does your principal ensure that the early college high school maintains a small school design and a relationship with the partner college?

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Appendix D
Student Focus Group Protocol

Perceptions of the school

Identify the key aspects/characteristics of the school (strengths and challenges; ask for examples)
• How would you describe your time at the school?
  o Were you happy here? Why (not)? What made the school a happy place? (examples)
  o Was it a safe school? Why (not)? What made you feel safe at school? (examples)
  o How did the school support your health? (motivation/attitudes/emotional and academic health)
  o Do you feel the school helped you achieve the best grades and college credits you could have?
• How would you describe your former teachers?
• Please give one example of a good/bad classroom learning experience you remember (Teachers should not be named).
• Do you think that this was a good school? Why? (examples)
• Would you have preferred to go to a different school? Why?
• Would you recommend to your friends to come to this school?

Perceptions of the leadership

• Tell me about your former principal. How you describe him/her to an outsider?
• This was a good school. How good would it have been without the principal? Why do you say so? Do you think she/he could have made it even better? What? How?
• Was he/she personally involved in your achievements (academic results, attendance, social behavior)? Give some examples
• How do you think the principal got along with:
  o Students
  o Teachers
  o Parents/Guardians
  o The partner college/university
  o College liaison (if applicable)

Concluding questions

• What would have made this school even more successful for you? (concrete examples)
  o More/better learning support (examples)
  o More/better homework support (examples)
o More/better student services (examples)
o Better school-home connections (examples)
o More/better after school programs (examples)
o Happier place
o Healthier place

- What would have contributed most to the success of this school for you? (see previous question – Why? (examples)

**Principal and 5 design principles**

ECHS principals and five design principles

1. How do you view the principal/director’s role at this early college high school?
   Most early college high schools are designed around 5 core principles to ensure student success: ensuring college readiness, powerful teaching and learning, personalization, professionalism and purposeful design. With this in mind:

2. How does the principal ensure students at this early college high school are college and career ready?
3. How does your principal ensure that high-quality, rigorous, and relevant instruction combined with ongoing assessment is taking place at this early college high school?
4. How does your principal provide close, personal relationships and academic support for first generation, low-income and minority students at this early college high school?
5. How does your principal ensure that staff receives ongoing professional development and have opportunities to collaborate at this early college high school?
6. How does your principal share leadership at this early college high school?
7. How does your principal ensure that the early college high school maintains a small school design and a relationship with the partner college?

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Appendix E
Liaison Interview Protocol

Tell me about your experiences in this school.

- What do people in this community think about this school?

Tell me why this is a successful school.

1. What are the major challenges this school faces or faced?
   - Issues with district or community resources/support?
   - Families or student needs? School safety or discipline?
   - Challenges with teacher quality/staffing
   - Challenges with curriculum or policies for accountability

2. What strategies have been successful for addressing these challenges?
   - Teacher quality (What? Evidence/concrete examples?)
   - Decision-making/management structures (e.g. distributed/shared/dispersed leadership)
   - Quality of pupil services of the school (What? Evidence/concrete examples?)
   - Teacher commitment?
   - Quality of the principal?
   - Quality of the leadership team in the school (What? Evidence/concrete examples?)
   - Quality of school-family connections (What? Evidence/concrete examples?)
   - Quality of school-university connections – with i) health and human services and ii) local (educational) authorities/policy makers in particular (What? Evidence/concrete examples?)

3. What has been the principal’s contribution to the success/change of the school? How do you know?
   - What has been the principal’s most important success in this school during the last few years? Why? How did s/he achieve that success? What evidence (examples) do you have?
   - What do you think is the principal’s vision for the school?
   - How do you describe the kind of leadership in the school?
   - What do you think drives the principal in his/her job?

4. How have others contributed toward school success/change?
   a. Outside the school:
      i. Parents/families
      ii. Community connections (Local – educational – authorities, health and human services, et cetera)?
      iii. Connections with other schools or principals (e.g. Networks)
iv. Connections with partner college/university

b. In the school:
   i. Administration
   ii. Teachers
   iii. Leadership team
   iv. Liaison

5. How does the school support students from different racial, social and cultural backgrounds and raise levels of achievement for all?

   a. Strategies in the school
   b. Strategies outside the school
   c. Strategies at the partner university
   d. Strategies at the classroom level

**Principal and 5 design principles**

ECHS principals and five design principles
1. How do you view the principal/director’s role at this early college high school?

