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The Effect of Leadership Change on School Climate

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THE EFFECT OF LEADERSHIP CHANGE ON SCHOOL CLIMATE

By

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School climate affects student achievement, feelings of safety within the school, and teacher job satisfaction. Concurrently, the principal is often seen as someone with a direct influence on the climate of the school, and therefore someone who has a direct role in shaping these aspects of school climate. Recent data suggests that about one in five principals leaves the profession every year, which means that every year, one in every five schools experiences a change to its climate, and a change to its achievement, safety, and teacher satisfaction. If this trend continues, schools are going to continue to feel the effects of inconsistency in the principalship. Through studying the effect of leadership change on school climate, we can better understand the ways in which climate is impacted by frequent changes in the principalship. Additionally, aspiring principals can learn a lot about the potential impact of their entrance into a school, and thus prepare for a successful transition into their new school and their new profession. Lastly, if administrators are prepared for the change in climate, hopefully they will have more success staying as the principal during those first challenging years.

Keywords: School climate, leadership, principal

DEDICATION

This is dedicated solely to my wife for her support, encouragement, and humor. She wrangled our boys when I needed time to work, carved out space in the house to serve as my "office," and kept up her positivity, love, and affection even as the demands of the dissertation increased. I could not have done this without her. This dissertation is as much hers as it is mine.

I promise I'm done taking classes, hon.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Schools and students thrive on a consistency of routines, structures, and practices (Salmon, 2010). Changes in school leadership, however, may challenge this consistency the most because, nationwide, school leadership is in a constant state of flux or change (Bradley & Levin, 2019; Partlow, 2007). The learning Policy Institute conducted a survey to measure and study principal turnover, and through its research, found that the "national average tenure of principals in their schools was four years as of 2016-2017" with "35 percent of principals being at their school for less than two years" (Bradley & Levin, 2019, p. 3). Continuity of leadership is important for the academic, social, and emotional health of schools (Farley-Ripple, Solano, & McDuffie, 2012; Meyer, Macmillan, & Northfield, 2009; Miller, 2013) as principals have a direct and often powerful impact of the climate of a school. A lack of continuity in leadership, therefore, has an impact on students, staff, and community, the implications of which require further study.

Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2013) found that "sustained positive school climate is associated with positive child and youth development, effective risk prevention and health promotion efforts, student learning and academic achievement, increased graduation rates, and teacher retention" (p. 357). Research has shown that when schools experience a change in leadership, they also experience an impact on the climate of the school, student achievement, and teacher retention (Henry & Harbatkin, 2019; Miller, 2013). Understanding the impact of this change can help schools plan for these transitions, predict the impact of leadership change, and mitigate the negative impacts of sudden shifts of practice, policy, or consistency.

My interest in school climate is based on my own learning and experience. I have come to recognize that a greater understanding of school climate is a factor for administrator success. As an elementary school administrator, I have seen the direct positive and negative impacts of

my own leadership on school climate and culture particularly during my first year as a principal. I am not proud of my first year as an administrator; I was not a good leader, I did not instill confidence in my staff, and I believe that the decisions I made or did not make led to poor staff morale. The previous principal had worked in the district for a number of years, was very organized, clinical, thorough, and measured. The staff at the time was a very veteran staff and many of the teachers in the school had worked in the district for over twenty years. In the five years the previous principal had been at the school, he had only replaced four teachers. Turnover at the school was low, and both teachers and administration were well versed, well established, and very knowledgeable about the school department, including its policies, practices, and unwritten expectations. Entering the school would have been a challenge for any new administrator, but I believe that my perception of the principalship and my approach to leadership did not help the staff or students transition positively with the change.

At the end of my first year, I surveyed the staff for feedback on what worked and what did not work. The main theme that emerged was that I was a nice guy, but I was not a leader. People were unhappy, and they expressed their frustrations both publicly and privately. I worked hard during the summer between my first and second year as principal, processing their feedback, and making the necessary improvements to my leadership in order to not only address their concerns, but to also address my own reflection and desire to do better. Through a recommendation by a mentor, I read Jim Collins' book *Good to Great*. One quote from the book really struck me, and provided a path for me to improve: "You need the discipline to confront the brutal facts of reality while retaining the resolute faith that you can and will create a path to greatness" (Collins, 2001, p. 127). I used this quote as a motto for my second year, and the feedback I received at the end of the year was overwhelmingly positive. The district offered me the opportunity to return as a continuing contract administrator, and the staff were excited that I was going to continue on as their principal. This experience shaped my interest in studying the effects of leadership change on school climate as well as how leadership continuity affects that

climate. Through understanding the impact of this change, I hope to better understand how new administrators can learn the impact they have on a school, and how they can successfully prepare for their own transition into the principalship.

Problem of Practice Statement

School climate has no singularly accepted definition, and yet teachers in schools can express the climate in their buildings (Meyer, Macmillan, & Northfield, 2009). While school climate is intangible, it is a perceptible "feel" of a building, and one that can impact multiple aspects of schools, both major and minor. Cohen (2009) describes school climate as "the quality and character of school life" (p. 100). Hernandez and Seem (2004) describe school climate as "related factors of attitude, feeling, and behavior of individuals within the school system" (p. 256). Rafferty (2003) states that "climate sets the tone for the schools' approach to resolving problems, trust and mutual respect, attitudes, and generating new ideas" (p. 52). These definitions describe something that is more felt and experienced than measured, but they also hint at the importance of school climate as something that gives a school its power. Each definition of school climate is thematically related through emotion and experience. Students, staff, and families can quickly recall their school experience as positive or negative, either at the classroom level or the school level, but they remember, with clarity, the emotions of the moments and the experiences. Those feelings are directly tied to an overall sense of the school, and the climate that was established, enhanced, or altered. And the importance of this invisible yet ever-present aspect of schools is far-reaching. Cohen (2009) believes that "a sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society" (p. 100). Key to this statement is the word "sustainable" as recent research (Bradley & Levin, 2019) has proven that a school's climate is anything but stable when there is a continuous change of leadership at the principal level. It is my contention that the principal of the building has a direct and profound impact on the climate

of a school, and therefore when schools experience multiple changes of leadership at the principal level, school climate, including all its intangible components, is affected.

The role of the school principal is multi-faceted. Principals are expected to be instructional leaders, disciplinarians, public envoys to the community, representatives of the school, and morale builders for staff and students. Research has shown that the principal has an impact on student achievement (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Miller, 2013; Nettles & Herrington, 2007; Ross & Gray, 2006). Research also shows that the principal directly affects the work environment of a school (Meyer, Macmillan, & Northfield, 2009), including influencing staff decisions on whether to remain at the school or seek employment elsewhere. Teachers in particular are heavily influenced by the school principal. Rafferty (2003) noted that "trust in relationships, particularly in the teacher-principal dyad, positively affected teachers' willingness to speak out about important work-related issues" (p. 50). Thus, two major factors seem to be directly affected by school leadership: achievement and morale.

Further complicating these components is the dearth of qualified individuals willing to take on the role of school leadership (Clifford, 2010), particularly in rural school districts. Rural districts and rural states seem to be most affected by consistent changes in leadership and most challenged by finding qualified candidates to fill major positions (Fuller &Young, 2009; Hansen, 2018; Pendola & Fuller, 2018). Rural schools, therefore, face a greater challenge in the impact that leadership instability has on school climate which could then negate the many benefits that rural schools provide students including smaller classes, stronger community ties, and better academic achievement for students in poverty (Surface, 2014).

This study looks to follow the lead of Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield (2009) who focused on "the impact of principal succession on teachers and their work" (p. 172), however, this study will differentiate itself from Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield by studying groups of teachers by years of experience, content specialty, and grade level, and studying the impact of leadership change on school climate through these indicators. Furthermore, this study will use a

framework established by Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, and Pickeral (2009) who identified four major areas of school climate: safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment (p. 184). These areas will serve as a focal point for this study, which will look at how leadership change affects school climate through these four identities.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to look at the effect of leadership change on school climate, specifically how leadership change affects the social, emotional, and normative character of a school and its staff. As Noonan (2004) argues, "every aspect of school has something to teach us about its climate" (p. 61) so the study also aims to incorporate many aspects of schools including teacher status, teacher experience, leadership roles, leadership turnover, and school status (city, urban, town, or rural) . For the purposes of this study, school climate will refer to both tangible and visible elements of a school as well as the intangible and invisible components that are felt or sensed more than seen or observed.

This study focuses specifically on teacher perceptions of school climate, prior to and following a change in leadership including if these changes were perceived as positive or negative. Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield (2009) argue that "teacher morale is a critical factor that influences the ability of the new principal to carry out their responsibilities and to initiate change" (p. 184), so investigating how teacher morale is impacted by a change in leadership, and therefore a change to school climate, will provide context for how leaders shape their approach. Through studying the impact of leadership change on school climate, I hope to provide information to the new administrator on the ways in which his/her entrance into a school has a positive or negative impact on the intangible but also extremely important morale of a school. Additionally, with research suggesting that about half of principals leave their schools within five years (Miller, 2013), and recent studies asserting the need for "further research on administrator career behavior [. . .] to improve the recruitment and retention of school leaders" (Farley-Ripple, Solano, & McDuffie, 2012, p. 228), the potential for new principal turnover is

great. The findings from this study could help not only those who wish to enter the principalship, but also those in leadership positions who are struggling to find educators to lead their schools.

I hope that my learning can help provide new administrators with a pathway to a successful transition, and to keep them engaged in the profession beyond the first few critical years where it seems the majority of principals end up leaving their schools, and in some cases, the education profession entirely (Battle, 2010). Furthermore, the information from this study could be used by districts to improve their professional development, professional support, or leadership mentorship capacities if they want to attract and maintain excellent leaders to propel their schools and districts forward academically, socially, and emotionally.

Research Questions

This study will look to answer questions around the impact of leadership change on school climate by surveying teachers who have experienced principal turnover, either one time or multiple times, in their schools, or in their educational careers. Additionally, this study will look to address leadership change through the lens of longevity and continuity, while also exploring how subsets of teacher groups are affected by leadership change. All data will use the framework established by Cohen (2009) and reinforced by Cohen et. al. (2009) to focus on safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment. Specifically, this study will look to answer the following questions:

- RQ1: How does leadership change at the principal level affect school climate, specifically through key components such as safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment?
- RQ2: Does leadership longevity or continuity lead to less disruption in school climate?
- RQ3: What factors, including teacher longevity, grade span, content specialty, and school status (city, suburban, urban, or rural) are most affected by a change in leadership?

Overview of Methodology

This study will use a mixed methods study to record the perceptions teachers have of changes in leadership through the four facets of the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework, specifically safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment in order to analyze the interplay between leadership consistency or inconsistency and the four constructs. Additionally, the survey will ask participants to identify themselves by the demographic categories of grade span, teaching role, formal leadership positions, years of experience, gender, and the number of leadership changes experienced both at individual schools and during years of total teaching experience. Grade span is based on traditional school structures including K-5 for elementary, 6-8 for middle school, and grades 9-12 for High School. Using data collected from the Maine DOE NEO 2.0 contact search dashboard (Search by Teaching Positions, 2020), the researcher will identify teaching position by classrooms, special education, specialist (art, music, physical education, guidance counselor, gifted/talented, Title I), content specialist, or other.

Additionally, the researcher will apply the NCES locale framework (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020) to identify if a district is city, suburban, town, or rural. While the locale framework expands the four basic types into subtypes, these will be compressed to the four broad categories. The locale codes are applied through the NCES database and matched with each school identified by the NEO 2.0 dashboard (Search by Teaching Positions, 2020).

Using the Maine DOE NEO 2.0 dashboard (Search by Teaching Positions, 2020), the researcher was able to identify 14,560 teacher emails by classroom, gifted and talented, and special education from classified schools. Classified schools are schools with an NCES locale code. NCES Local codes provided the following breakdown of data in relation to the 14,560 emails:

1,530 (10.5%) Classified as **City - Small**

1,978 (13.6%) Classified as **Suburban - Midsize**

766 (5.3%) Classified as **Suburban - Small**

624 (4.3%) Classified as **Town - Fringe**

1,177 (8.1%) Classified as **Town - Distant**

831 (5.7%) Classified as **Town - Remote**

2,537 (17.4%) Classified as **Rural - Fringe**

3,852 (26.4%) Classified as **Rural - Distant**

1,265 (8.7%) Classified as **Rural - Remote**

1,200 emails were from schools that are not classified because they are Academies, Private Schools, or Catholic Schools. Because these schools could not be identified with an NCES Locale Code, they were not included in this study.

Using emails from where teachers work, the researcher used a stratified sampling (Krathwohl, 2009) of the overall population by randomly selecting 10% of the 14,560 teacher emails in Maine. The stratified sampling (Krathwohl, 2009) identified schools through the NCES locale framework, and the researcher categorized respondents as city, suburban, town, or rural teachers, and then built a representative sample based on the aforementioned percentages of the Maine teacher population. The goal of this sampling strategy was to have a representative population of teachers in the state, even when randomly choosing participants based on their NCES locale. This data and this sampling provided the foundation for the descriptive and inferential statistics the researcher examined in this study.

Positionality

I approached this project from the viewpoint of an administrator who was seeking to understand the role he had in impacting the climate of a school that had an already established routine, structure, and culture. My goal was to understand the impact that my own entrance into the profession had on the school climate, and to a further extent, to help other administrators who see to enter the principalship prepare for their roles. Administrator preparation programs try to prepare leaders for their futures, but there are many unplanned facets of the principalship

for which new administrators will never be prepared, one of the most impactful being the way in which a principal affects the climate of the school.

I am a white, heterosexual, cisgender male who grew up in a fairly middle-class suburb in New York. I gravitated toward education because of teachers I had who strongly influenced me to love literature the way they did. I moved to Maine to attend college and ended up staying and establishing both a life and a career. Similar to my high school experience, I gravitated towards leadership because I had leaders who influenced me to have a positive global impact on students. I have been lucky in my career and education to have understanding leaders who allowed me the space to make mistakes and to grow. If not for their patience and support, I would not have made it very far in my career, and thus my approach to this project is founded in an experience that allowed for mistakes, failure, but ultimately growth.

Additionally, I love data and data analysis so my approach to this project was centered in quantitative research because of the important role that data plays in understanding the impetus, effect, and next steps in education. Numbers can be interpreted in many ways, but my analysis of the data was always coming from a belief that numbers tell a story, but we need to unlock that story to understand its theme.

I am an insider to both education and to administration, but my intent, always, was to help leaders help students and staff. Even in my seventh year as an administrator, I worry that my faults and failures during that first year have had ripple effects not only on the staff but also the students and families. I have always approached this project with the mindset that I can help prepare future leaders for an entrance into the principalship. I cannot erase the experiences I had as a first year administrator, and nor would I want to. These experiences shaped my own beliefs about the influence of the principal, the intangible yet powerful connections between all school stakeholders, and the intent of new leaders to have positive impacts in their schools.

Considerations for Scholarly Practitioners

The study of educational leadership is vast, but the implications of this study are multi-faceted: a) to find out the impact that leadership change has on school climate, b) to prepare future leaders for the ways in which even their initial entrance into a school will affect established norms, practices, or feelings, and c) to provide districts with information on how they can build leadership capacity from within, or support new leaders from outside the district on their entrance to the principalship.

For policy makers, the research findings show that work needs to be done regarding professional development for new administrators as well as teachers in order to ensure a smooth transition for not only new leaders but also for all teachers in the building as they will be affected by the change in leadership. Supporting all stakeholders affected by leadership change could help build community capacity, understanding, and connectivity so that all members are supported during a change in leadership. Additionally, the research findings show that relationships are most affected by changes in leadership, therefore districts should look to ways in which they can address, support, or consider the relational impact of leadership change. One example could be for districts to promote from within so that the principal has an understanding of the district philosophies and a familiarity with the direction of the school. This could be accomplished through leadership programs or cohorts who focus solely on building leadership capacity through its own employees.

For researchers, the study shows that leadership change has far reaching impacts, most specifically in the relationships between leaders and teachers, and that further research around the gender of leaders, and the success of certain leadership styles could lessen the major impacts of leadership change on school climate. Lastly, the locale of the school plays a significant role in how the leadership change is perceived. Given that Maine is a mostly rural state, and given that rural communities are experiencing the most changes in leadership, work around supporting rural communities with attracting and retaining qualified leadership, supporting and mentoring

rural leaders, or supporting and providing professional development for rural educators is paramount to the success of those who are in a position of leadership, or have experience multiple changes of leadership and therefore instability in school climate.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review is intended to provide context for the need to study leadership change and its effects on school climate. This review will begin with an explanation and definitions of school climate, followed by an overview of the importance of strong school climate. The literature review will also address the four components of the Cohen et. al. framework (2009) including safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment. Lastly, the literature review will discuss principal turnover and attrition which have a noticeable and direct correlation to changes in school climate. All of these components deserve study as they all contribute to understanding and analyzing school climate, and how it is impacted by inconsistency in the principalship. The chapter will close with a review of the conceptual framework of the study.