   Most early college high schools are designed around 5 core principles to ensure student success: ensuring college readiness, powerful teaching and learning, personalization, professionalism and purposeful design. With this in mind:

2. How does the principal ensure students at this early college high school are college and career ready?
3. How does the principal ensure that high-quality, rigorous, and relevant instruction combined with ongoing assessment is taking place at this early college high school?
4. How does the principal provide close, personal relationships and academic support for first generation, low-income and minority students at this early college high school?
5. How does the principal ensure that staff receives ongoing professional development and have opportunities to collaborate at this early college high school?
6. How does the principal share leadership at this early college high school?
7. How does the principal ensure that the early college high school maintains a small school design and a relationship with the partner college?

This protocol was adapted from the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) and Santamaria and Santamaria’s *Applied Critical Leadership in Education* (2011). Please contact Hattie Hammonds at hattieh@g.clemson.edu before using or distributing this protocol.
Appendix F

Initial Letter to Participants – Principal

Dear Principal __________:

Good morning. My name is Hattie Hammonds and I am a doctoral candidate at Clemson University in Clemson, SC. I am contacting you today because my dissertation examines early college high school principals as democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders that promote the success of the minority and low-income students that they serve.

I have chosen you as a participant for my study because you lead a school that meets the following criterion: a high percentage of students that are racially/ethnically students of color, a high number of students that receive free or reduced lunch and you have served as principal at the early college high school for at least four or more years. I am not sure if you would classify yourself as being a democratic, socially just or culturally responsive leader; however, this is something I hope to find out during the course of the study. The results of this study will be presented at regional and national conferences as well as published in peer-reviewed journals and publications. Since there is not much information about principals at early college high schools this study is both timely and relevant.

I have received IRB approval, so I anticipate the study taking 1-2 months. As a doctoral student I am not allowed to be the principal investigator for the study; that responsibility would fall to my advisor, Dr. Rob Knoeppel. However, I will be the person that is collecting and analyzing data and will be writing the dissertation. I anticipate conducting 2 interviews with you; 2 observations of your leadership; and 3 focus groups with the following groups: students who are 12th graders that started the program in 9th grade; their parents/guardians and 3-7 teachers at the school. Additionally, I would like to conduct one interview with a representative from the higher education partner that can speak about your leadership at the early college high school.

If you agree to participate in my study, you and everyone involved would have anonymity (unless you want to be named) and all data would be held with the strictest of confidence and security. Everyone would receive an informed consent letter that provides information about the study and students that participate would be required to gain parent/guardian permission.

I realize that if you agree to participate in this study it would be a time commitment for you and everyone that I am seeking information from. I do not take this lightly – I taught as a full-time English teacher for eight years in North Carolina public schools and two in South Carolina, so I understand time constraints and commitments that educators face. I would seek to keep all interviews and focus groups to no more than an hour at a time and would be willing to discuss some type of monetary or non-monetary incentive for both you and the other participants in the study.

Thank you in advance for your attention to my inquiry. If you are willing to participate in the study, please reply back in the affirmative and provide some good times for me to call and speak with you further about the study. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Hattie Hammonds
Clemson University
Appendix G
Initial Letter to Participants – Parents/Guardians

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Good morning. My name is Hattie Hammonds and I am a doctoral candidate at Clemson University in Clemson, SC. My dissertation examines early college high school principals as democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders that promote the success of the minority and low-income students that they serve.

I have chosen you as a participant for my study because you are the parent or guardian of a senior at an early college high school that is participating in my study. I am seeking your participation in a focus group that will be approximately 60 minutes long. The focus group will be audio recorded.

If you agree to participate in my study, you and everyone involved would have anonymity (unless you want to be named) and all data would be held with the strictest of confidence and security. Everyone would receive an informed consent letter that provides information about the study.

Thank you in advance for your attention to my inquiry. If you are willing to participate in the study, please reply back in the affirmative with the best times for me to contact you either via phone or email. Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Hattie Hammonds
Clemson University
Appendix H
Initial Letter to Participants – Teachers

Dear Teacher:

Good morning. My name is Hattie Hammonds and I am a doctoral candidate at Clemson University in Clemson, SC. My dissertation examines early college high school principals as democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders that promote the success of the minority and low-income students that they serve.

I have chosen you as a participant for my study because you teach at an early college high school that is participating in my study. The results of this study will be presented at regional and national conferences as well as published in peer-reviewed journals and publications. Since there is not much information about principals at early college high schools this study is both timely and relevant. I am seeking your participation in a focus group that will be approximately 60 minutes long. The focus group will be audio recorded.

If you agree to participate in my study, you and everyone involved would have anonymity (unless you want to be named) and all data would be held with the strictest of confidence and security. Everyone would receive an informed consent letter that provides information about the study.

I realize that if you agree to participate in this study it would be a time commitment for you and everyone that I am seeking information from. I do not take this lightly – I taught as a full-time English teacher for eight years in North Carolina public schools and two in South Carolina, so I understand time constraints and commitments that educators face.

Thank you in advance for your attention to my inquiry. If you are willing to participate in the study, please reply back in the affirmative with the best times for me to contact you either via phone or email. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Hattie Hammonds
Clemson University
Appendix I
Initial Letter to Participants – Students

Dear Student:

Good morning. My name is Hattie Hammonds and I am a doctoral candidate at Clemson University in Clemson, SC. My dissertation examines early college high school principals as democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders that promote the success of the minority and low-income students that they serve.

I have chosen you as a participant for my study because you are a senior at an early college high school that is participating in my study. I am seeking your participation in a focus group that will be approximately 60 minutes long. The focus group will be audio recorded.

If you agree to participate in my study, you and everyone involved would have anonymity (unless you want to be named) and all data would be held with the strictest of confidence and security. Everyone would receive an informed consent letter that provides information about the study.

Thank you in advance for your attention to my inquiry. If you are willing to participate in the study, please reply back in the affirmative with the best times for me to contact you either via phone or email. Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Hattie Hammonds
Clemson University
Appendix J
Initial Letter to Participants – Liaison

Dear Liaison:

Good morning. My name is Hattie Hammonds and I am a doctoral candidate at Clemson University in Clemson, SC. My dissertation examines early college high school principals as democratic, socially just, culturally responsive leaders that promote the success of the minority and low-income students that they serve.

I have chosen you as a participant for my study because your university or college is partnered with an early college high school that is participating in my study. I am seeking your participation in an interview that will be approximately 60 minutes long. The interview will be audio recorded.

If you agree to participate in my study, you and everyone involved would have anonymity (unless you want to be named) and all data would be held with the strictest of confidence and security. Everyone would receive an informed consent letter that provides information about the study.

Thank you in advance for your attention to my inquiry. If you are willing to participate in the study, please reply back in the affirmative with the best times for me to contact you either via phone or email. Thank you again.

Sincerely,
Hattie Hammonds
Clemson University
Appendix K
Informed Consent – Principal
Information about Being in a Research Study
Clemson University

Leading Change: An Examination of Early College High School Principals as Democratic, Socially Just and Culturally Responsive Leaders

Description of the Study and Your Part in It
You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Robert Knoeppel and Hattie L. Hammonds from Clemson University. The purpose of the study is to understand how early college high school principals use democratic, socially just and culturally responsive leadership within their schools.

You are being asked to take part in this study because you are the leader of an early college high school and you self-identified as being a democratic, socially just or culturally responsive leader. In total, three principals will be interviewed.

If you agree to be in this study, your involvement will include participating in 2-3 interviews of between 60 to 70 minutes each. The interviews will be conducted by the researcher and will be audio recorded. The interviews will be about your experiences as a principal of an early college high school and how democratic, socially just or culturally responsive leadership informs your practices. You will also be asked to share any artifacts you feel would help the researchers better understand your democratic, socially just or culturally responsive leadership.

Risks and Discomforts
There are no known risks associated with this study.

Potential Benefits
The benefit of participation is the opportunity to reflect upon your leadership within an early college high school and to add knowledge to the field of education concerning democratic, socially just and culturally responsive leadership particularly at early college high schools.
Incentives
In appreciation of your participation in the study, you will be provided with a gift card for $10 to Starbucks or Dunkin Doughnuts at the end of the interviews.

Protection of Confidentiality
This study is confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only the researchers will have access to the records. All audio recordings will also be stored securely, and only the researchers will have access to them. The recordings will be used for research publications and will be held for up to ten years before being destroyed.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise please contact Dr. Robert Knoeppel at rck@clemson.edu or (864) 656-5585, or Hattie L. Hammonds at hattieh@g.clemson.edu or (919) 610-4181. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-6460 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC’s toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

A copy of this letter will be given to you.
Appendix L
Informed Consent – Parent/Guardian

Information about Being in a Research Study
Clemson University

Leading Change: An Examination of Early College High School Principals as Democratic, Socially Just and Culturally Responsive Leaders

Description of the Study and Your Part in It
You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Robert Knoeppel and Hattie L. Hammonds from Clemson University. The purpose of the study is to understand how early college high school principals use democratic, socially just and culturally responsive leadership within their schools.