Definition of School Climate

School climate research is not a new area of exploration. Scholarly practitioners have been studying school climate for over 100 years, looking to define, understand, and determine its impact on the many facets of school life (Perry, 1908). The researcher's approach to school climate is based on Cohen's (2009) definition of school climate as "the quality and character of school life," and one that "includes norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe (p. 100). Cohen's framework (2009) helps to parse out and to catalogue the various research that has been conducted on school climate, a lot of which fits neatly into Cohen's initial definition and explanation.

The National School Climate Center (2007) expands on Cohen's definition to include school climate as "based on patterns of school life experiences" and one that "reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, and organizational structures" (p. 5). The American Institute for Research *Quality School Leadership* brief (2012) includes the "availability of supports for teaching and learning" as well

as “goals, values, interpersonal relationships, formal organizational structures, and organizational practices” (p. 3) in its definition of school climate. And work by Brown, Corrigan, and Higgins-D’Alessandro in their *Handbook of Prosocial Education* (2012) identifies school climate as “an amalgam of many individual, interpersonal, and group influences and how the person ‘weights’ them in conscious and unrecognized ways (p. 5). The common themes of these statements, involving relationships, teaching and learning, organizational structures and goals, are all tied together through what is best described as an intangible yet perceptible aura of a school, one that is felt more than seen, and yet one that has far reaching implications. Cornell and Huang (2019) referred to school climate as a “metaphorical term” (p. 159), and one that captures both quantitative as well as qualitative aspects of school life.

Importance of Strong School Climate

The importance of school climate, regardless of the principal, is of particular note as much has been written about school climate and the ways in which it impacts schools. Welsh (2000) writes about the effects of school climate on social disorder, noting that climate measures can be used to gain a greater “understanding of school violence, and the identification of contributing or inhibiting factors at the school level [that] can help guide appropriate, effective prevention and intervention efforts” (p.104). Strong school climate has also been associated with student academic success despite neighborhood crime and community violence (Laurito, Lacoe, Schwartz, Sharkey, & Ellen, 2019). Gage, Larson Sugai, and Chafouleas (2016) studied school climate to determine “specific facets of school climate that are predictive of decreased risk” for office referrals (p. 493). They discovered that a strong school climate leads to strong connections between teachers and students, teachers and teachers, teachers and families, and therefore less disciplinary concerns. Additional work around perceptions of school climate by students, parents, and teachers found that changes in leadership and administration had a direct effect on perceptions of engagement. Gonzalez, Bozick, Daugherty, Sherer, Singh Suàrez, and Ryan (2013) argued that “parents [. . .] typically associated their sense of school engagement

with the perceived quality of the school's leader – and new leadership was not associated with parents' feeling more engaged" (p. 50).

In researching organizational culture and climate, Ostroff, Kinicki, and Muhammad (2013) noted the importance of leadership on climate, arguing in that "leaders are likely to play a particularly important role in the emergence of and consensus of climate perceptions" (p. 663), nothing that the behaviors of leaders, from their leadership style to their communication style, can have strong and powerful implications for successful organization climate. Clearly, the principal of the building has an effect, even peripherally, on the success of the students within.

Safety

Schools should be safe spaces, and this belief has evolved from the more harrowing events, such as school shootings and gang violence, to acceptable of marginalized groups such as students of color, students of different races and ethnicities, and the growing number of LGBTQ students in schools. Cornell and Mayer (2010) studied the effects of school disorder and found, unsurprisingly, that schools that experienced more disorder and a lack of safety were also schools that impaired learning and achievement. Furthermore, Cornell and Mayer (2010) argued that "day-to-day, low-level incivility in schools is a key factor in student adjustment and psychological well-being" (p. 8).

Sindhi (2013), in writing about the role of the school principal in creating a safe environment, states that safe schools are those that "protect the emotional, psychological, and physical well-being of students" (p. 78) and the principal's role in fostering, maintaining, and enhancing safety in schools is paramount. Sindhi (2013) also argues that the principal should should "accept the responsibility for providing a safe working environment for staff and visitors," "create a personalized, warm, safe, orderly, and inviting school environment," and "collected and compile data regarding safety related incidents" (p. 81-82).

Strong leadership and its role in school safety is also echoed in the work of Gregory, Dewey, and Fan (2012) who studied teacher safety in authoritative school climates and found

that teachers who worked in schools with high structure and support had less staff victimization and more effective supports for students. Schools with low or zero tolerance for bullying also noted stronger climate and less risky student behaviors in both the school (Cornell & Konold, 2012; Romer & Selman, 2007), and in the classroom (Kingby, 2006). The role of safety in schools extends to not only students, but to teachers, staff, and visitors.

Teaching and Learning

The principal in a school is viewed as an instructional leader of a building (Anderson & Pounder, 2009), and is also seen as someone who has a direct influence on student academic, behavioral, and social emotional success in schools. School climate researchers have studied the principal's impact on student achievement, supporting the belief that strong and consistent instructional leadership has a direct positive impact on student academic success in schools (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Wahlstrom, Anderson, Mascall, & Gordon, 2009; Nettles & Harrington, 2007; Seashore-Louis, Dretzke, Wahlstrom, 2010). Strong leadership from a school principal is seen as having a direct correlation on student reading achievement (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996), but more through the ways in which the principal acts as the instructional leader, holding teachers accountable to high expectations, providing many opportunities for students to learn, and creating a strong and coherent school mission.

Further literature around the strength of instructional leadership and its correlation to student achievement is found in the work of Nettles and Herrington (2007) who promote the idea that "individual improvements in principal practice can impact thousands of students" (p. 732). Ross and Gray (2006) found transformational leadership to be of particular importance if a school were going to place a large-scale focus on student achievement, noting that "principals who adopt transformational leadership behaviours [sic] contribute to teachers' professional commitment directly and indirectly through collective teacher efficacy" (p. 799) which is seen as a direct predictor of student achievement (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000). The instructional leadership of the principal is two-fold: first through the indirect impact of adherence to

curricular expectations, review and analysis of data, and school-wide planning efforts for student improvement, and secondly through working with teachers on their instructional practice either through evaluation systems or through a shared vision for student success.

Relationships

The importance of relationships, in coordination with the principalship, cannot be understated. The principal has a relationship with every stakeholder in the school, including students, staff, teachers, and community members. Burkhauser (2017) argues that "the school principal can play a key role in improving teachers' perceptions of their school environment which have been shown to affect their leaving decisions" (p. 140). Furthermore, Clifford (2010) in his Learning Point Associates' *Quality School Leadership* brief on hiring quality school leaders encourages districts, when looking at hiring principals, to involve the candidate with other stakeholders in the school. Specifically, Clifford writes, "because principals' work involves community members and school and district staff, hiring committees should seek input from these and other salient groups" (p. 10). The principal has daily interactions with all groups, and the relationships she forges can play a vital role in helping the principal move the school forward through her own vision, or in being stymied, overtly or subversively, in achieving any goals or achievements she has when entering the principalship.

As the human capital manager of schools, principals have a direct role in hiring, retaining, or removing teachers. Kimball (2011) argues that "principals must connect school improvement strategies with the management activities needed to recruit, select, develop, and retain effective teachers" (p. 18). Kimball, Milanowski, and Heneman (2010) found that principals had a harder time recruiting talented staff in high poverty urban schools, but they also noted that "all the principals mentioned the importance of working conditions on retaining teachers and avoiding de-motivation" (p. 19) which aligns with other beliefs about the influence of the principal on teacher retention decisions.

Boyd et al. (2011) found that working conditions in schools, administrative support for example, is a factor in teacher career decisions. Protheroe (2006) argues that the principal has a direct impact on the success of new teachers in their first year, and Pgodzinksi, Youngs, Frank, and Belman (2012) noted a similar find in their study on novice teachers' intent to remain teaching, specifically that "when novices reported administrator-teacher relations in their school as being poor, they were significantly less likely to indicate intent to remain teaching in that school" (p. 268).

The School Environment

While school climate research tends to focus on the human resources aspect, specifically the principal, the teachers, or the practices they follow to achieve success, researchers cannot ignore the importance of the physical appearance, cleanliness, and structural stability of the school building itself. Uline and Tschannen-Moran (2008) researched school quality and student achievement and found that both the school climate and student achievement are both affected by the quality of the school facility, specifically in the perception that the state of the building has on staff, students, and the community. The perception of the facility and its impact on achievement is also argued by Bowers and Urick (2011) who found that the perceptions of facilities have an indirect impact on achievement through teacher motivation, particularly when teachers feel good about the school in which they work. This conclusion was also echoed by Kok, Mobach, and Omta (2019) who wrote that the "perceived quality of cleanliness is most strongly positively related to study success" (p. 56). Even minor updates to facilities, rather than major construction projects, can have a positive impact on the school climate. Buckley, Schneider, and Shang found that the facility improvements positively affected teacher retention equally or greater than pay increases (2004).

Building quality was a factor in research by Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield (2009) who found, when studying principal succession, that the morale of teachers was directly impacted by the state of the building. One group of teachers in their study was in a building that

was damp, poorly ventilated, and located away from the city center, and these teachers reported some of the lowest morale of all groups. The principal has a direct influence on the building, regardless of its age, and when students, teachers, and community members perceive the building as well-cared for, there is a noticeable difference in both student achievement and staff morale.

Impact of Principal Turnover on School Climate

A lot has been written about principal turnover (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018; Pendola & Fuller, 2018), and a lack of principal retention (Fuller & Young, 2007) and the many reasons why principals are leaving schools and sometimes even the education professional entirely. The learning policy institute noted that "18 percent of principals were no longer in the same position one year later" and in high poverty schools, "the turnover rate was 21 percent" (Bradley & Levin, 2019, p. 3). Partlow (2007) noted that "the only predictor variable that was statistically significant in predicting principal turnover was student achievement test scores" (p. 67) while Grissom and Bartanen (2018) found that principals in schools with higher achievement are less likely to leave the profession, but principals in schools with low achievement or high numbers of low-income students are more likely to leave, particularly in middle schools.

Furthermore, principal turnover impacts student achievement. Miller (2013) found that student achievement returns to pre-transition levels about five years after the principal has left. Kearney, Valadez, and Garcia (2012) found that administrator longevity was correlated with elementary student success, and significant in the success of secondary school students. Henry and Harbatkin (2019) studied principal turnover mid-year and between year, and found a negative correlation on both student achievement and student proficiency which continues for two years after the transition.

Principal turnover also has an impact on school staff. Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield (2009) found that a high frequency of principal turnover leads to marginalization of the principal position, the rise of informal leaders, and decreased teacher morale, specifically with

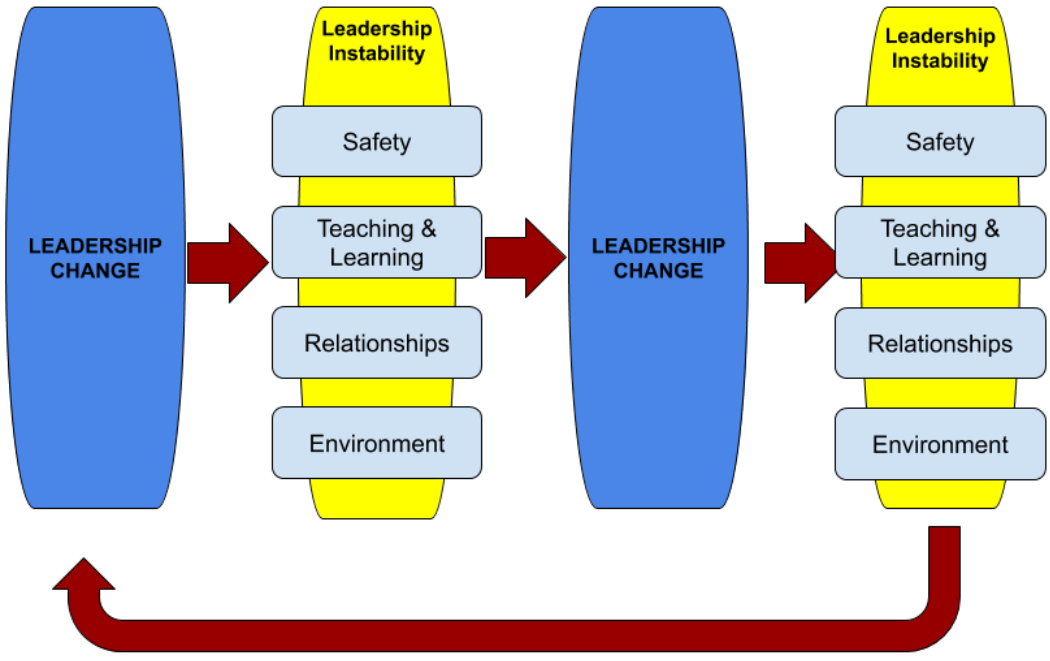
newer teachers. In studying the effect of principal turnover on professional learning communities, Kilbane (2009) noted that leadership changes also affected direction setting, curriculum, and teacher perceptions of being a bigger component of school level initiatives. School administration is also affected by leadership change as Assistant Principals are twice as likely to leave their position following principal turnover (Bartanen, Rogers, & Woo, 2021).

Conceptual Framework

Using the school climate framework developed by Cohen et. al. (2009), the researcher looked at how leadership change impacts safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment. The goal is that through studying the ways in which these facets are impacted by leadership change, the researcher can share, with prospective leaders, the impact their arrival will have on the already established climate of the school. Figure 1 represents a continuous loop of leadership change and school climate instability.

Figure 1

Leadership Inconsistency and the Impact on School Climate

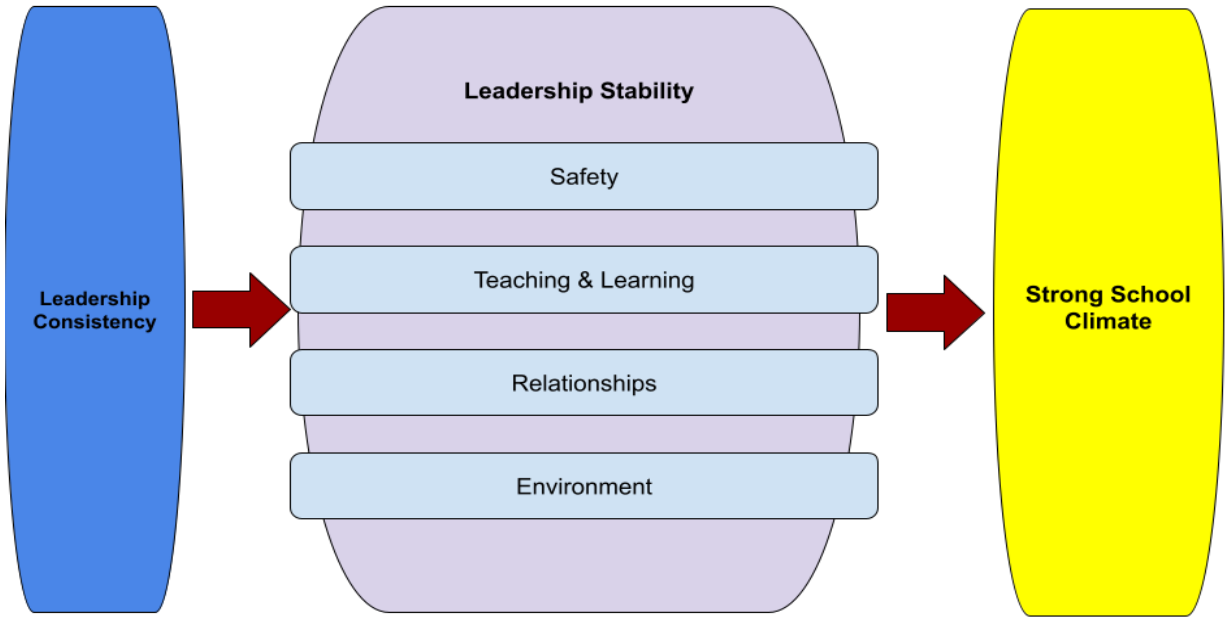


If there is frequent leadership change, the school climate is in a constant state of instability, and thus the four components of school climate as established by Cohen et. al. (2009) are continuously impacted in a negative way. Without leadership stability, safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the school environment cannot establish a firm, consistent foothold.

If leadership instability leads to school climate instability, leadership stability will therefore lead to school climate stability. Leadership stability has been shown to have positive long-term impacts on social organizations (Tafvelin, Hyvönen, & Westerberg, 2014), as well as positive impacts on student achievement (Kearney, Valdez, & Garcia, 2012). Long standing and consistent leadership has the ability to lead to a stronger school climate. Figure 2 represents the impact of leadership stability on school climate.