You are being asked to take part in this study because your child attends an early college high school and your principal has self-identified as being a democratic, socially just or culturally responsive leader.

If you agree to be in this study, your involvement will include participating in one focus group that will last from between 60 to 70 minutes. The focus group will be conducted by the researcher and will be audio recorded. The focus group will focus on your perspective of your child’s principal’s leadership, especially how he/she helps your child learn and be successful. You will also be asked to share any artifacts you feel would help the researchers better understand your child’s principal’s leadership practices and actions.

Risks and Discomforts
There are no known risks associated with this study.

Potential Benefits
The benefit of participation is the opportunity to reflect upon your child’s principal’s leadership within an early college high school and to add knowledge to the field of education concerning principal leadership particularly at early college high schools.
**Incentives**
In appreciation of your participation in the study, you will be entered into a raffle for a gift card for $10 to Starbucks or Dunkin Donuts at the end of the focus group.

**Protection of Confidentiality**
This study is confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only the researchers will have access to the records. All audio recordings will also be stored securely, and only the researchers will have access to them. The recordings will be used for research publications and will be held for up to ten years before being destroyed.

**Voluntary Participation**
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

**Contact Information**
If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise please contact Dr. Robert Knoeppel at rck@clemson.edu or (864) 656-5585, or Hattie L. Hammonds at hattieh@g.clemson.edu or (919) 610-4181. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-6460 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC’s toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

A copy of this letter will be given to you.
Appendix M
Informed Consent – Teacher

Information about Being in a Research Study
Clemson University

Leading Change: An Examination of Early College High School Principals as
Democratic, Socially Just and Culturally Responsive Leaders

Description of the Study and Your Part in It
You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Robert Knoeppel and Hattie L. Hammonds from Clemson University. The purpose of the study is to understand how early college high school principals use democratic, socially just and culturally responsive leadership within their schools.

You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a teacher at an early college high school and your principal has self-identified as being a democratic, socially just or culturally responsive leader.

If you agree to be in this study, your involvement will include participating in one focus group that will last from between 60 to 70 minutes. The focus group will be conducted by the researcher and will be audio recorded. The focus group will focus on your perspective of principal’s leadership, especially how he/she demonstrates democratic, socially just or culturally responsive leadership. You will also be asked to share any artifacts you feel would help the researchers better understand your principal’s democratic, socially just or culturally responsive leadership.

Risks and Discomforts
There are no known risks associated with this study.

Potential Benefits
The benefit of participation is the opportunity to reflect upon your principal’s leadership within an early college high school and to add knowledge to the field of education concerning democratic, socially just and culturally responsive leadership particularly at early college high schools.
**Incentives**
In appreciation of your participation in the study, you will be entered into a raffle for a gift card for $10 to Starbucks or Dunkin Doughnuts at the end of the focus group.

**Protection of Confidentiality**
This study is confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only the researchers will have access to the records. All audio recordings will also be stored securely, and only the researchers will have access to them. The recordings will be used for research publications and will be held for up to ten years before being destroyed.

**Voluntary Participation**
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

**Contact Information**
If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise please contact Dr. Robert Knoeppel at rck@clemson.edu or (864) 656-5585, or Hattie L. Hammonds at hattieh@g.clemson.edu or (919) 610-4181. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-6460 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC’s toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

A copy of this letter will be given to you.
Appendix N

Informed Consent – Student

Child/Minor Agreement to Be in a Research Study
Clemson University

Leading Change: An Examination of Early College High School Principals as Democratic, Socially Just and Culturally Responsive Leaders

You are being invited to be in a research study. Below you will find answers to some of the questions that you may have.

Who Are We?
- Dr. Robert Knoeppel and Hattie L. Hammonds are inviting you to take part in a research study. Dr. Robert Knoeppel is a professor at Clemson University. Hattie L. Hammonds is a student at Clemson University running this study with the help of Dr. Robert Knoeppel.

What Is It For?
- To examine the actions and practices of your principal to see how the principal’s actions and practices help promote your learning and success.

Why You?
- You are being asked to participate in the study because you are 12th grader at the school and have seen your principal’s actions and practices
- Being in this study will not have a negative impact on you

What Will You Have to Do?
- Participate in one focus group with other 12th grade students that will last from 60 to 70 minutes
- If you would like for your parent/guardian to be present during the focus group that is okay

What Are the Good Things and Bad Things that May Happen to You If You Are in the Study?
- We do not know of any risks or discomforts to you in this research study.

What If You Want to Stop? Will You Get in Trouble?
- Participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time
- This research study will not will not be used to positively or negatively impact your grades or participation in programs.
Do You Have Any Questions?

- You can ask questions at any time. You can ask them now. You can ask later. You can talk to me or you can talk to someone else at any time during the study. Here are the telephone numbers to reach us Dr. Robert Knoeppel at (864) 656-5585 or rck@clemson.edu or Hattie L. Hammonds at 919-601-4181 or hattieh@g.clemson.edu.

By being in this study, I am saying that I have read this form and have asked any questions that I may have. All of my questions have been answered and I understand what I am being asked to do. I am willing and would like to be in this study.

A copy of this form will be given to you.
Appendix O
Informed Consent – Parent Permission

Parent Permission Form
Clemson University

Leading Change: An Examination of Early College High School Principals as Democratic, Socially Just and Culturally Responsive Leaders

Description of the Research and Your Child’s Part in It

Dr. Robert Knoeppel and Hattie L. Hammonds are inviting your child to take part in a research study. Dr. Robert Knoeppel is a professor at Clemson University. Hattie L. Hammonds is a student at Clemson University running this study with the help of Dr. Robert Knoeppel. The purpose of this study is to examine the actions and practices of the principal at your child’s school to see how the principal’s actions and practices help promote your child’s learning and success.

Your child’s part in this study will be to participate in a focus group with other students to discuss the principal’s actions and practices that help them learn and be successful.

It will take your child about 60 to 70 minutes to take part in this study.

Risks and Discomforts

We do not know of any risks or discomforts to your child in this research study.

Possible Benefits

We do not know of any way your child would benefit directly from taking part in this study. However, this research may help us to understand how your child’s principal helps him or her be successful in school.

Incentives

In appreciation of your child’s participation in the study, your child will be entered into a raffle for a gift card for $10 to Starbucks or Dunkin Doughnuts at the end of the focus group.

Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality

We will do everything we can to protect your child’s privacy and confidentiality. We will not tell anybody outside of the research team that your child was in this study or what information we collected about your child in particular. The records of this study will be
kept private. No identifiers linking your child to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only the researchers will have access to the records. All audio recordings will also be stored securely, and only the researchers will have access to them. The recordings will be used for research publications and will be held for up to ten years before being destroyed.

**Choosing to Be in the Study**

You child does not have to be in this research study. You do not have to let your child be in the study anymore. Your child will not be punished in any way if you decide not to let your child be in the study or if you stop your child from continuing in the study. Your child’s grades will not be affected by any decision you make about this study.

We will also ask your child if they want to take part in this study. Your child will be able to refuse to take part or to quit being in the study at any time.

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise please contact Dr. Robert Knoeppel at rck@clemson.edu or (864) 656-5585, or Hattie L. Hammonds at hattieh@g.clemson.edu or (919) 610-4181. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-6460 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC’s toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

A copy of this form will be given to you.
Appendix P
Informed Consent – Liaison

Information about Being in a Research Study
Clemson University

Leading Change: An Examination of Early College High School Principals as Democratic, Socially Just and Culturally Responsive Leaders

Description of the Study and Your Part in It
You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Dr. Robert Knoeppel and Hattie L. Hammonds from Clemson University. The purpose of the study is to understand how early college high school principals use democratic, socially just and culturally responsive leadership within their schools.

You are being asked to take part in this study because your community college partners with an early college high school and the principal at the early college high school self-identified as being a democratic, socially just or culturally responsive leader.

If you agree to be in this study, your involvement will include participating in one interview of between 60 to 70 minutes each. The interview will be conducted by the researcher and will be audio recorded. The interview will be about your experiences partnering with the principal of an early college high school and your perspective on this principal’s democratic, socially just or culturally responsive leadership. You will also be asked to share any artifacts you feel would help the researchers better understand the principal’s democratic, socially just or culturally responsive leadership.

Risks and Discomforts
There are no known risks associated with this study.

Potential Benefits
The benefit of participation is the opportunity to reflect upon the leadership of the early college high school principal your college partners with and to add knowledge to the field of education concerning democratic, socially just and culturally responsive leadership particularly at early college high schools.
Incentives
In appreciation of your participation in the study, you will be provided with a gift card for $10 to Starbucks or Dunkin Doughnuts at the end of the interview.