Figure 2

Leadership Stability and the Impact on School Climate.



Safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment are made stronger with leadership longevity, which all leads to a strong school climate. Each component of the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework deserves explanation as each component is important to measure both independently and together.

The first component of school climate is safety, which Cohen et. al. (2009) define as "physical" and "social emotional" (p. 184). Benbenishty et. al. (2016) noted the importance of school safety in their study on school violence and its impact on student academic achievement. They found that "high levels of overall improvements in the school academic performance predict better climate and much lower victimization over time" (Benbenishty et. al., 2016, p. 203). Additionally, Welsh (2000) argues that "school climate sets the parameters of acceptable behavior among all school actors, and it assigns individual and institutional responsibility for school safety" (p. 89). Laurito et. al. (2019) concur that "school climate, including how safe, orderly, and welcoming a school is perceived to be, may affect how youth are able to cope with traumatic events at home or in the residential community" (p. 142). The importance of safety in schools, and its impact through school climate, cannot be understated or ignored.

Next, the framework identifies teaching and learning which Cohen et. al. (2009) define as "quality instruction," "social, emotional, and ethical learning," "professional development," and "leadership" (p. 184). Much has been written about school climate and student achievement (Nettles & Harrington, 2007; Ross & Gray, 2006), and further study on the ways in which the change in leadership impact teaching and learning will help new administrators to prepare for how they can support the academic and emotional success of their teachers and students.

Cohen et. al. (2009) also focuses on relationships which are defined as "respect for diversity," "school community and collaboration," and "morale and connectedness" (p. 184). Strong relationships in schools, particularly between the leader and the teachers, have a profound impact on teacher morale (Meyer, Macmillan, & Northfield, 2009), trust and open communication (Rafferty, 2003), and school climate improvement (Gülşen & Gülden, 2014). For new administrators, understanding how their entrance affects the relationships in the school would mean they could understand how they affect the respect, collaboration, and morale of teachers.

Lastly, Cohen et. al. (2009) define environment as cleanliness, adequate space and materials, aesthetic quality of the school, and curricular/extra curricular offerings (p. 184). Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield (2009) noted the physical state of the building in their study on principal succession and its impact on teacher morale. In the study, teachers expressed concerns around the physical state of the building, and the researchers alluded to the environment as playing a role in the low morale in the school. Studying the ways in which leadership change can affect the physical environment can also lead to interesting insights in the impact on school climate. It is the contention of the researcher that leadership continuity will lead to stronger stability of school climate, specifically through the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Setting and Context

Principal turnover is an ongoing problem in public schools. One in five principals leaves the profession after one year (Bradley & Levin, 2019) which means that 20% of schools face a change in the direction of the school, specific focuses on achievement, school or district level initiatives, and expectations for students, families, and personnel. This upheaval has been associated with frustration over sustainability of professional learning communities (Kilbane, 2009), student achievement (Miller, 2011), and teacher morale (Meyer, Macmillan, & Northfield, 2009). Additionally, the state of Maine is experiencing a "leadership crisis" (Maine State Legislature, 2016) as administrative positions throughout the state, including principalships and superintendencies, remain unfilled.

Given these competing factors – consistent turnover, the impact of the school principal, and the lack of candidates for critical fill positions – an attempt was made to survey teachers in the state to measure the perceptions of Maine teachers, broadly, and how they measure the impact of leadership change through the four facets of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment, categories which Jonathan Cohen and his colleagues (2009) stated was the measures most consistently found in research around school climate.

The researcher used a survey to examine the relationship between leadership change and the four facets of school climate as described by Cohen et. al. (2009). The survey looked at the interplay between leadership consistency or inconsistency, and safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the school environment. Additionally, the survey asked participants to identify themselves by the demographic categories of grade span, teaching position, formal leadership positions, years of experience, gender, and number of leadership changes experienced. Grade span was based on traditional school structures including K-5 for elementary, grades 6-8 for middle school, and grade 9-12 for High School. Using the data collected from the Maine DOE

NEO 2.0 contact search dashboard (Search by Teaching Positions, 2020), teaching positions were identified as classroom, special education, specialist (for example physical education or art teachers), content specialist, or other.

Additionally, the researcher applied the NCES locale framework (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020) to identify if a district was city, suburban, town, or rural. While the locale framework expands the four basic types into subtypes, these were compressed to broad categories of city, suburban, town, and rural districts. The locale codes were applied through the NCES database (National Center for Education Statistics) and matched with each school identified by the NEO 2.0 dashboard (Search by Teaching Positions, 2020).

Research Design

In order to best study the effect of leadership change on school climate, the researcher approached the study in what Krathwohl would describe as the "method of concomitant variation" whereby the data is used to determine a cause and effect (p. 226). The research was designed to measure the effect of leadership change on school climate, so the approach was based on exploring data submitted by teachers, incorporating demographic information and variables, then analyzing the results to look for patterns or trends in responses.

Given the number and type of variables, the goal of the research design was also to look at the variables separately. Because the research was going to include demographic information related to NCES Locale, grade span, teacher type, formal leadership roles, gender, gender, years of experience, years teaching at a current school, and number of leadership changes experienced, the data could not be gathered nor analyzed holistically. The best approach was to measure leadership change through a cause and effect lens, and to have teachers provide the details and the data to tell a story on the effects that the leadership change has on specific aspects of schools.

Additionally, the research design was meant to be, mostly, quantitative data. Given the researchers intent to measure school climate through the Cohen et. al. (2009) constructs, a

quantitative approach was considered from the inception of the research. The goal was to gather as much data as possible, in the quickest way possible. Knowing that teachers do not have much time during the day to respond to surveys, building the research design around a 1-4 Likert scale and crafting a survey design that would take minimal time to complete offered the best possible chance of multiple responses from multiple areas throughout the state of Maine.

The research design was also intended to provide the details needed to address the researcher's questions. The researcher avoided approaching the study with any preconceived notions of responses and instead relied on the data to provide the answers. The research design was built, initially, upon the experiences the researcher had as a first-year administrator, and so the goal was always to avoid inserting personal assumptions in the process of research design, survey construction, or data analysis.

This study used a mixed methods approach in order to measure teacher perceptions of leadership change and the effect this change has on school climate. Teachers responded to four sets of statements, one set for each of the constructs of the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework, including safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment, using a 1-4 Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Additionally, teachers were provided the opportunity to expand on their statements through four open ended questions at the end of the survey, each question tied to one of the four constructs of the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework.

The researcher used a study design that consisted of a pilot survey created using Qualtrics, and distributed to teachers through email. Initial Data was collected and analyzed from the pilot survey in order to provide guidance for survey revision, analysis of measures for validity and trustworthiness, and as an outline for future pitfalls that the researcher would encounter. A second instrument was crafted using Qualtrics and based on the data collected from the first. The second survey was distributed to a larger stratified sample population of teachers via email, and followed up with email reminders to encourage additional participation and to push the response rate to 20% or higher.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to measure the effects of leadership change on school climate, specifically through the lenses of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment, four key components established by Cohen et al. (2009). Specifically, this study looks to answer the following questions:

1. How does leadership change at the principal level affect school climate, specifically through key components such as safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment?
2. Does leadership longevity or continuity lead to less disruption in school climate?
3. What factors, including teacher longevity, grade span, content specialty, and rural or urban schools' status, are most affected by a change in leadership?

Methods

Participant Selection

Using the Maine DOE NEO 2.0 dashboard (Search by Teaching Positions, 2020), the researcher was able to collect 14,560 teacher emails identified by classroom, Gifted and Talented, and Special Education from classified schools. Classified schools are schools with an NCES locale code (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). NCES locale codes provided the following breakdown of data in relation to the 14,560 emails:

1,530 (10.5%) Classified as **City - Small**
1,978 (13.6%) Classified as **Suburban - Midsize**
766 (5.3%) Classified as **Suburban - Small**
624 (4.3%) Classified as **Town - Fringe**
1,177 (8.1%) Classified as **Town - Distant**
831 (5.7%) Classified as **Town - Remote**
2,537 (17.4%) Classified as **Rural - Fringe**
3,852 (26.4%) Classified as **Rural - Distant**
1,265 (8.7%) Classified as **Rural - Remote**

1,200 emails were from schools that are not classified because they are Academies, Private Schools, or Catholic Schools. Because these schools cannot be identified with an NCES locale code, they were not included in the survey.

Using teacher emails as a way to send the survey, the researcher used a stratified sampling (Krathwohl, 2009) of the overall population by randomly selecting 10% of the 14,560 teacher emails in Maine. The stratified sampling (Krathwohl, 2009) identified the schools through the NCES locale framework, categorized respondents as city, suburban, town, or rural teachers, and built the representative sample based on the aforementioned percentages of the Maine teacher population. Teacher emails were recorded on a spreadsheet, separated by NCES locale code, and using a random number generator, the researcher selected the stratified sample of respondents. The researcher excluded respondents from his own district (NCES Locale 13: City-Small) as teachers in this district are not permitted to respond to surveys without superintendent approval. Additionally, the district in which the researcher works had not experienced leadership turnover in more than five years, and thus responses might not have provided the level of data or detail needed to gauge the effect of leadership change on school climate. The goal of the sampling strategy was to have a representative population of teachers in the state, even when randomly choosing participants based on their NCES locale. This data and this sampling provided the foundation for the descriptive and inferential statistics the researcher examined and analyzed. Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the response rates for the representative Samples:

Table 1
Response Rates for representative Samples

NCES Locale Code	Responses	N-Size	Response Rate
1	37	153	24%
2	36	198	18%
3	12	77	16%
4	14	63	22%
5	19	118	16%
6	15	83	18%
7	51	253	20%
8	82	384	21%
9	27	127	21%

The survey was piloted in the winter of 2021. A stratified sampling of 100 teachers was selected using a random number generator, and the results were used to measure Cronbach's alpha, initial survey data, and to make any adjustments to the survey before it was fully sent. Initially, 37 teachers responded to the survey, a 37% response rate. To establish internal reliability of the survey, a Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated for each construct: safety ($\alpha = .282$), teaching and learning ($\alpha = .303$), relationships ($\alpha = .452$), and the school environment ($\alpha = .342$). Given the low scores, the researcher calculated a Cronbach alpha coefficient when separating the constructs by pre and post statements. The scores showed a stronger internal reliability for safety pre ($\alpha = .852$), safety post ($\alpha = .737$), teaching and learning pre ($\alpha = .824$), teaching and learning post ($\alpha = .723$), relationships pre ($\alpha = .885$), relationships post ($\alpha = .840$), the school environment pre ($\alpha = .714$), and the school environment post ($\alpha = .713$). Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS statistics software, and qualitative data was coded using NVivo computer software.

Data Collection

To collect and elicit the type of data the researcher wanted to study, the researcher used a stratified random sampling that aligned with statewide data on teachers from different NCES Locales. The survey had questions built around the framework established by Cohen et. al. (2009) which incorporated safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the school environment as themes (p. 184). These themes were chosen after "a review of research,

practitioner, and scholarly writings [that] suggest there are four major aspects of school life that color and shape school climate" (p. 183). Questions were organized by theme in order to address each component as it relates to leadership change. To ensure this instrument had a strong internal validity, the researcher used Cronbach's alpha to make sure that the instrument was consistent for all participants.

Furthermore, collected data was organized by descriptive factors including NCES Locales, grade span, teacher category, leadership roles, gender, years teaching at the current school, years total teaching, and number of leadership changes experienced by participants. Where possible and appropriate, certain categories were collapsed to identify variations and variables in responses, for example when looking at NCES Locales, grade span, leadership experience, gender, and probationary or veteran status. These same categories were also used to measure qualitative responses from teachers to extract additional details and determine themes as they related to the constructs of the survey.

Instruments/Protocols

Previous research on school climate focused on the use of a certain type of climate survey, such as the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCQD) (Rafferty, 2003) or a geographically specific survey such as the California Healthy Kids Survey (CKHS) (Benbenishty, et. al, 2016). Yet recent research on school climate referenced Cohen et. al. (2009) for the thoroughness of their design, and for their shared definition that "school climate refers to the quality and character of school life," and one that "includes norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe" (p. 100). Their definition is repeatedly referenced as an exemplar explanation and thus made an excellent platform on which to construct a survey.

The researcher used a self-created survey based on the framework created by Cohen et. al (2009) with questions addressing safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment in relation to a change and leadership and the effect of this change on school

climate. The need to create a new, individualized survey was due to the fact that existing surveys on school climate tended to focus on how the students or personnel (or both) feel about the current school climate in relation to academics, safety, learning, and satisfaction. These surveys do not, however, address the impact of leadership change on school climate. They are written as a current measure of climate, therefore, a survey tailored specifically to the area of study was best suited for this research.

Survey protocols were specific to the created instrument, specifically asking teachers to anonymously participate in a survey based on leadership change and its effect on school climate. Participants were asked to provide demographic data, followed by responding to statements on leadership, through the lens of the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework, on a 1-4 Likert Scale. The last section of the survey asked for open-ended responses related to the four constructs.

The expectation for survey participants was to spend less than 10 minutes providing responses to the statements as well as expanding upon their thoughts through open-ended questions. The goal was to take as little time as possible, and to reach a large number of teachers who have and have not experienced leadership change while also providing safety for teacher anonymity so as to elicit the most honest responses to the statements.

Data Analysis

While Noonan (2004) argues that school climate can be assessed in a "simpler, if less scientific way" (p. 61) through visual and character assessments of a school, the data pulled from a quantitative survey provided the framework for data analysis. Measuring the data against the components established by Cohen et. al (2009) helped differentiate aspects of climate and measured how they were impacted by leadership change. First, data was analyzed through descriptive statistics to "organize and describe the characters" of the data (Salkind, 2014, p. 8), then the data was analyzed through inferential statistics to "make inferences from a smaller group of data" (Salkind, 2014, p. 9). An explanation of the use of descriptive and inferential statistics follows below.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistical analysis focused on the common ratings teachers gave to the four dimensions of the Cohen et al. (2009) framework to determine mean scores for safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the school environment in relation to leadership change or stability. These mean scores were analyzed both as a whole – the mean score of all participants – and by category, for example, the mean score probationary teachers, who are teachers in the first two years of their contract according to the Maine DOE (Title 20-A: Education, 2019), gave to "safety" and leadership change compared to the mean score certified teachers, who are teachers beyond the first two years of their contract (Title 20-A: Education, 2019), give to "safety" and leadership change. The goal of this analysis was to determine common themes or experiences of teachers through the different identifiers they indicated on the survey.

The standard deviation of mean scores from different groups was also compared to identify how much each group's scores varied from the mean, for example the standard deviation of scores around relationships between K-5 teachers and middle school teachers. From the standard deviation, the researcher used the calculated variance to see the spread of scores, again between K-5 teachers and middle school teachers. The information collected through descriptive statistics allowed the researcher to run inferential statistics, including calculating independent t-tests and analyses of variance.

Inferential Statistics

Survey data was analyzed through several different inferential statistics to measure the four dimensions and the ways in which they are impacted by leadership change. Changes in leadership specifically refer to a change at the principal level. Participants self-identified the number of leadership changes they experienced in their time in education, and scored the ways those changes impact safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment on a 1-4 Likert scale. The choice of a 1-4 Likert scale was to avoid participants choosing a neutral

option and therefore providing more detailed responses to either agree or disagree with the role that leadership change has had in their school through the Cohen et al. (2009) dimensions.

Inferential statistical analysis focused on relationships between various demographics and safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the school environment as it related to leadership change. The researcher used independent t-tests to compare the average scores of variables between two groups independent of each other using indicators such as gender, years of teaching experience, formal leadership roles, and leadership changes, as well as attitudes towards leadership change as they relate to the four Cohen et al. (2009) dimensions. The demographic variable "years of experience" was categorized dichotomously as either probationary teacher or certified teacher. A probationary teacher was defined as a teacher in the first two years of their contract (Title 20-A: Education, 2019); a certified teacher is having three or more years of experience (Title 20-A: Education, 2019). These definitions are standard for every contracted teacher in the state of Maine. Additionally, an independent t-test was used to compare responses differentiated by gender, either male or female. An "other" option was offered to be inclusive of gender diversity, but those responses were not included in an analysis of responses by gender due to the small n-size. Lastly, the inclusion of formal leadership roles had participants identify as a teacher leader, department head, faculty advisor, or other in relation to how these groups view leadership change in one of the four dimensions. Given the small n-size (one teacher or .3% of the survey total), teachers who identified as faculty advisor were removed from the data analysis.