Protection of Confidentiality
This study is confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to the study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only the researchers will have access to the records. All audio recordings will also be stored securely, and only the researchers will have access to them. The recordings will be used for research publications and will be held for up to ten years before being destroyed.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise please contact Dr. Robert Knoeppel at rck@clemson.edu or (864) 656-5585, or Hattie L. Hammonds at hattieh@g.clemson.edu or (919) 610-4181. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-6460 or irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC’s toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

A copy of this letter will be given to you.
REFERENCES

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17 Themes Based on Metasynthesis of Qualitative Findings

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Power, Governance and the University-School Relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Student Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Why Attend or Reasons for an ECHS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>History Behind ECHSs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Support Systems/Mechanisms for Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Caring Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Resistance to attending ECHS/Student Adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Role of Parents/Parent Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Importance of P-16 &amp; P-20 systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>High School vs. College Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Student Identity Concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>How to Evaluate ECHSs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Role of Principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Border Crossers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Communication issues between school and partner college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Student Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Unintended Consequences of ECHSs (community-based)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.4

*Table of Prior Studies on ECHSs (2006-2014)*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)/Year</th>
<th>Method/ Data Collection</th>
<th>Question(s)/ Topic(s)</th>
<th>Participant(s)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T. Born 2006</td>
<td>Multi-case qualitative study using interviews, document analysis and observations</td>
<td>What support structures are currently employed at both schools? What lessons emerge about what academic administrative and emotional supports need to be in place for students to be successful?</td>
<td>Principals and teachers at two ECHSs</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.B. Kisker 2006</td>
<td>Literature review</td>
<td>Why has this educational idea continually reemerged, capturing the minds and hearts of educators, philanthropists, and policy entrepreneurs? What happened to institutions that once offered an integrated 11th-through 14th-grade curriculum?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trevino, A. &amp; Mayes C. 2006</td>
<td>Qualitative single case study using observation and document analysis</td>
<td>The purpose of this article is to look at some of its early experiences in order to inform other teachers, educational leaders, and policymakers who are involved in finding ways of creating more, and more effective, transitions for minority students from high school into college</td>
<td>One early college high school in Utah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIR and SRI 2006</td>
<td>Qualitative study using interviews, observations and document analysis</td>
<td>How does the ECHSI function? How are ECHSs implemented? What do ECHSs look like?</td>
<td>Principals and program implementers at the state level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIR/SRI 2008</td>
<td>Mixed Methods Qualitative data (e.g., interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations) from a sample of 20 ECSs, 313 intermediaries, four Sub-intermediaries, JFF, and the foundation. Quantitative data included online school survey (120 ECHSs participated), an online student survey (1,396 students participated) and the ECHSI Student Information System (SIS)</td>
<td>What patterns and relationships are found between and among ECHSs as of 2008?</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoffman, N., Vargas, J., Santos, J. 2009</td>
<td>Qualitative case study using document analysis</td>
<td>How can dual enrollment programs help a wide range of students and highlights the importance of state policy in encouraging these efforts to create stronger connections among high schools, postsecondary institutions and the workforce.</td>
<td>Cases: Florida (dual enrollment) NY (College Now) NC (Learn and Earn/ECHSs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.4

Table of Prior Studies on ECHSs (2006-2014) - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Data Sources</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIR and SRI 2009</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed methods</td>
<td>Quantitative data: school survey, a student survey, extant data from publicly available sources, and the Student Information System (SIS) Qualitative data: site visits, intermediary interviews, and ECHS graduate interviews</td>
<td>This report follows the activities of the ECHSs in the ECHSI associated with 13 organizations</td>
<td>Six ECHSs and interviews with 13 intermediaries, four sub-intermediaries, 16 graduates and Jobs for the Future (JFF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams, M. R., &amp; Southers, T. (2010)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed methods study using a survey and interviews</td>
<td>Does the presence of ECHS students (aged 14-18) have an unplanned effect on the learning experiences of adult students at the community college?</td>
<td>Chief operating officers at 24 community colleges in NC that host ECHSs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. A. Edmunds N. Arshavsky F. Unlu R. Luck L. Bozzi Abt Associates Inc. 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative study using survey data, administrative data, and interview data</td>
<td>How many students leave ECHSs and what are their characteristics? Why do students leave ECHSs and what measures can schools take to keep these students?</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kanuika, T. S. Vickers, M. 2010</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed method case study using a 2-way chi-square analysis, an online survey, interview and focus groups</td>
<td>Examines one early college high school to determine to what degree this school is affecting student performance and attempt to develop some understanding as to why.</td>
<td>61 seniors, 16 classroom teachers, one counselor, an assistant principal and a principal at a school in Fayetteville, NC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.4

*Table of Prior Studies on ECHSs (2006-2014) - continued*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Sample Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J. A. Edmunds et al. (2010)</td>
<td>Quantitative experimental study using schools chosen using random assignment</td>
<td>This article reports on preliminary 9th-grade results in a longitudinal experimental study of the impact of the model 1. What is the impact of the ECHS model on students’ course-taking? 2. To what extent do ECHS implement the required components of the model?</td>
<td>285 ninth graders (132 treatment and 159 control) in 2 sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Oliver et al. (2010)</td>
<td>Quantitative study using survey for data collection</td>
<td>We compared the self-reported motivational profiles of ECHS students to traditional first-year university students to explore the different college advising and support services each group may require.</td>
<td>103 ECHS students 838 college freshmen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. O. Ongaga (2010)</td>
<td>Qualitative case study using focus groups</td>
<td>What factors influence students to attend an ECHS? What factors do students attribute to their academic success in this ECHS? What challenges do students experience in this ECHS?</td>
<td>21 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Alaie (2011)</td>
<td>Qualitative single case study using observation and document analysis</td>
<td>What can be learned from the unsuccessful experience of 37 ECHS students in an introductory biology course?</td>
<td>37 ECHS students in an Introductory Biology course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Source</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>Sample Size/Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Thompson &amp; K. Ongaga 2011</td>
<td>Qualitative descriptive single case study using interviews and focus groups</td>
<td>Using Noddings’ ethics of care (modeling, practice, dialogue and confirmation), what factors support and constrain student and teacher development and success within an ECHS (a small learning community)?</td>
<td>5 teachers and 16 students at an ECHS in a southern state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webb, M. Mayka, L. 2011</td>
<td>Quantitative study with data coming from <em>The Integrated Survey</em> administered by JFF and <em>The ECHSI Student Information System</em></td>
<td>Examines characteristics of the 2007, 2008, and 2009 early college graduating classes</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. A. Edmunds L. Bernstein, F. Unlu E. Glennie J. Willse Smith N. Arshavsky 2012</td>
<td>Quantitative longitudinal experimental study</td>
<td>Presents results from a federally funded experimental study of the impact of the early college model on Grade 9 outcomes to determine effectiveness of the early college design</td>
<td>1,607 9th grade students in 18 cohorts in 12 schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrow, J.G. Torrez, A. 2012</td>
<td>Qualitative single case study using observation</td>
<td>Strategies this school used to help students get accepted and enroll in college, particularly top-tier universities</td>
<td>Clear Horizons ECHS in Houston, TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Chambers 2012</td>
<td>Qualitative multisite case study</td>
<td>How to measure success of the ECHSs?</td>
<td>9 ECHSs in Hartford Connecticut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.M. Hemmer P.E. Uribe 2012</td>
<td>Quantitative descriptive study that included a systematic review and meta-analysis</td>
<td>Descriptive study described aspects of two alternative school settings in context to populations they served and framed by equity concerns.</td>
<td>Meta-analysis that took place over a 15-month period, from fall 2010 to spring 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Authors</td>
<td>Research Design/Methodology</td>
<td>Research Question</td>
<td>Sample Size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Valdez, F.D. McDowell, D.J. Loveless &amp; C. DelaGarza 2012</td>
<td>Qualitative Collective Case Study</td>
<td>How did the high school to college transitions regarding student identity, community and academic discourse change during the four-year combination of high school and early college?</td>
<td>Six students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. McDonald &amp; T. Farrell 2012</td>
<td>Grounded theory using focus groups and interviews</td>
<td>What are ECHS students’ perceptions of college readiness with respect to academic, social and personal preparedness?</td>
<td>31 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Howley, M.D. Howley, C.B. Howley &amp; T. Duncan 2013</td>
<td>Qualitative study using interviews and purposive sampling</td>
<td>The feasibility of expanding early college and dual enrollment programs</td>
<td>22 educators on the K-12 and higher education side who had played some role in the consortium’s efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Leonard 2013</td>
<td>Qualitative longitudinal case study using participant-observer</td>
<td>How might a high school enhance college readiness using an early college high school model that is comprehensive as well as affordable and sustainable?</td>
<td>A planning and design team that included: an academic vice president and a dean from the college, the district superintendent, district director of curriculum, high school principal and vice principal and three guidance counselors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene Cravey 2013</td>
<td>Qualitative ethnographic design using focus groups and interviews</td>
<td>Why do students, or their parent(s), choose the ECHS route of secondary education in lieu of a traditional high school setting?</td>
<td>28 students, teachers, advisors, and corresponding higher-education institution representatives on 5 Texas ECHS campuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. B. Woodcock &amp; H.K. Olsen Beal 2013</td>
<td>Qualitative narrative inquiry study using interviews</td>
<td>How do graduates of ECHSs in Texas describe their academic experiences as ECHS students? How do they describe their social experiences?</td>
<td>3 graduates of Texas ECHSs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2.4