An analysis of variance was used to compare teachers from different grade spans – elementary, middle, high school, and other – as well as attitudes towards leadership change as they related to one of the four Cohen et al. (2009) dimensions. Schools were identified by standard definitions such as elementary being grades K-5, middle school encompassing grades 6-8, and high school encompassing grades 9-12. An analysis of variance was also used to compare how leadership change affected different content specialties as defined by the Maine

DOE NEO 2.0 dashboard (Search by Teaching Positions) which divided teachers into categories as either core content classroom teachers, content specialist teachers, or special education teachers. Classroom teachers self-identified their content specialty if they had one. An analysis of variance was also used to compare scores from districts as identified by NCES codes. The researcher collapsed the nine NCES codes into broad codes as not all sub-codes were represented in the state.

A factorial analysis of variance was used to look at the influence of more than one factor simultaneously, for example gender, years of experience, and views on any of the dimensions of the Cohen et al. (2009) framework. The goal of using the factorial analysis of variance was to see if there was an effect between two factors (gender and years of experience) and the interaction of those factors through their views on leadership change and its effect on school climate.

The data was analyzed for any statistically significant differences in the mean values of the four different dimensions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment as they pertain to teacher grade spans, years of experience, gender, content specialty, and formal leadership roles. The data was also analyzed for statistically significant differences between years of experience, gender, grade span, number of leadership changes experienced, NCES Locale designations, content specialty or designation, and formal leadership roles. To eliminate the potential for false positives, the researcher also ran a post hoc "after-the fact comparison" using a post hoc Bonferrni (Salkind, 2009, p. 248). This allowed the researcher to find statistical significance between groups.

Lastly, the survey included four open-ended questions that related to each of the four Cohen et al. (2009) dimensions. Responses were analyzed qualitatively using NVivo coding to identify themes related to the four dimensions of school climate. These themes helped inform the data the researcher intended to analyze quantitatively by expanding the insights of teachers who responded to the survey. The open-ended questions offered teachers an opportunity to

share more explicit detail about the ways they felt the four Cohen et al. (2009) dimensions were impacted by leadership change by expanding on the 1-4 Likert scale responses.

Open-ended responses were analyzed for repeated key words and phrases in order to determine themes as they related to each of the Cohen et al. (2009) dimensions. The researcher used the Krathwohl (2009) steps in coding and analysis which included finding "the characteristics, aspects, or wording that is significant" (p. 316). Codes were determined through "analysis of words" which "involve finding the most frequently used words" and "searching for the context in which they are used" (Krathwohl, 2009, p. 314). Qualitative Data was compared with quantitative data to provide a fully developed assessment of leadership change and its impact on school climate.

This study may provide information that increases our understanding of the impact of leadership change on school climate. The goal of collecting this data was to inform potential administrators, or practitioners in the field of educational leadership on the ways in which they can prepare for entrance into a school, and to successfully maintain their positions beyond the first few years.

Study Timeline

The survey was piloted in the winter of 2021. Initially, a stratified sample, using NCES Locale Codes, of 100 teachers were randomly selected to participate. Three reminder emails were sent to survey participants, inviting them to take the survey. With responses still low, the researcher selected a second set of 100 teachers to participate. Three reminder emails were sent out as well, and when a 20% response rate was achieved, the pilot survey was closed. When data was returned, the researcher analyzed the internal reliability using a Cronbach alpha. When the data proved the survey reliable, a second sample of teachers was selected to participate in the final survey. Using a stratified sample of teachers based on NCES Locale codes, the researcher chose 10%, or 1,465 teachers, were selected using a random number generator, and the survey was administered early in the spring of 2021. Three reminder emails followed the original

invitation, and when the 20% response rate was achieved, the survey was closed. Data was then analyzed throughout the summer of 2021.

Positionality

As a school administrator, I was intrigued by my own entrance into the principalship. My first year was the impetus for my interest in this study as I struggled to find a balance between my interpretation of the principalship, and the actuality of my own personality. As an educator with twelve years of experience, I had established who I was a classroom teacher, but not who I was as an administrator. My approach to administration was much different than my approach to the classroom and unfortunately, this incongruence created a noticeable rift between myself and the staff. I relied too heavily on what I *thought* an administrator was supposed to be and not enough on who I *knew* I was as an educator.

After my first year, I was determined to not only improve as a leader, but to be more in line with who I was as a teacher. My personality was different, my approach was different, and my connections with staff, students, and families vastly improved. Through my own reflection, I found a growing interest in understanding school climate and culture. Over the course of the previous six years, I have learned that school climate is a fickle, elusive, and intangible force, but one that has major impacts for the progress one can make in changes to routines, structures, practices, expectations, or initiatives.

I have also learned that leadership change occurs at a very frequent rate. There are many theories for this, including a lack of solid administrator preparation programs, the increasing demands of the job, the increased stress of the position, the lack of support some administrators feel from school and district level staff, the tough interactions with students and adults, and the general wear and tear on one's confidence, emotions, and morale.

I approached this study with the knowledge that leadership change is occurring at a frequent rate, that Maine is in a particularly difficult position with its lack of leadership candidates, and that my own entrance into the principalship caused friction for which I did not

account. My intent in this study was to learn the ways in which leadership change impacts school climate so that new leaders, those who are interested in filling these challenging but extremely important and ultimately rewarding positions, have a better understanding of the challenges they will face, and how they can overcome these obstacles to stay in the position longer. By learning about the impact of leadership change on school climate, future leaders can learn how to make their entrance into a new school beneficial for all school stakeholders.

Validity/Trustworthiness

To ensure credibility of the research, the researcher had the study and the survey instrument approved through an independent review board given that human subjects were going to be involved. An email message containing a link to the survey was sent to a representative sample of 1,465 K-12 teachers using an email list from the Maine Department of Education's NEO 2.0 Dashboard, a resource that is publicly available. Two additional reminder emails followed the initial call for responses, and after the third email request, the survey data was collected.

Consent to participate in the research was sought by providing informed consent information embedded on the first page of the online survey. Participation in the survey indicated consent from participants, and the survey itself was anonymous. No IP addresses were collected, and no individually identifying information was linked with the responses to survey questions. Risks to participants were minimal, and participants were permitted to skip survey questions they did not wish to answer. Additionally, there was no compensation offered to teachers who chose to participate in the survey.

Some limitations of the study include that I excluded my own district from the study, partially because I know that policies within the district prohibit teachers from participating in studies such as this one, and also because there had not been a lot of turnover in leadership during the time the study was conducted. The survey was shared, however, with other districts who have similar characteristics, demographics, and NCES Locales.

Another limitation was the experience the participants had with leadership. If a teacher had not experienced leadership change, yet still participated in the study, their responses could be viewed as incomplete or inaccurate. These responses, however, still provided detail and insight in how important the connection is between a teacher and a leader, particularly for a teacher who had only worked with a single administrator over the course of his or her career.

Internal validity of the survey was also measured through Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated for each construct: safety ($\alpha = .282$), teaching and learning ($\alpha = .303$), relationships ($\alpha = .452$), and the school environment ($\alpha = .342$). Given the low scores, the researcher calculated a Cronbach alpha coefficient when separating the constructs by pre and post statements. The scores showed a stronger internal reliability for safety pre ($\alpha = .852$), safety post ($\alpha = .737$), teaching and learning pre ($\alpha = .824$), teaching and learning post ($\alpha = .723$), relationships pre ($\alpha = .885$), relationships post ($\alpha = .840$), the school environment pre ($\alpha = .714$), and the school environment post ($\alpha = .713$).

History and selection validity were threats to the survey. For example, those teachers who have had a negative experience with leadership, current or former, had a different view of the effects that leadership change has had on school climate as compared to staff who have had positive experiences. The researcher hoped to diminish this threat by creating questions that were centered more on attitudes of leadership change, through the Cohen et. al (2009) framework, rather than on the perceived effectiveness of the leader. Furthermore, selection was a clear threat to validity because there might have been systematic biases between various groups, for example the ways in which veteran teachers were impacted versus the ways in which probationary teachers were impacted. The researcher's self-created survey, with data from multiple schools and multiple teachers, spanning all grade levels, helped to identify these biases, especially if they were consistent between various groups from different schools and districts.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS/RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to measure the effects of leadership change on school climate, specifically through the lenses of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment, four key components established by Cohen et al. (2009). Specifically, this study looks to answer the following questions:

1. How does leadership change at the principal level affect school climate, specifically through key components such as safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment?
2. Does leadership longevity or continuity lead to less disruption in school climate?
3. What factors, including teacher longevity, grade span, content specialty, and rural or urban schools' status, are most affected by a change in leadership?

To address these factors, the researcher created a survey with questions built upon the four constructs of Cohen et. al. (2009). Each construct consisted of six questions, three based on the current administrator, and three on the previous administrator. Additionally, four open ended questions were placed at the end of the survey to allow teachers to expand upon their answers. Emails were obtained through the Maine DOE NEO portal, and of the 14,650 teachers in the state, 10% or 1,465 were chosen to participate. Emails were coded using National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Locale Codes, and proportionate groups were created to match statewide demographic percentages of teachers based on NCES locales. In each group, the researcher used a random number generator to determine which emails to contact regarding the survey. The survey was sent out two times to 1,465 teachers, and 294 responded, a 20% response rate. Participants rated responses on a 1 to 4 scale with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 4 being "strongly agree." Numerical data was processed through SPSS statistics to calculate mean scores, and mean scores were compared through independent t-tests, or analyses of variance (ANOVA) depending on the number of groups in each category.

Of the 294 teachers who responded to the survey, 96 identified as K-5 teachers (32.6%), 71 identified as 6-8 teachers (24.1%), and 91 identified as 9-12 teachers (30.9%). 30 identified as "other" (10.2%) which responses including K-6, K-8, 7-12, K-4, K-12, 5-6, 1-8, 11-12 CTE, and vocational special education and 6 (2.04%) chose not to answer. Table 2 provides an overview of participant demographics related to grade span.

Table 2
Survey Participants by Grade Span

Grade Span	N	Percentile
K-5	96	32.6%
6-8	71	24.1%
9-12	91	30.9%
Other	30	10.2%
N/A	6	2.04%

Teachers also self-identified as classroom teacher, special education teacher, specialist, content specialists, or other. Table 3 provides an overview of participant demographics related to teacher specialty.

Table 3
Survey Participants by Specialty

Teacher Specialty	N	Percentile
Classroom Teacher	179	60.8%
Special Education Teacher	43	14.6%
Specialist	35	11.9%
Content Specialist	35	11.9%
Other	12	4.08%

For the purpose of this study, specialists were identified as art, music, physical education, guidance counselor, gifted and talented, and Title I teachers, and content specialists were identified as English, math, science, or social studies teachers. 179 identified as classroom teachers (60.8%), 43 identified as special education teachers (14.6%), 35 identified as specialists (11.9%), 12 identified as other (4.08%) including math interventionist, welding and machinery, specialist and content specialist, alternative instruction, Response to Intervention, Vocational school instructor, Alternative education, world language, and technology/engineering.

Teachers were asked to identify formal leadership roles, if any, including teacher leaders, department heads, faculty advisors, or other. 175 teachers identified as having no formal leadership role (59.5%) while 65 identified as teacher leaders (22.1%), 17 identified as department heads (5.7%), 1 identified as faculty advisor (.03%), 7 did not answer the question (2.3%) and 29 identified as other (9.8%) including mentor teacher, administrative intern, leadership team, teacher representative, union leader, team leader, faculty advisory council, advisor club, chair of accreditation committee, athletic director, supervisor of educational technicians, functional life skills leader, education coordinator, technology coordinator/integrator, coach, assistant principal, and co-leader of student leadership team. Table 4 provides an overview of demographic information as it relates to formal leadership roles.

Table 4
Survey Participants by Formal Leadership Roles

Formal Leadership Role	N	Percentile
None	175	59.5%
Teacher Leader	65	22.1%
Department Head	17	5.7%
Other	30	10.2%
N/A	7	2.3%

In regards to gender, 223 teachers identified as female (75.8%) and 61 as male (20.7%). There were 5 participants (1.7%) who chose not to self-identify. Table 5 provides an overview of demographic information as it relates to self-identified gender.

Table 5
Survey Participants by Gender

Self-Identified Gender	N	Percentile
Female	223	75.8%
Male	61	20.7%
N/A	5	1.7%

Teachers were asked to self-identify the number of years they have been teaching at their current school, and the number of total years of teaching experience they have. Regarding total years at their current school, 27 teachers (9.1%) indicated they had been working at their current

school for less than one year, 25 identified having worked at their current school for one to two years (8.5%), 85 identified as three to seven years (28.9%), 37 identified as eight to twelve years (12.5%), 115 identified as more than 12 years (39.1%), and 5 did not respond (1.7%). Table 6 provides an overview of demographic information as it relates to teachers identifying the number of years they have been teaching at their current school.

Table 6
Survey Participants by Years Teaching at their Current Schools

Years Teaching at Current School	N	Percentile
<1 Year	27	9.1%
1-2 Years	25	8.5%
3-7 Years	85	28.9%
8-12 Years	37	12.5%
13 Years or more	115	39.1%
N/A	5	1.7%

Regarding years of teaching, 6 had less than one year of experience (2.04%), 8 had one to two years of experience (2.7%), 48 had three to seven years of experience (16.3%), 36 had eight to twelve years of experience (12.2%), and 190 (64.6%) had twelve or more years of experience. Table 7 provides an overview of demographic information as it relates to total years of teaching.

Table 7
Survey Participants by Total Years Teaching

Total Years Teaching	N	Percentile
<1 Year	6	2.04%
1-2 Years	8	2.7%
3-7 Years	48	16.3%
8-12 Years	36	12.2%
13 Years or more	190	64.6%

Using years of teaching, the researcher was able to determine that 274 identified as veteran teachers (93.1%) and 14 identified as probationary teachers (4.7%). For the purpose of this study, probationary teacher status was based on the Maine State Legislature definition of probationary being those teachers who have two or less years of experience. Veteran status was determined based on having more than two years of experience. 6 teachers (2.04%) chose not to answer. Table 8 provides an overview of this information.

Table 8
Survey Participants by Probationary or Veteran Status

Professional Status	N	Percentile
Veteran	274	93.1%
Probationary	14	4.7%
N/A	6	2.04%

Teachers were also asked to share how many administrators they have worked with at their current school with answers ranging from one to five. 107 teachers shared they have only worked with one administrator (36.3%), 61 shared they have worked with two administrators (20.7%), 42 shared they have worked with three administrators (14.2%), 24 shared they have worked with four administrators (8.1%), and 55 shared they have worked with five or more administrators (18.7%) while 5 did not respond (1.7%). Table 9 provides an overview of this information.

Table 9
Survey Participants by Grade Span

Number of Administrators	N	Percentile
1	107	36.3%
2	61	20.7
3	42	14.2%
4	24	8.1%
5+	55	18.7%
N/A	5	1.7%

Lastly, teacher emails helped the researcher identify education demographics to provide additional information on how teachers from different parts of the state responded to leadership change. National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) Locale Classifications were used to identify respondents from either city, suburban, town, or rural areas. Of the 294 respondents, 37 were identified as *city-small* (12.6%), 36 were identified as *suburban-midsize* (12.2%), 12 were identified as *suburban-small* (4.1%), 14 were identified as *town-fringe* (4.8%), 19 were identified as *town-distant* (6.5%), 16 were identified as *town-remote* (5.4%), 51 were identified as *rural-fringe* (17.3%), 82 were identified as *rural-distant* (27.9%), and 27 were identified as *rural-remote* (9.2%). Table 10 provides an overview of demographic information as it relates to NCES Locale Classifications.

Table 10
Survey Participants by Locale Classification

NCES Locale	N	Percentile
City-Small	37	12.6%
Suburban-Midsize	36	12.2%
Suburban-Small	12	4.1%
Town-Fringe	14	4.8%
Town-Distant	19	6.5%
Town-Remote	16	5.4%
Rural-Fringe	51	17.3%
Rural-Distant	82	27.9%
Rural-Remote	27	9.2%

Locales were also collapsed based on n-sizes and percentiles. Descriptive data was collected for all codes, but inferential data was collected for collapsed classifications. Table 11 provides an overview of these same NCES Locale Classifications when groups are collapsed into like locales.

Table 11
Survey Participants by Locale Classifications (Collapsed)

NCES Locale Collapsed	N	Percentile
City	37	12.6%
Suburban	48	16.3%
Town	49	16.7%
Rural	160	54.4%

Research Question 1

To determine the answer to the first research question, "How does leadership change at the principal level affect school climate specifically through key components such as safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the school environment," the researcher analyzed data descriptively as well as inferentially. Descriptive statistics include n-size, means, and standard deviations. Inferential statistics include t-tests and analyses of variance (ANOVA). Overall means for the 24 items were calculated, by the four main constructs, in order to analyze perceptions of how leadership change affected safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the school environment.

Finding #1

Using a 1-4 Likert scale, data was identified when it fell below 2.50, or the mean score. Table 12 shows the overall means for the four main constructs.

Table 12
Overall means for the four main constructs of the Cohen et. al (2009) framework: Safety, Teaching and Learning, Relationships, and the Environment.

Construct	N	Overall Mean	Standard Deviation
Safety	190	2.79	.407
Teaching and Learning	189	2.81	.426
Relationships	187	2.71	.456
Environment	183	2.82	.349

Note: scale ranges from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*.

In ordering the constructs, the school environment had the most positive response (*M=2.82*) followed by teaching and learning (*M=2.81*), safety (*M=2.79*), and lastly relationships (*M=2.71*). Overall, teachers in the study had positive responses with all the items in the construct as all means were 2.50 or higher. Of the four major constructs, leadership change most affects the relationships amongst staff while the environment suffers the least from a change in leadership. Teaching and learning and safety are affected next, but not as strongly as relationships.

When analyzing the data by safety, teachers agreed that safety is more positive under the current administrator (*M*=3.12) *as* compared to the previous administrator (*M*=2.50). The same can be said of teaching and learning (*M*=3.11 and *M*=2.55), relationships (*M*=3.01 and *M*=2.45), and the school environment (*M*=3.23 and *M*=2.47). Overall, teachers view the current administrator more positively than the previous administrator, most obviously when comparing relationships (*M=2.45*) and the school environment (*M=2.45*) for the previous administrator as both scores were below 2.50. Comparing the means, however, shows that teachers once again had the most positive response to the school environment followed by the safety, teaching and learning, and finally relationships which scored the lowest amongst the four constructs rating the current administrator. Table 13 further isolates specific means when the four constructs are separated by current administrator and previous administrator, dividing each construct into two dichotomous responses comparing current leadership to previous leadership.

Table 13
Overall means for the four main constructs of the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework, separated by responses addressing the current administrator and the previous administrator.

Construct	N		Mean		Standard Deviation	
	Current	Previous	Current	Previous	Current	Previous
Safety	209	190	3.12	2.50	.715	.741
Teaching and Learning	207	190	3.11	2.55	.770	.718
Relationships	206	188	3.01	2.45	.780	.780
School Environment	206	184	3.23	2.47	.552	.600

Note: scale ranges from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*.

Finding #2

When comparing the means of different groups of teachers and their responses to the constructs based on current administrator and previous administrator. Table 14 shows the overall means for the four constructs, current and previous, separated by grade span.

Table 14
Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on Grade Span

		Grade Span					
Construct	Overall Mean	K-5 n=96	SD	6-8 n=71	SD	9-12 n=91	SD
Safety Current Administrator	3.12	3.01	.811	3.09	.682	3.17	.638
Safety Previous Administrator	2.50	2.59	.859	2.47	.647	2.44	.631
Teaching and Learning Current Administrator	3.11	3.04	.856	3.07	.770	3.11	.720
Teaching and Learning Previous Administrator	2.55	2.67	.757	2.44	.693	2.45	.634
Relationships Current Administrator	3.01	2.76	.757	3.07	.703	3.11	.734
Relationships Previous Administrator	2.45	2.61	.844	2.34	.750	2.32	.675
School Environment Current Administrator	3.23	3.10	.642	3.24	.484	3.33	.461
School Environment Previous Administrator	2.47	2.54	.683	2.44	.571	2.41	.545

Note: scale ranges from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*;

All grade levels have more positive views of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment with the current administrator as compared to the previous administrator. In several categories, teacher mean scores fell below 2.50, specifically in 6-8 (*M=2.48*) and 9-12 (*M=2.47*) grade spans in relation to safety under the previous administrator, and in relationships under the previous administrator at the 6-8 (*M=2.34*) and 9-12 (*M=2.33*) grade spans, the K-8 (*M=2.45*) and 9-12 (*M=2.38*) grade spans, and the K-5 (*M=2.37*) and 6-12 (*M=2.46*) grade spans. All mean scores also show a trend upwards as each grade span increases. Elementary school teachers give the lowest scores to current administrators while 9-12 teachers give the highest scores. Conversely, Elementary school teachers give the highest scores in each of the four major constructs (*M*=2.59*; M*=2.67; *M*=2.61; *M*=2.54) to the previous administrator indicating that they feel less positive about leadership change than teachers in higher grade levels. A one-way ANOVA revealed no statistical significance.

Initial data analyses revealed that teachers at the K-5 level experienced the least amount of leadership change, followed by 6-8 teachers, and lastly 9-12 teachers who experienced the most changes in leadership. To measure these changes, grade spans were compressed into K-8 and 9-12. Table 15 provides an overview of these means.

Table 15
Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on K-8 and 9-12 grade spans.

		Grade Span			
Construct	Overall Mean	K-8 n=167	SD	9-12 n=91	SD
Safety Current Admin	3.12	3.11	.706	3.09	.795
Safety Previous Admin	2.50	2.50	.722	2.47	.741
Teaching and Learning Current Admin	3.11	3.09	.796	3.17	.762
Teaching and Learning Previous Admin	2.55	2.56	.760	2.50	.659
Relationships Current Admin	3.01	3.00	.779	3.02	.844
Relationships Previous Admin	2.45	2.45	.801	2.38	.715
School Environment Current Admin	3.23	3.22	.563	3.29	.572
School Environment Previous Admin	2.47	2.47	.641	2.44	.492

Note: scale ranges from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*;

K-8 teachers have a more positive view of safety (*M*=3.11) under their current administrator, but 9-12 teachers have more positive views of teaching and learning (*M*=3.17), relationships (*M*=3.02), and the school environment (*M*=3.29) under their current administrators. In all previous administrator constructs, K-8 teachers have a more positive view of the administrator than 9-12 teachers, but no statistical significance was found in the data analysis when mean scores were compared through an independent t-test.

The researcher further separated the grade spans into K-5 and 6-12 to provide additional analyses of compared means. This was done in an effort to further identify how more complexity in scheduling, larger faculties, facilities, and staff react to changes in leadership, especially when those changes tend to occur more at the 6-8, 9-12 level. Table 16 provides an overview of this data.

Table 16
Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on K-5 and 6-12 grade spans.

		Grade Span			
Construct	Overall Mean	K-5 n=96	SD	6-12 n=162	SD
Safety Current Administrator	3.12	3.12	.714	3.09	.751
Safety Previous Administrator	2.50	2.46	.660	2.46	.766
Teaching and Learning Current Administrator	3.11	3.06	.810	3.15	.770
Teaching and Learning Previous Administrator	2.55	2.56	.650	2.53	.768
Relationships Current Administrator	3.01	2.97	.774	3.02	.817
Relationships Previous Administrator	2.45	2.37	.719	2.46	.809
School Environment Current Administrator	3.23	3.18	.503	3.28	.597
School Environment Previous Administrator	2.47	2.40	.557	2.50	.614

Note: scale ranges from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*;

Teachers who instruct students at higher grade levels have more positive views of current administrator for teaching and learning (*M*=3.15), relationships (*M*=3.02), and the school environment (*M*=3.29). Similar to teachers in the K-8 span, K-5 teachers have a more positive view of safety under the current administrator (*M*= 3.12). In comparing mean scores of teachers

referring to previous administrators, K-5 teachers only have a more positive view of teaching and learning (M=2.56). In all other categories, 6-12 teachers have more positive views of safety (M=2.51), relationships (M=2.46), and the school environment (M=2.5). No statistical significance was found in the data when the mean scores were compared through an independent t-test.

Finding #3

Analyses were conducted on formal leadership roles, gender, and teaching status. Teachers self-identified formal leadership roles, and the researcher collapsed the responses to identify the numbers of teachers who had formal leadership roles, and the number of teachers who didn't have formal leadership roles. Similar analyses were conducted for gender (male or female), and teaching status. Probationary or veteran status was determined based on the number of years of experience a teacher indicated. In Maine, teachers with less than two years of teaching experience are considered probationary while teachers with two or more years of experience are considered continuing contract. Data was collected based on those teachers who would still be considered probationary and those teachers who would be considered veteran. Table 17 shows the overall means for the four constructs, separated into current and previous, and sorted by teachers who self-identified as having or not having a formal leadership role.

Table 17
Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on Formal Leadership Roles

Construct	Overall Mean	No Formal Leadership Role		Formal Leadership Role	
		N=175	SD	N=112	SD
Safety Current Administrator	3.12	3.09	.718	3.14	.717
Safety Previous Administrator	2.50	2.49	.710	2.54	.800
Teaching and Learning Current Administrator	3.11	3.08	.773	3.15	.770
Teaching and Learning Previous Administrator	2.55	2.56	.677	2.54	.778
Relationships Current Administrator	3.01	3.00	.790	3.02	.780
Relationships Previous Administrator*	2.45	**2.43**	.712	**2.48**	.895
School Environment Current Administrator	3.23	3.18	.536	3.30	.576
School Environment Previous Administrator	2.47	2.47	.585	2.46	.637

Note: scale ranges from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*; * indicates a significant difference at the p<.05 level between groups.

Teachers in formal leadership roles had more positive views of safety (*M*=3.14), teaching and learning (*M*=3.15), relationships (*M*=3.02) and the school environment (*M*=3.30) compared to teachers who did not have formal leadership roles. They also had more positive views of the previous administrator in regards to safety (*M*=2.54) and relationships (*M*=2.48). Teachers who did not identify as having a leadership role had more positive views of the previous administrator in regards to teaching and learning (*M*=2.56), and the school environment (*M*=2.47). Several mean scores fell below 2.50, specifically under the previous administrator in relation to safety (*M=2.49*), relationships (*M=2.43* and *M=2.48*), and the school environment (*M=2.47* and *M=2.46*). Mean scores were compared through an independent t-test which showed statistical significance between mean scores of relationships under the previous administrator (p=.006).

Finding #4

When analyzing current and previous constructs in regards to gender, males had consistently more positive views of the current administrator in relation to safety (*M*=3.33), teaching and learning (*M*= 3.31), relationships (*M*=3.28) and the school environment (*M*= 3.43). Females had consistently more positive views of the previous administrator in relation to safety (*M*=2.51), teaching and learning (*M*=2.58), relationships (*M*=2.48), and the school environment (*M*=2.49). An independent *t*-test revealed there was a significant difference between females and males in how they viewed each of the constructs under the current administrator in terms of safety (*p*=.012), teaching and learning (*p*=.024), relationships (*p*=.005), and the school environment (*p*=.003). Table 18 provides an overview of these findings.

Table 18
Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on Gender.

Construct	**Female Mean**		**Male Mean**	
	N=223	SD	N=61	SD
Safety Current Administrator*	**3.07**	**.738**	**3.33**	**.579**
Safety Previous Administrator	2.51	.784	2.45	.574
Teaching and Learning Current Administrator*	**3.06**	**.769**	**3.31**	**.718**
Teaching and Learning Previous Administrator	2.58	.713	2.41	.825
Relationships Current Administrator*	**2.94**	**.781**	**3.28**	**.710**
Relationships Previous Administrator	2.48	.802	2.34	.707
School Environment Current Administrator*	**3.17**	**.554**	**3.43**	**.505**
School Environment Previous Administrator	2.49	.608	2.39	.579

Note: scale ranges from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*; * indicates a significant difference at the .05 level between groups.

Finding #5

Teaching status was also analyzed based on self-identified years of teaching, and then separating those groups into probationary and veteran status. Probationary teaching status is defined as two or less years of teaching while Veteran status is defined as more than two years of experience. Group means were analyzed through current and previous administrator in relation to the four constructs. Table 19 provides an overview of this analysis.

Table 19
Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on probationary or veteran teacher status

Construct	**Probationary Teacher**		**Veteran Teacher**	
	N=14	SD	N=274	SD
Safety Current Administrator*	3.00	.906	3.12	.707
Safety Previous Administrator	2.78	.912	2.49	.732
Teaching and Learning Current Administrator*	2.85	.886	3.13	.763
Teaching and Learning Previous Administrator	2.85	.883	2.53	.703
Relationships Current Administrator*	2.72	.742	3.03	.784
Relationships Previous Administrator	2.78	.866	2.44	.774
School Environment Current Administrator*	3.12	.453	3.23	.559
School Environment Previous Administrator	2.52	.412	2.47	.610

Veteran teachers had a more positive view of the current administrator in all constructs, including safety (M=3.12), teaching and learning (M=3.13), relationships (M=3.23), and the school environment (M=3.12) than probationary teachers. Probationary teachers had a more positive view of the previous administrator in all constructs, including safety (M=2.78), teaching and learning (M=2.85), relationships (M=2.78), and the school environment (M=2.52). An

independent t-test revealed no statistical significance in these findings, but several scores fell below 2.50, specifically with veteran teachers in relation to safety (*M=2.49*), relationships (*M=2.44*), and the school environment (*M=2.47*) under the previous administrator. An independent t-test revealed no statistical significance.

Finding #6

Lastly, analysis was conducted on teachers who had experienced a leadership change at their school during the time they worked there. This was determined based on the number of years a teacher had worked at their current school and the number of administrators they had worked with during that time. Teachers who indicated that they had worked with more than one principal were grouped into a "yes" category while teachers who indicated that they only worked with a single principal were grouped into a "no" category. Table 20 shows the overall means for the four constructs, separated into current and previous administrators, and listed specific for teachers who identified having experience a change in leadership during their time at their current school

Table 20
Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on Leadership Change.

Construct	**Leadership Change (Yes)**			**Leadership Change (No)**		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Safety Current Administrator*	147	3.06	.715	62	3.25	.700
Safety Previous Administrator	144	2.53	.714	46	2.41	.820
Teaching and Learning Current Administrator	146	3.05	.768	61	3.24	.762
Teaching and Learning Previous Administrator	146	2.57	.712	44	2.46	.737
Relationships Current Administrator*	145	***2.92***	.767	61	***3.20***	***.779***
Relationships Previous Administrator	145	2.48	.797	43	2.31	.712
School Environment Current Administrator*	145	***3.17***	.540	61	***3.36***	**.562**
School Environment Previous Administrator*	142	***2.51***	.586	42	***2.30***	**.619**

Note: scale ranges from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*; * indicates a significant difference at the .05 level between groups.

When analyzing data through the lens of leadership change, teachers who had not experienced leadership change at their schools indicated more positive views of safety (*M=3.25*), teaching and learning (*M=3.24*), relationships (*M=3.20*), and the school environment (*M=3.36*). Teachers who had experienced leadership change had more positive views of the previous administrator in relation to safety (*M=2.53*), teaching and learning (*M=2.57*), relationships (*M=2.48*), and the school environment (*M=2.51)*. All scores related to the previous administrator fell below 2.50, specifically with teachers who had experienced leadership change in relation to safety (*M=2.41*), teaching and learning (*M=2.46)*, relationships (*M=2.31*) and the school environment (*M=2.30*). Teachers who had experience leadership had one score fall below a mean of 2.50 in relationships (*M=2.48*) under the previous administrator. An independent *t*-test revealed there were significant different between teachers who had experience leadership change and those who had not in relation to the current administrator and relationships (*p*= .018), and the school environment (*p*=.023), though the environment under the previous administrator also showed statistical significance (p=.041).

Finding #7

Regarding teacher locations, the researcher used the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) locale classification codes. Using these codes, the researcher analyzed the survey data by using nine NCES locale classification codes. Table 21 highlights these locale classifications, delineating: a) city small; b) suburban midsize; c) suburban small; d) town fringe; e) town distant; f) town remote; g) rural fringe; h) rural distant; and i) rural remote. For each construct of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and school environment, the researcher tested to see if there were differences in perceptions among these nine groups.

Table 21

Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on NCES Locale Classifications

NCES Locale Classification																	
NCES Locale	**N**	**Safety Current**	**SD**	**Safety Previous**	**SD**	**Teaching and Learning Current**	**SD**	**Teaching and Learning Previous**	**SD**	**Relationships Current**	**SD**	**Relationships Previous**	**SD**	**School Environment Current**	**SD**	**School Environment Previous**	**SD**
City Small	28	2.94	.870	2.61	.671	3.09	.092	2.55	.716	2.79	.885	2.59	.747	3.04	.683	2.51	.729
Suburban Midsize	29	3.13	.601	2.66	.777	2.97	.683	2.62	.807	2.82	.824	2.50	.823	3.09	.533	2.51	.755
Suburban Small	10	3.03	.776	2.56	.685	2.90	1.04	2.70	.760	2.66	.801	2.56	.770	3.26	.466	2.50	.323
Town Fringe	8	2.83	.776	2.77	1.20	3.00	.712	3.20	.737	2.75	.894	2.66	.971	3.00	.563	3.08	.630
Town Distant	9	2.74	1.11	2.70	.611	2.77	1.15	2.66	.471	2.95	.909	2.57	.929	3.29	.563	2.48	.412
Town Remote	11	2.66	3.94	2.24	.579	2.40	.777	2.40	.782	2.46	.688	2.26	.644	2.76	.316	2.40	.409
Rural Fringe	36	3.08	.705	2.37	.758	3.01	.707	2.46	.769	3.05	.711	2.30	.797	3.26	.463	2.45	.591
Rural Distant	56	3.36	.556	2.38	.709	3.42	.625	2.38	.646	3.03	.655	2.32	.746	3.44	.510	2.36	.552
Rural Remote	22	3.27	.717	2.55	.825	3.22	.548	2.71	.660	3.24	.668	2.63	.808	3.25	.543	2.48	.556

Initial analyses showed that teachers in rural distant districts viewed safety under the current administrator the most favorably (*M=3.36*) while teachers in town distant districts viewed this the least favorably (*M=2.74*). Town Remote teachers viewed safety under the previous administrator the least favorably (*M=2.24*) while teachers in town fringe districts viewed this the most favorably (*M=2.77*). Town remote (*M=2.24*), rural fringe (*M=2.37*), and rural distant districts (*M=2.38*) had mean scores below 2.50. Teaching and learning under the current administrator was viewed most favorably by rural distant teachers (*M=3.42*) while teachers in town remote districts viewed this least favorably (M=2.40). Under the previous administrator, town fringe teachers had the most positive view of teaching and learning (*M=3.20*) while rural distant teachers had the least positive view of teaching and learning (M=2.38). In addition to rural distant teachers having mean scores below 2.50, town remote (M=2.40) and rural fringe (M=2.46) teachers also had mean scores below 2.50.