Table of Prior Studies on ECHSs (2006-2014) - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Research Question(s)</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leonard, J. 2013</td>
<td>Qualitative case study using planning meeting notes, student surveys, and interviews with leaders, teachers, parents, and students</td>
<td>How can parental support help increase college readiness skills for academically average students?</td>
<td>Two college administrators, the district superintendent, director of curriculum, high school principal and one guidance counselor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall, A. 2013</td>
<td>Mixed methods that included data from student surveys and administrator interviews</td>
<td>Examines student retention, achievement and perceptions, and implementation of the initiative</td>
<td>Four western North Carolina early colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locke, L.A. Stedrak, L. J. Eadens, D. 2014</td>
<td>Qualitative single case study using interviews, observations, and institutional documents</td>
<td>Discusses how a principal hired a consultant to help address issues of lower performance among Hispanic females at her ECHS</td>
<td>The principal, consultant and 10 Latina students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1

Racial/Ethnic Information for 77 ECHSs in North Carolina

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total students</th>
<th>% non-white</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 1</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 4</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 5</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 6</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 7</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 8</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 9</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 11</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 12</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 13</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 14</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 15</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 16</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 17</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 18</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 19</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 20</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 21</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 22</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 23</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 24</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 25</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 26</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 27</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 28</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 29</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 30</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1

Racial/Ethnic Information for 77 ECHSs in North Carolina (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School 31</th>
<th>141</th>
<th>79%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 32</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 33</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 34</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 35</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 36</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 37</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 38</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 39</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 40</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 41</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 42</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 43</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 44</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 45</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 46</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 47</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 48</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 49</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 50</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 52</td>
<td>43</td>
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<td>School 53</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 54</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 55</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 56</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>67%</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 57</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
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<td>School 58</td>
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<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 59</td>
<td>155</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 60</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>56%</td>
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<tr>
<td>School 61</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 62</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 63</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 64</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1

*Racial/Ethnic Information for 77 ECHSs in North Carolina (continued)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 65</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 66</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 67</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 68</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School 69</strong></td>
<td><strong>221</strong></td>
<td><strong>70%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 70</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 71</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 72</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School 73</strong></td>
<td><strong>255</strong></td>
<td><strong>47%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 74</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School 75</strong></td>
<td><strong>190</strong></td>
<td><strong>51%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 76</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 77</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Schools that are eligible based on percentage of non-Whites students are in **BOLD**.
Table 3.2

*Free/Reduced Information for remaining 35 ECHSs in North Carolina*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total students</th>
<th>% non-white</th>
<th>Title I (Y or N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 7</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 9</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 13</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 15</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 16</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 17</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 20</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 22</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 23</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 25</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 27</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 28</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 31</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 37</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 38</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 39</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 42</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 45</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 46</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 47</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 48</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 49</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 55</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 56</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 60</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 61</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 62</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 69</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 70</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 71</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 72</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2

*Free/Reduced Information for remaining 35 ECHSs in North Carolina (continued)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 73</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 75</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Schools that are eligible based on free or reduced lunch percentage are in **BOLD**.
Table 3.3

Principal Tenure information for remaining 31 schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total students</th>
<th>% non-white</th>
<th>Title I (Y or N)</th>
<th>Principal eligible?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 2</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 3</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 7</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 9</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 13</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 16</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 17</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 20</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 23</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 25</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 27</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 28</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 31</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 37</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 38</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 39</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 42</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 45</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 46</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 47</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 48</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 49</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 55</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 56</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 60</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 61</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 62</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 69</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 71</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 72</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 75</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Schools that are eligible based on principal’s tenure are in **BOLD**.
Table 3.4

*Potential participants for the study after applying three criterion*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total students</th>
<th>% non-white</th>
<th>Title I (Y or N)</th>
<th>Principal eligible?</th>
<th>Participating in study?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School 9 1</td>
<td>348</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 13 1</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 16 2</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 23 3</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 38 3</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 48 3</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 49 3</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 56 4</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 61 4</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 62 4</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 69 1</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School 75 4</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Principal agreed to participate in the study.

2 School presented a conflict of interest for the researcher.

3 Principal did not agree to participate in study once contacted via email or phone.

4 Principal did not respond to email or phone requests to participate in study.

5 District would not allow students to participate in the study, which excluded this school from the study.