Relationships under the current administrator were viewed most positively by rural distant teachers having a mean score below 2.50, town remote (*M=2.40*) and rural fringe (*M=2.46*) teachers also had mean scores below 2.50. Relationships under the current administrator were viewed most positively by rural distant remote (*M=3.24*) while teachers in town remote districts viewed this the least favorably (*M=2.46*). Similarly, teachers in town remote districts had the least positive view of relationships under the previous administrator (*M=2.26*) while teachers in town distant districts had the most positive view (*M=2.66*). Teachers in rural fringe districts and teachers in rural distant districts had mean scores that fell below 2.50 (*M=2.30* and *M=2.32,* respectively).

For the last construct, the school environment, town remote teachers had the least positive view (*M=2.76*) while rural distant teachers had the most positive view (*M=3.44*). Under the previous administrator, school environment was viewed most positively by town fringe teachers (*M=3.08*) and least positively by rural distant teachers (*M=2.36*). Several mean scores fell below 2.50 in the school environment under the previous administrator, specifically with

town distant (*M=2.48*), town remote (*M=2.40*), rural fringe (*M=2.45*), and rural remote (*M=2.48*) teachers.

A one-way ANOVA determined statistical significance between mean scores for teaching and learning under the current administrator, and the school environment under the current administrator. A one way ANOVA revealed statistical significance between groups under safety (p=.018), teaching and learning (p=.014), and the school environment (p=.022) under the current administrator. A post hoc Bonferroni test revealed statistical significance between town remote and rural distant teachers (p=.006) in relation to teaching and learning. A post hoc Bonferroni also revealed statistical significance in relation to the school environment under the current administrator between city small and rural distant districts (p=.050), and between town remote districts and rural distant districts (p=.009).

Further analysis of the data revealed additional details. Given the small n-sizes of certain groups, the researcher compressed the nine NCES locale codes into four main categories: a) city; b) suburban; c) town; and d) rural. Table 22 provides an overview of these findings

Table 22

Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on NCES Locale Classifications (Collapsed)

NCES Locale Classification																
NCES Locale	**N**	**Safety Current**	**SD**	**Safety Previous**	**SD**	**Teaching and Learning Current**	**SD**	**Teaching and Learning Previous**	**SD**	**Relationships Current**	**SD**	**Relationships Previous**	**SD**	**School Environment Current**	**SD**	**School Environment Previous**	**SD**
City	28	2.94	.870	2.61	.671	3.09	.902	2.55	.716	2.79	.885	2.59	.747	***3.04****	.68	2.51	.729
Suburban	39	3.11	.641	2.63	.744	2.95	.776	2.64	.781	***2.78****	.811	2.51	.798	3.13	.517	2.50	.659
Town	28	***2.73****	.776	2.52	.778	***2.71****	.907	2.66	.715	***2.70****	.807	2.44	.808	***3.01****	.518	2.55	.498
Rural	114	***3.26****	.645	2.41	.745	***3.26****	.658	2.47	.696	***3.21****	.678	2.37	.778	***3.35****	.506	2.41	.562

When condensing the NCES Locales, the researcher noted that teachers in rural districts had the most positive view of safety under the current administrator (*M=3.26*) while teachers in city districts had the least positive view (*M=2.94*). Safety under the previous administrator was viewed least positively by rural teachers (*M=2.41*) while teachers in suburban districts had the most positive view of safety (*M=2.63*).

When comparing mean scores for teaching and learning under the current administrator, rural schools had the highest mean score (*M=3.26*) and an overall more positive view of teaching and learning while teachers in town districts had the lowest mean scores (*M=2.71*). Rural schools had the lowest mean score (*M=2.47*) when comparing teaching and learning with the previous administrator, and city teachers had the highest mean score (*M=2.55)*.

Rural teachers also had the most positive view of relationships under the current administrator (*M=3.21*) while teachers in town districts had the least positive view (*M=2.70*). Rural teachers had the least positive view of relationships under the previous administrator (*M=2.37*) while teachers in city districts had the most positive view (*M=2.59*).

Lastly, teachers in rural districts had the most positive view of the school environment under the current administrator (*M=3.35*) while teachers in town districts had the last positive view (*M=3.01*). Teachers in rural districts had the least positive view of the school environment under the previous administrator (*M=2.41*) while teachers in town districts had the most positive view (*M=2.55*).

Teachers in rural districts had scores below 2.50 under the previous administrator for safety (*M=2.41*), teaching and learning (*M=2.47*), relationships (*M=2.37*), and the school environment (*M=2.41*). Teachers in town districts had a mean below 2.50 for relationships under the previous administrator (*M=2.44*).

A one-way ANOVA revealed statistical significance between groups for safety (p=.002), teaching and learning (p=.005), relationships (p<.001), and the school environment (p=.002) under the current administrator. For the safety construct, there was a statistically significant difference between teachers in town districts and teachers in rural districts regarding perceptions of safety under the current administrator as determined by a Post Hoc Bonferroni (p=.003). Statistical significance was also found between town and rural teachers in relation to teaching and learning under the current administrator as determined by a Post Hoc Bonferroni (p=.006). A Post Hoc Bonferroni also revealed statistical significance for relationships under the current administrator between suburban and rural teachers (p=.015) and town and rural teachers (p=.011). The school environment under the current administrator, when analyzed by a Post Hoc Bonferroni also revealed statistical significance between city and rural teachers (p=.045), and town and rural teachers (p=.045).

Teachers were also able to provide detailed responses to questions related to the four Cohen et. al. (2009) constructs with four open ended questions. Responses that related to leadership change affecting school climate through safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment revealed interesting insights into what teachers valued in their current or previous administrators.

When speaking about safety, teachers highlighted what they prized about the ways in which their leadership approached this construct and how it affected students. Of the current principal, one teacher wrote, “She has worked locally in education for her entire career and fully understands the all to [sic] unfortunate circumstances that many of our students deal with at home.” This attention to students' social and emotional well being was echoed in other responses as one teacher wrote, “[The principal] understands the value of having an efficient and effective (teacher and kid-friendly) SEL curriculum in place.” In contrast, teachers who expressed negativity towards their administrators highlighted their lack of connectivity to social and emotional needs of students. One teacher wrote, “The principal is unaware of student’s

needs. He avoids conflicts by sending other staff in to deal with them" while another teacher wrote, "[The] current principal shows no evidence of caring for students' social-emotional needs."

This focus on relationships was a major factor in many comments from teachers. For those that spoke critically of their administrators, they highlighted the ways in which their principal failed to build capacity in the building, specifically through being present and being approachable. Teachers were specific in their criticism of administrators who were not visible and not collaborative, and how this affects their ability to forge relationships with both staff and students. Table 23 provides an overview of these comments.

Table 23
Teacher perceptions of the effect of leadership change on school climate specific to relationships.

Construct	Comment
Relationships	"My leader is not present in the classrooms."
Relationships	"The current principal has never attended grade level meetings that I'm aware of [. . .] He is also rarely at leadership meetings where Ed Techs, Admin Team (except the principal) and teachers across grade levels look at data together."
Relationships	"It's really hard to know or respond to this because our current principal is not present."
Relationships	"We are not watched, observed, monitored, *etc.* This is so hard to explain, but our administrators are not interested in education."
Safety	"The previous principal can't be bothered as she was never at school"
Relationships	"Our new admin only has one way of thinking. If you don't think like her, your opinion doesn't matter."
Safety	"My current principal does not have any real palpable relationships with students here."

Teachers who praised their leadership highlighted the ways in which they built capacity in the school through relationships, stating "The current principal focus on building relationships [has helped] with learning and trust," and "The current administration's collaborative and supportive approach has lead to other leaders in the building taking innovative steps in supporting the social-emotional [needs] of our students."

Research Question 2

To answer the second research question, "Does leadership longevity or continuity lead to less disruption in school climate?" the researcher analyzed data descriptively as well as inferentially. Teachers indicated how many administrators they had worked with at their current schools, the average being 2.51. 107 teachers indicated that they had worked with only one administrator, 61 teachers indicated that they had worked with two administrators, 42 teachers indicated that they had worked with three administrators, 24 teachers indicated that they had worked with four administrators, and 55 indicated that they had worked with five or more administrators. Table 24 provides an overview of these findings

Table 24
Number of administrators by n-size

N	Number of Administrators
107	1
61	2
42	3
24	4
55	5+

The same group of teachers was asked to indicate how many years they had been at their current school, and how many years total teaching experience they had. 27 teachers indicated that they had worked at their current school for less than a year, 25 teachers indicated that they had worked at their current school for one to two years, 85 teachers indicated that they had worked at their current school for three to seven years, 37 teachers indicated that they had worked at their current school for eight to twelve years, and 15 teachers indicated that they had worked at their current school for twelve or more years. Six teachers indicated that they had less

than one year of experience, 89 teachers indicated that they had between one and two years of experience, 48 teachers indicated that they had between three and seven years of experience, 36 teachers indicated that they had eight to twelve years of experience, and 190 teachers indicated that they had twelve or more years of experience. Table 25 provides an overview of this information.

Table 25
Years of experience by school and total years in education.

N	Years at Current School	N	Years of Total Experience
27	<1	6	<1
25	1-2	89	1-2
85	3-7	48	3-7
37	8-12	36	8-12
15	13 or more	190	13 or more

Finding #1

Analyses were conducted comparing teacher responses to the four constructs of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment in relation to the number of administrators a teacher had worked with. Table 26 provides an overview of these findings as they relate to safety.

Table 26
Perceptions of safety based on number of administrators with whom a teacher has worked.

Number of Administrators	N Size	Safety Current		Safety Previous	
1	62	M=3.25	SD=.700	M=2.41	SD=.820
2	45	M=2.94	SD=.763	M=2.59	SD=.672
3	34	M=3.10	SD=.718	M=2.51	SD=.697
4	21	M=3.12	SD=.756	M=2.36	SD=.691
5+	47	M=3.12	SD=.653	M=2.54	SD=.783

Teachers who had only worked with one administrator had the most positive view of safety under the current administrator (*M=3.25)*. while teachers who worked with two administrators had the least positive view of safety (*M=2.94*). Teachers who had worked with four administrators had the least positive view of safety from the previous administrators (*M=2.36*) while teachers who worked with two administrators had the most positive view of safety under

the previous administrator (*M=2.59*). Several scores fell below 2.50, specifically related to the previous administrator and only one administrator (*M=2.41*) and four administrators (*M=2.36*).

Similar analyses were run for perceptions of teaching and learning when comparing the previous and current administrators, and based on the number of administrators with whom a teacher had worked. Table 27 provides an overview of these findings as they relate to the construct of teaching and learning.

Table 27
Perceptions of teaching and learning based on number of administrators with whom a teacher has worked.

Number of Administrators	N Size	Teaching and Learning Current		Teaching and Learning Previous	
1	44	M=2.93	SD=.598	M=2.46	SD=.737
2	44	M=2.81	SD=.577	M=2.59	SD=.649
3	34	M=2.86	SD=.551	M=2.59	SD=.786
4	21	M=2.93	SD=.611	M=2.55	SD=.693
5	47	M=2.71	SD=.513	M=2.53	SD=.741

Teachers who worked with only one administrator had the most positive view of teaching and learning (*M=2.93*), a mean score that matches teachers who worked with four administrators (*M=2.93*). Teachers who indicated they only worked with one administrator had the least positive score of teaching and learning under a previous administrator (*M=2.46*) while teachers who worked with two or three administrators had the most positive view of teaching and learning under their previous administrator (*M=2.59*). Only one score fell below 2.50, related to the previous administrator and teachers who had only worked with one administrator (*M=2.46*). Teachers also indicated how the number of administrators impacted relationships when comparing current and previous administrators. Table 28 provides an overview of this data.

Table 28
Perceptions of the relationships based on number of administrators with whom a teacher has worked.

Number of Administrators	N Size	Relationships Current		Relationships Previous	
1	61	M=3.20	SD=.779	M=2.31	SD=.712
2	45	M=2.83	SD=.757	M=2.56	SD=.834
3	34	M=2.14	SD=.824	M=2.35	SD=.742
4	21	M=3.22	SD=.717	M=2.39	SD=.711
5	45	M=3.01	SD=.724	M=2.54	SD=.844

Teachers who indicated they worked with four administrators had the most positive view of relationships (*M=3.22*) while teachers who worked with three administrators had the least positive view of relationships (*M=2.74*). Teachers who worked with only one administrator had the least positive view of relationships under their previous administrator (*M=2.31*) while teachers who worked with two administrators had the most positive view of relationships under their previous administrator (*M=2.56*). Several scores fell below 2.50 in relation to both current and previous administrators. Specific to relationships under the current administrator, teachers who worked with three administrators had a low mean score (*M=2.14*). Specific to relationships under the previous administrator, mean scores fell below 2.50 for teachers who worked with one administrator (*M=2.31*), three administrators (*M=2.35*), or four administrators (*M=2.39*).

Lastly, teachers indicated how they perceived the school environment based on the number of administrators with whom they worked. Table 29 provides an overview of these findings.

Table 29
Perceptions of the school environment based on number of administrators with whom a teacher has worked.

Number of Administrators	N Size	School Environment Current		School Environment Previous	
1	61	M=3.36	SD=.561	M=2.30	SD=.619
2	45	M=3.10	SD=.535	M=2.49	SD=.559
3	34	M=3.11	SD=.537	M=2.52	SD=.538
4	21	M=3.26	SD=.553	M=2.36	SD=.581
5	45	M=3.22	SD=.515	M=2.59	SD=.653

Teachers who worked with only one administrator had the most positive perception of the school environment (*M=3.36*) while teachers who worked with two administrators had the least positive perception (*M=3.10*). Teachers who worked with five or more administrators indicated the most positive view of the school environment under the previous principal (*M=2.59*) whereas teachers who worked with only one administrator had the least positive view of the school environment under the previous administrator (*M=2.30*). Several scores fell below 2.50,

specifically related to previous administrators and teachers who had worked with one (*M=2.30*), two (*M=2.49*), or four (*M=2.36*) administrators.

To determine if any statistical significance existed between the means scores of each construct, the researcher conducted a one-way ANOVA. While the initial analysis seemed to indicate a statistical significance between groups in relation to relationships under the current administrator (p = .019), a post hoc Bonferroni confirmed no statistical significance.

To further determine if leadership longevity or continuity lead to less disruption in school climate, the researcher conducted analyses to determine the means of the six components of each construct. The first construct, safety, refers to teachers feeling safe at school with their administrator, feeling like rules are routinely enforced, and the administrator knowing what to do in a crisis situation. Table 30 provides an overview of these findings in relation to the specific components of safety under current and previous administrators.

Table 30
Perceptions of school safety based on number of administrators with whom a teacher has worked.

# of Admin	N	Safety Current	SD	Safety Previous	SD	Rules Enforced Current	SD	Rules Enforced Previous	SD	Crisis Knowledge Current	SD	Crisis Knowledge Previous	SD
1	62	3.45	.783	2.25	1.04	3.06	.744	2.22	.987	3.24	.881	2.78	.892
2	45	3.13	.842	2.36	.865	2.64	.802	2.41	.923	3.04	.903	3.02	.731
3	34	3.24	.855	2.29	.970	2.82	.716	2.35	.812	3.25	.864	2.91	.900
4	21	3.29	.784	2.10	.852	3.00	.775	2.29	.902	3.10	.944	2.86	.854
5+	47	3.47	.687	2.41	10.2	2.89	.759	2.36	.965	3.00	.834	2.79	1.02

Teachers who worked under one administrator gave the most positive marks to safety (*M=3.45*), rules being enforced (*M=3.06*), and the current administrator knowing what to do in a crisis situation (*M=3.24*) while teachers who worked with two administrators gave the least positive marks to the same three constructs (*M=3.13; M=2.64*; *M=3.04,* respectively). Teachers who worked with two administrators had the most positive perceptions of safety (*M=2.36*), rules

being enforced (*M=2.41*), and knowing what to do in a crisis situation (*M=3.02*) under the previous administrator. A one-way ANOVA showed no statistical significance between the mean scores of the different groups. For safety under the previous administrator, all mean scores fell below 2.50 (*M=2.25*; *M=2.36*; *M=2.29*; *M=2.10*; *M=2.41*, respectively), as did all scores for rules enforced (*M=2.22; M=2.41*; *M=2.35*; *M=2.29*; *M=2.36*, respectively).

The second construct, teaching and learning, was similarly analyzed based on the individual components of the construct. Teaching and learning relates to the administrator having high expectations for student achievement, the administrator having a clear and compelling vision, and the administrator supporting staff. Table 31 provides an overview of these findings.

Table 31
Perceptions of teaching and learning based on number of administrators with whom a teacher has worked.

# of Admin	N Size	High Expectations Current	SD	High Expectations Previous	SD	Clear Vision Current	SD	Clear Vision Previous	SD	Support Current	SD	Support Previous	SD
1	62	3.35	.726	2.51	.869	3.07	.981	2.48	.821	3.31	.904	2.39	.993
2	45	3.20	.726	2.57	.873	2.69	1.08	2.59	.816	3.07	1.00	2.64	.892
3	34	3.18	.834	2.59	.892	2.82	1.02	2.65	.981	3.32	.806	2.56	1.05
4	21	3.24	.768	2.67	.856	2.90	.995	2.57	.746	3.40	.821	2.49	.926
5	47	3.17	.732	2.72	.800	2.72	.902	2.45	.880	3.21	.954	2.43	1.01

Teachers who worked with only one administrator had the most positive view of teaching and learning in relation to having high expectations for student achievement (*M=3.35*), and clear and compelling vision (*M=3.07*), while teachers who worked with four administrators had the most positive responses to feeling of supported from their current administrator (*M=3.40*).

Teachers who worked with four administrators had the most positive view of high expectations under their previous administrator (*M=2.67*) while teachers who worked with one administrator had the least positive view (*M=2.51*). Teachers who worked with three administrators had the most positive view of clear and compelling vision under the previous administrator (*M=2.65*) while teachers who worked with five administrators had the least positive view of a clear and compelling vision under the previous administrator (*M=2.45*). Teachers who worked under one administrator had the least positive view of feeling supported under the previous administrator (*M=2.39*) while teachers who worked with two administrators had the most positive perception of support under the previous administrator (*M=2.64*). A one-way ANOVA showed no statistical significance between the mean scores of the different groups. Several scores fell below 2.50, though, specifically related to clear vision under the previous administrator for teachers who had worked with one (*M=2.48*) or five or more (*M=2.45*) administrators. Scores also fell below 2.50 in relation to support under the previous administrator for teachers who had worked with one (*M=2.39*), four (*M=2.49*), or five or more (*M=2.43*) administrators.

An analysis of relationships was conducted using specific components of the construct. Relationships refers to the administrator having positive relationships with students in the building, having positive relationships with staff, and fostering a collaborative and unified school climate. Table 32 shows an overview of the findings of the construct related to relationships when broken down to specific components of the construct.

Table 32
Perceptions of relationships based on number of administrators with whom a teacher has worked

# of Admin	N Size	Positive Relations Adults	SD	Positive Relations Adults	SD	Positive Relations Students	SD	Positive Relations Students	SD	Collaborative Climate Current	SD	Collaborative Climate Previous	SD
1	61	3.21	.777	2.24	.857	3.31	.807	2.34	.834	***3.10****	.943	2.66	.808
2	45	2.89	.859	2.59	.972	2.96	.767	2.52	.902	2.67	.977	2.57	.925
3	34	2.82	.904	2.44	.960	2.94	.851	2.26	***.751***	***2.47****	.896	2.35	.950
4	21	3.29	.902	2.29	.717	3.24	.539	2.48	.873	3.14	.964	2.43	.811
5+	45	3.09	.848	2.39	.977	3.09	.668	2.59	.979	2.87	.934	2.65	.924

Note: scale ranges from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*; * indicates a significant difference at the .05 level between groups.

Teachers who worked under one administrator had the most positive view of positive relationships between the adults in the building under the current administrator (*M=3.21*) while teachers who worked with three administrators had the least positive view (*M=2.82*). Teachers who worked under one administrator also had the most positive view of relationships with students (*M=3.31*) while teachers who worked with three administrators also had the least positive view (*M=2.94*). Teachers who worked with four administrators had the most positive view of the current administrator fostering and unified and collaborative climate (*M=3.14*) while teachers who worked with three administrators had the least positive view (*M=2.47*). The same teachers who worked with one administrator had the least positive view of relationships with adults under the previous administrator (*M=2.24*) while teachers who worked with two administrators had the most positive view of relationships with adults under the previous administrator (*M=2.59*). Teachers who worked with five or more administrators had the most positive view of relationships with students under the previous administrator (*M=2.59*) while teachers who worked with three administrators had the least positive view (*M=2.26*). Teachers who worked with one administrator had the most positive view of a unified and collaborative climate under the previous administrator (*M=2.66*) while teachers who worked with three administrators had the least positive view (*M=2.35*).

Almost all mean scores related to positive relationships with adults under the previous administrator were below 2.50 for teachers who had worked with one (*M=2.24*), three (*M=2.44*), four (*M=2.29*), or five or more (*M=2.39*) administrators. Teachers who worked with one (*M=2.34*) or four (*M=2.48*) administrators had scores below 2.50 related to positive relationships with students under the previous administrator. Teachers who worked with three administrators had mean scores below 2.50 for collaborative climate under the current administrator (*M=2.47*) and the previous administrator (*M=2.35*). Teachers who worked with

four administrators also had a mean score below 2.50 in collaborative climate under the previous administrator (*M=2.43*).

A one-way ANOVA revealed a statistical significance between groups in relation to teachers feeling like the current administrator fostered a collaborative and unified school climate (p=.011) while a post hoc Bonferroni analysis confirmed statistical significance between the mean scores of teachers who worked with one administrator and teachers who worked with three administrators (p=.021).

Lastly, an analysis of the school environment was conducted using the specific components of the construct. The school environment relates to the cleanliness of the building, the relationships with students, and adequate supplies for students and staff. Table 33 provides an overview of these findings.

Table 33
Perceptions of the school environment based on number of administrators with whom a teacher has worked.

# of Admin	N Size	Cleanliness	SD	Cleanliness Previous	SD	Positive Relations Students	SD	Positive Relations Students	SD	Adequate Supplies Current	SD	Adequate Supplies Previous	SD
1	61	3.43	.531	2.21	.645	3.34	.772	2.30	.741	3.31	.786	2.44	.825
2	45	3.11	.647	2.25	.686	3.00	.769	2.43	.728	3.20	.548	2.80	.701
3	34	3.15	.610	2.38	.739	2.97	.758	2.32	.727	3.24	.654	2.88	.686
4	21	3.14	.854	2.25	.550	3.33	.483	2.43	.746	3.33	.730	2.52	.873
5+	46	3.30	.662	2.24	.712	3.13	.726	2.62	.960	3.28	.688	2.89	.767

Teachers who worked with one administrator had the most positive perception of cleanliness under the current administrator (*M=3.43*) while teachers who worked with two administrators had the least positive view (*M=3.11*). Teachers who worked with one administrator also had the most positive view of relationships with students under the current administrator (*M=3.34*) while teachers who worked with three administrators had the least positive view (*M=2.97*). Teachers who worked with four administrators had the most positive view of the principal making sure the school has adequate supplies and materials for students (*M=3.33*) while teachers who worked with two administrators had the least positive view

(*M=3.20*). Teachers who worked with three administrators had the most positive view of cleanliness under the previous administrator (*M=2.38*) while teachers who worked with one administrator had the least positive view (*M=2.21*). Teachers who worked with five administrators had the most positive view of the previous administrator having positive relationships with students (*M=2.62*) while teachers who worked with one administrator had the least positive view (*M=2.30*). Teachers who worked with five administrators also had the most positive view of the previous administrator making sure the school had adequate supplies for students and staff (*M=2.89*) while teachers who worked for one administrator had the least positive view (*M=2.44*).

All mean scores related to cleanliness under the previous administrator were below 2.50 (*M=2.21*; *M=2.25*; *M=2.38*; *M=2.25*; *M=2.24*, respectively). Teachers who worked with one (*M=2.30*), two (*M=2.43*), three (*M=2.32*), or four (*M=2.43*) administrators had mean scores below 2.50 in relation to positive relationships with students under the previous administrator. Only teachers who worked with one administrator had a mean score below 2.50 (*M=2.44*) in relation to adequate supplies under the previous administrator.

A one-way ANOVA revealed a statistical significance between groups in relation to the previous principal making sure the school had adequate supplies for students and staff ($p = .026$) but a post hoc Bonferroni analysis showed no statistical significance between groups in relation to this specific question.

Teacher responses regarding administrator longevity were mixed. Leadership longevity or continuity appears to matter less than the actions the principal takes to address safety, support teaching and learning, build relationships, and enhance the school environment. One teacher who had only worked with one principal wrote, "Our principal is not connected to our school community. He lacks the capacity and interest required to be successful as a school leader." In contrast, a different teacher who had only worked with one administrator shared a more general statement about the importance of leadership growth, stating "[Students' social-

emotional needs] needs to become more of a focus for today's principals. It is a huge obstacle to learning." Table 34 provides an overview of comments shared by teachers who have only worked with a single administrator in their buildings.

Table 34
Perceptions of teachers who have experienced leadership continuity.

Construct	Comment
Safety	"The social/emotional health of the students and the staff are at the forefront of the current principal. He has made it a priority from his first day."
Relationships	"Current leadership inquires and offers support to various learning styles."
The School Environment	"The current leadership has high expectations for cleanliness and displaying student work. It's refreshing to walk about the building and see [student work] samples."
Safety	"There could be more attention paid to several students' needs, more consistent following of programs."
Teaching and Learning	"The principal is much more in tune with social emotional needs within the building. This puts the principal is a difficult spot - seeing first hand student /teachers challenges and answering to district level expectations."

The statements from teachers highlight the skills of the administrator over the longevity of the leadership. For example, another teacher who worked with multiple principals shared a different perspective, writing

> Comparatively the last two principals we have had have been the best of my 22-year career (out of the seven principals I have worked with [. . .] the current principal made it a priority to hire two counselors (on top of the guidance counselor) to meet the needs of students. She recognizes the growing needs of our student population who increasingly each year exhibit anxiety and depression

because of trauma, substance abuse in the home, domestic violence, and differing degrees of neglect. She is doing everything possible to support our students.

Table 35 provides an overview of the comments shared by teachers who have worked with at least five administrators in their current school. The statements are a mix of critical and supportive, again depending on the ways in which the principal has attempted (or not attempted) to build capacity among the staff.

Table 35
Teacher perceptions of the effect of frequent leadership change as it relates to the Cohen et. al. (2009) constructs.

Construct	Comment
Safety	"The last three principals gave the student body much more social-emotional support than the first principal that I worked with at this school."
Teaching and Learning	"The current principal is very data driven yet he celebrates growth rather than focus on [the] need to improve."
Safety	"Our current principal is too disorganized to have focused attention on any issues."
Safety	"Our current principal cares more about SEL and SE needs, but doesn't often have follow through and action. Just lots of talk. No leadership to make change."
Relationships	"The [current principal] has really pushed that people learn in different ways and we need to develop assessments that show this."
The School Environment	"[The principal] shares a lot of student work on social media but it comes across as if she is showing her accomplishments rather than the accomplishments of our students."
The School Environment	"The most recent principal has made it a priority to pay attention to the physical environment. This brought about pride in not only the building but within our school and the larger community. The impact was more dramatic than one might expect."

Administrator longevity as related to leadership continuity seems to depend heavily on the individual perception of the teachers, or the individual leadership style of the principal. Teachers, in their comments, indicated that the personality of the leader and the ways in which he does nor does not engage with the school community as a whole have a strong bearing on how the teachers perceive the leader, and ways in which he impacts the Cohen et. al. (2009) facets of school climate.

Research Question 3

To answer the third question, "What factors, including teacher longevity, grade span, content specialty, and rural or urban schools are most affected by a change in leadership?" the researcher analyzed data descriptively as well as inferentially, looking specifically at data comparing current and previous administrators. Table 36 provides an overview of these findings.

Finding #1

Table 36
Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on teacher longevity when comparing current and former administrators.

Years	N	Safety Current	SD	Safety Previous	SD	Teaching and Learning Current	SD	Teaching and Learning Previous	SD	Relationships Current	SD	Relationships Previous	SD	Environment Current	SD	Environment Previous	SD
< 1	3	3.33	.577	1.83	.235	3.11	.384	2.16	.235	3.00	.000	2.00	N/A	2.77	.192	2.00	NA
1-2	4	3.58	.419	2.08	.787	3.33	.272	2.44	.509	3.41	.319	2.55	.509	3.50	.430	2.11	.192
3-7	27	2.77	.704	2.45	.821	2.76	.851	2.61	.694	2.79	.925	2.41	.841	3.02	.612	2.38	.699
8-12	24	3.06	.804	2.57	.597	3.06	.786	2.48	.759	3.04	.697	2.50	.646	3.22	.595	2.41	.556
13+	150	3.17	.698	2.51	.744	3.71	.733	2.52	.726	3.02	.778	2.43	.791	3.26	.531	2.49	.581

Teachers with one to two years of experience had the most positive view of safety under the current administrator (*M=3.33*) while teachers with three to seven years of experience had the least positive view (*M=2.77*). Teachers with less than a year of experience had a negative view of safety under the previous administrator (*M=1.83*) while teachers with eight to twelve years of experience had the most positive view (*M=2.57*). Teachers with one to two years of experience had the most positive view for teaching and learning under the current principal (*M=3.33*) as well as the most positive view of relationships (*M=3.41*) and the school environment (*M=3.50*). Teachers with three to seven years and the least positive views of teaching and learning under the current administrator (*M=2.76*) as well as relationships (*M=2.79*). Teachers with less than one year of experience had the least positive view of the school environment under the current administrator (*M=2.77*). The same group of teachers had the least positive view of teaching and learning (*M=2.16*), relationships (*M=2.00*), and the school environment (*M=2.00*) under the previous administrator.

Teachers who have less than one year of experience had mean scores below 2.50 related to the previous administrator for safety (*M=1.83*), teaching and learning (*M=2.16*), relationships (*M=2.00*), and the school environment (*M=2.00*). Teachers with 1-2 years of experience had mean scores below 2.50 for safety (*M=2.08*), teaching and learning (*M=2.44*), and the environment (*M=2.11*) under the previous administrator. Teachers with three to seven years of experience had mean scores below 2.50 for safety (*M=2.45*), relationships (*M=2.41*), and the school environment (*M=2.38*) under the previous administrator. Teachers with eight to twelve years of experience had mean scores below 2.50 for teaching and learning (*M=2.48*) and the school environment (*M=2.41*) under the previous administrator. Teachers with thirteen or more years of experience had mean scores below 2.50 under relationships (*M=2.43*) and the school environment (*M=2.49*) under the previous administrator.

A one-way ANOVA showed statistical significance between groups in relation to teaching and learning ($p = .025$), but a post hoc Bonferroni showed no statistical significance between the responses.

Finding #2

Next, the researcher analyzed grade spans in relation to the four constructs of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment when comparing the current and previous administrator. Grade spans were broken up by traditional transitions with one group identified as K-5 or elementary school teachers, one group as 6-8 or middle school teachers, one group as 9-12 or high school teachers, and one group as "other" which included teachers in K-8, 3-5, 4-5, and other non-traditional variation schools. Table 37 provides an overview of these findings.

Table 37
Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on grade span when comparing current and former administrators.

Grade Span	N Size	Safety Current	SD	Safety Previous	SD	Teaching and Learning	SD	Teaching and Learning	SD	Relationships Current	SD	Relationships Previous	SD	Environment Current	SD	Environment Previous	SD
K-5	65	3.00	.811	2.59	.859	3.04	.856	2.67	***.757***	***2.76****	.853	2.61	.844	3.10	.642	2.54	.683
6-8	46	3.08	.682	2.47	.647	3.06	.770	2.44	.693	3.06	.703	2.34	.750	3.24	.484	2.44	.571
9-12	73	3.16	.638	2.43	.631	3.10	.720	2.45	.634	3.10	.734	2.32	.675	3.33	.461	2.41	.545
Other	24	3.36	.694	2.58	.829	3.43	.623	2.73	***.820***	***3.31****	.670	2.61	.851	3.23	.617	2.50	.591

Note: scale ranges from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*; * indicates a significant difference at the .05 level between groups.

Teachers who identified as outside the traditional grade structures had the most positive view of safety (*M=3.36*), teaching and learning (*M=3.43*), and relationships (*M=3.31*) while teachers who identified as 9-12 had the most positive view of the school environment (*M=3.33*). Teachers in K-5 schools had the most positive view of safety (*M=2.59*), teaching and learning (*M=2.67*), and the school environment (*M=2.54*) under the previous administrator. Teachers at the 6-8 level had the least positive view of teaching and learning under the previous administrator (*M=2.44*), while 9-12 teachers had the least positive view of relationships (*M=2.32*) and the school environment (*M=2.41*) under the previous administrator.

Teachers who identified in the 6-8 grade span had mean scores below 2.50 for safety (*M=2.47*), teaching and learning (*M=2.44*), relationships (*M=2.34*), and the school environment (*M=2.44*) under the previous administrator. Similarly, teachers who

identified in the 9-12 grade span had mean scores below 2.50 for safety (*M=2.43*), teaching and learning (*M=2.45*), relationships (*M=2.32*), and the school environment (*M=2.41*) under the previous administrator. A one-way ANOVA revealed a statistical significance between groups (p=.008) when analyzing relationships under the current administrator and a post hoc Bonferroni confirmed statistical significance between K-5 and other grade span teachers (p=.015) when analyzing relationships under the current administrator.

Similar analyses were conducted when collapsing grade spans into K-5, 6-12, and other as well as K-8, 9-12, and other. Tables 38 and 39 provide an overview of these findings.

Table 38
Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on K-5, 6-12 and other when comparing current and former administrators.

Grade Span	N Size	Safety Current	SD	Safety Previous	SD	Teaching and Learning	SD	Teaching and Learning	SD	Relationships Current	SD	Relationships Previous	SD	Environment Current	SD	Environment Previous	SD
K-5	68	3.12	.714	2.45	.660	3.06	.810	2.55	.650	2.97	.774	2.37	.719	3.18	.503	2.39	.557
6-12	117	3.09	.751	2.51	.766	3.15	.770	2.53	.768	3.02	.817	2.45	.803	3.27	.591	2.50	.614
Other	21	3.20	.532	2.75	.811	3.00	.648	2.72	.586	3.04	.612	2.79	.697	3.07	.446	2.64	.576

Note: scale ranges from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*

Teachers who identified as other had the most positive view of relationships under their current administrator (*M=3.20*) while teachers who identified as 6-12 had the last positive view (*M=3.09*). Teachers who identified as 6-12 had the most positive view of teaching and learning (*M=3.15*) as well as the school environment (*M=3.27*) under the current administrator. Teachers who identified as "other" had the least positive view of teaching and learning (*M=3.00*) as well as the school environment (*M=3.07*) under

the current administrator, but they had the most positive view of relationships (*M=3.04*). K-5 teachers had the least positive view of safety (*M=2.45*), relationships (*M=2.55*), and the school environment (*M=2.39*) under the previous administrator while teachers who identified as other had the most positive view of safety (*M=2.75*), teaching and learning (*M=2.72*), relationships (*M=2.79*), and the school environment (*M=2.64*) under the previous administrator. Teachers who identified as K-5 had mean scores below 2.50 under safety (*M=2.45*), relationships (*M=2.37*), and the school environment (*M=2.39*) for the previous administrator. Teachers who identified as 6-12 only had a mean score below 2.50 for relationships under the previous administrator (*M=2.45*). A one-way ANOVA revealed no statistical significance between responses.

Table 39
Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on K-8, 9-12 and other when comparing current and former administrators.

Grade Span	N Size	Safety Current	SD	Safety Previous	SD	Teaching and Learning	SD	Teaching and Learning	SD	Relationships Current	SD	Relationships Previous	SD	Environment Current	SD	Environment Previous	SD
K-8	121	3.11	.706	2.50	.722	3.09	.796	2.56	.760	3.00	.779	2.45	.807	3.21	.563	2.47	.641
9-12	64	3.09	.795	2.47	.741	3.17	.762	2.50	.659	3.02	.844	2.37	.715	3.29	.572	2.44	.492
Other	21	3.20	.532	2.75	.811	3.00	.648	2.72	.586	3.04	.617	2.79	.697	3.07	.446	2.64	.576

Note: scale ranges from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*

Teachers who identified as other had the most positive view of safety under the current administrator (*M=3.20*) while teachers who identified as 9-12 had the least positive view (*M=3.09*). Teachers who identified as K-8 had the most positive view of teaching and learning under the current administrator (*M=3.09*) while teachers who identified as other had the least positive view (*M=3.00*). Teachers who identified as other had the most positive view of relationships under the current administrator (*M=3.04*) but the least positive view of the environment under the current administrator (*M=3.07*). Teachers who identified as K-5 had the least positive view of relationships under the current administrator (*M=3.00*) and 6-8 teachers had the most positive view of the environment under the current administrator (*M=3.29*). Teachers who identified as other had the most positive view of safety (*M=2.75*), teaching and learning (*M=2.79*), relationships (*M=2.79*), and the school environment (*M=2.64*) under the previous administrator while teachers who identified as 9-12 had the least positive view of safety (*M=2.47*), teaching and learning (*M=2.50*), relationships (*M=2.37*), and the school environment (*M=2.44*) under the previous administrator. Teachers who identified as K-8 had mean scores below 2.50 for relationships (*M=2.45*) and the school environment (*M=2.41*) under the previous administrator. Teachers who identified as 9-12 had mean scores below 2.50 for safety (*M=2.47*), relationships (*M=2.37*), and the school environment (*M=2.44*) related to the previous administrator. A one-way ANOVA for both groups revealed no statistical significance in their responses.

Finding #3

Teachers also identified as classroom, special education, specialist, content specialist, or other when responding to survey constructs. Analyses were conducted to compare the means of the four constructs when comparing current and former administrators. Table 40 provides an overview of these responses.

Table 40

Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on teacher specialty when comparing current and former administrators.

Teacher	N Size	Safety Current	SD	Safety Previous	SD	Teaching and Learning	SD	Teaching and Learning	SD	Relationships Current	SD	Relationships Previous	SD	Environment Current	SD	Environment Previous	SD
Class	128	3.03	.731	2.49	.756	2.98	.801	2.54	.764	2.88	.823	2.45	.812	3.14	.561	2.48	.622
SPED	28	3.17	.657	2.55	.714	3.29	.707	2.52	.458	3.18	.655	2.59	.627	3.32	.457	2.37	.495
Specialist	26	3.29	.750	2.53	.726	3.33	.805	2.61	.773	3.18	.733	2.40	.889	3.42	.620	2.63	.680
Content	16	3.25	.704	2.46	.784	3.14	.438	2.47	.750	3.25	.683	2.37	.787	3.35	.563	2.40	.537
Other	11	3.36	.482	2.48	.720	3.57	.473	2.51	.251	3.30	.504	2.27	.442	3.24	.336	2.24	.396

When comparing means for current administrators, teachers who identified as other had the most positive views of safety (*M=3.36*), teaching and learning (*M=3.57*), and relationships (*M=3.30*), while teachers who identified as specialists had the most positive view of the school environment (*M=3.42*). Classroom teachers had the least positive view of safety (*M=3.03*), teaching and learning (*M=2.98*), relationships (*M=2.88*), and the school environment (*M=3.14*) under the current administrator. Special education teachers had the most positive views of safety (*M=2.55*) and relationships (*M=2.59*) under the previous administrator while specialists had the most positive view of teaching and learning (*M=2.61*) and the school environment (*M=2.63*) under the previous administrator. Content specialists had the least positive view of safety under the previous administrator (*M=2.46*) as well as teaching and learning (*M=2.47*). Teachers who identified as other had the least positive view of relationships (*M=2.27*) and the school environment (*M=2.24*) under the previous administrator. Teachers who identified as classroom had mean scores below 2.50 for safety (*M=2.49*), relationships (*M=2.45*), and the school environment (*M=2.48*). Teachers who identified as special education had a mean score below 2.50 for the school environment under the previous administrator (*M=2.37*), while specialists only had a mean score below 2.50 for relationships under the previous administrator (*M=2.40*). Content specialists had mean scores below 2.50 for all constructs related to the previous administrator (*M=2.46*; *M=2.47*; *M=2.37*; *M=2.40, respectively*). Teachers who identified as "other" had mean scores below 2.50 for safety (*M=2.48*), relationships (*M=2.27*), and the school environment (*M=2.24*). A one-way ANOVA revealed a statistical significance between groups in relation to teaching and learning under the current administrator ($p = .025$) but a post hoc Bonferroni revealed no statistical significance.

Finding #4

Lastly, the researcher conducted an analysis of means based on NCES locale codes. Analyses were conducted in two sets, the first being each individual code and the second being a collapsed set where similar groupings were combined into a larger cohort. First, the researcher

analyzed the NCES locales to determine the average number of principals with whom each group has worked. Table 41 provides this information.

Table 41
Average number of principals per NCES locale

NCES Locale	N	Average # of Administrators
City Small	37	2.13
Suburban Midsize	36	2.14
Suburban Small	12	3.33
Town Fringe	14	1.78
Town Distant	19	1.94
Town Remote	16	2.68
Rural Fringe	51	2.64
Rural Distant	82	2.61
Rural Remote	27	2.46

Teachers in suburban small communities, which are identified as territories outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with a population of less than 100,000 have worked with the highest number of different administrators for an average of 3.33. Teachers in town fringe communities, which are defined as a territory inside an urban cluster that is less than or equal to 10 miles from and urbanized area, have experienced the least amount of turnover having only worked with an average of 1.78 administrators. Table 42 provides a similar overview, but with the locales collapsed into similar groupings.

Table 42
Average number of principals per collapsed NCES locale.

NCES Locale	N	Average # of Administrators
City	37	2.13
Suburban	48	2.89
Town	49	2.14
Rural	160	2.59

Teachers in suburban districts have experienced the most administrator turnover with an average of 2.89 administrators while teachers in city districts have experienced the least amount of turnover, having worked with an average of 2.13 administrators.

Next, the researcher analyzed the mean scores of each construct, when separated into current and previous administrator, for each of the nine individual NCES locales. Table 43 provides an overview of these findings.

Table 43

Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on NCES designations when comparing current and former administrators

NCES Locale Classification																	
NCES Locale	**N**	**Safety Current**	**SD**	**Safety Previous**	**SD**	**Teaching and Learning Current**	**SD**	**Teaching and Learning**	**SD**	**Relationships Current**	**SD**	**Relationships Previous**	**SD**	**School Environment Current**	**SD**	**School Environment Previous**	**SD**
City Small	28	2.94	.870	2.61	.671	3.09	.092	2.55	.716	2.79	.885	2.59	.747	3.04	.683	2.51	.729
Suburban Midsize	29	3.13	.601	2.66	.777	2.97	.683	2.62	.807	2.82	.824	2.50	.823	3.09	.533	2.51	.755
Suburban Small	10	3.03	.776	2.56	.685	2.90	1.04	2.70	.760	2.66	.801	2.56	.770	3.26	.466	2.50	.323
Town Fringe	8	2.83	.776	2.77	1.20	3.00	.712	3.20	.737	2.75	.894	2.66	.971	3.00	.563	3.08	.630
Town Distant	9	2.74	1.11	2.70	.611	2.77	1.15	2.66	.471	2.95	.909	2.57	.929	3.29	.563	2.48	.412
Town Remote	11	2.66	3.94	2.24	.579	2.40	.777	2.40	.782	2.46	.688	2.26	.644	2.76	.316	2.40	.409
Rural Fringe	36	3.08	.705	2.37	.758	3.01	.707	2.46	.769	3.05	.711	2.30	.797	3.26	.463	2.45	.591
Rural Distant	56	3.36	.556	2.38	.709	3.42	.625	2.38	.646	3.03	.655	2.32	.746	3.44	.510	2.36	.552
Rural Remote	22	3.27	.717	2.55	.825	3.22	.548	2.71	.660	3.24	.668	2.63	.808	3.25	.543	2.48	.556

Teachers in rural distant communities have the most positive views of safety (*M=3.36*), teaching and learning (*M=3.42*), and the school environment (*M=3.44*). Teachers in Town distant communities had the least positive view of safety (*M=2.63*) the current administrator while teachers in town remote districts had the least positive view of teaching and learning (*M=2.40*), relationships (*M=2.46*), and the school environment (*M=2.76*) under the current administrator. Teachers in town fringe communities had the most positive views of safety (*M=2.77*), teaching and learning (*M=3.20*), relationships (*M=2.66*), and the school environment (*M=3.08*) all under the previous administrator. Teachers in town remote communities had the least positive view of safety (*M=2.24*) and relationships (*M=2.26*) under the previous administrator while teachers in rural distant communities had the least positive view of teaching and learning (*M=2.38*) and the school environment (*M=2.36*) under the previous administrator. Several mean scores for previous administrator fell below 2.50. Specifically, town remote (*M=2.24*), rural fringe (*M=2.37*), and rural distant (*M=2.38*) had scores below 2.50 in relation to safety. When comparing scores of teaching and learning, town remote (*M=2.40*), rural fringe (*M=2.46*), and rural distant (*M=2.38*) teachers gave mean scores below 2.50. Under relationships, town remote (*M=2.26*), rural fringe (*M=2.30*), and rural distant (*M=2.32*) teachers gave scores below 2.50. Lastly, the school environment under the previous administrator had the highest frequency of scores below 2.50 in relation to town distant (*M=2.48*), town remote (*M=2.40*), rural fringe (*M=2.45*), rural distant (*M=2.36*), and rural remote (*M=2.48*) communities.

The researcher then analyzed the NCES locales when collapsed into similar groupings. Table 44 provides an overview of these findings.

Table 44

Perceptions of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment based on collapsed NCES designations when comparing current and former administrators.

NCES Locale Classification																
NCES Locale	**N**	**Safety Current**	**SD**	**Safety Previous**	**SD**	**Teaching and Learning Current**	**SD**	**Teaching and Learning**	**SD**	**Relationships Current**	**SD**	**Relationships Previous**	**SD**	**School Environment Current**	**SD**	**School Environment**	**SD**
City	28	2.94	.870	2.61	.671	3.09	.902	2.55	.716	2.79	.885	2.59	.747	***3.04****	.68	2.51	.729
Suburban	39	3.11	.641	2.63	.744	2.95	.776	2.64	.781	***2.78****	.811	2.51	.798	3.13	.517	2.50	.659
Town	28	***2.73****	.776	2.52	.778	***2.71****	.907	2.66	.715	***2.70****	.807	2.44	.808	***3.01****	.518	2.55	.498
Rural	114	***3.26****	.645	2.41	.745	***3.26****	.658	2.47	.696	***3.21****	.678	2.37	.778	***3.35****	.506	2.41	.562

Note: scale ranges from 1=*strongly disagree* to 4=*strongly agree*; * indicates a significant difference at the .05 level between groups.

Teachers in rural communities had the most positive view of safety (*M=3.26*), teaching and learning (*M=3.26*), relationships (*M=3.21*), and the school environment (*M=3.35*) under the current administrator. Teachers in town communities had the least positive view of the same constructs, safety (*M=2.73*), teaching and learning (*M=2.71*), relationships (*M=2.70*), and the school environment (*M=3.01*) under the current administrator. In relation to the previous administrator, suburban teachers had the most positive view of safety (*M=2.63*), teachers in town communities had the most positive view of teaching and learning (*M=2.66*) and the school environment (*M=2.55*), and teachers in city communities had the most positive view of relationships (*M=2.59*). Teachers in rural communities had the least positive view of all constructs under the previous administrator for safety (*M=2.41*), teaching and learning (*M=2.47*), relationships (*M=2.37*), and the school environment (*M=2.41*).

Several scores fell below 2.50, specifically in categories for previous administrators. Rural teachers had a mean below 2.50 (*M=2.41*) in safety, teaching and learning (*M=2.47*), relationships (*M=2.37*), and the school environment (*M=2.41*) while only teachers in town communities had a score below 2.50 under relationships (*M=2.44*). All other scores were above 2.50.

A one-way ANOVA also revealed statistical significance in responses to safety ($p = .002$), teaching and learning ($p = .005$), relationships ($p < .001$). and the school environment ($p = .002$) all in relation to the current administrator. Regarding safety, a post hoc Bonferroni analysis showed statistical significance between town and rural communities ($p = .003$). A similar statistical significance between town and rural communities was also found in teaching and learning ($p = .006$), and relationships ($p. = .011$), though the researcher also found statistical significance between suburban and rural communities ($p = .015$). Lastly, the research showed statistical significance in relation to the school environment between town and rural communities ($p. = .020$), as well as city and rural communities ($p. = .045$)

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

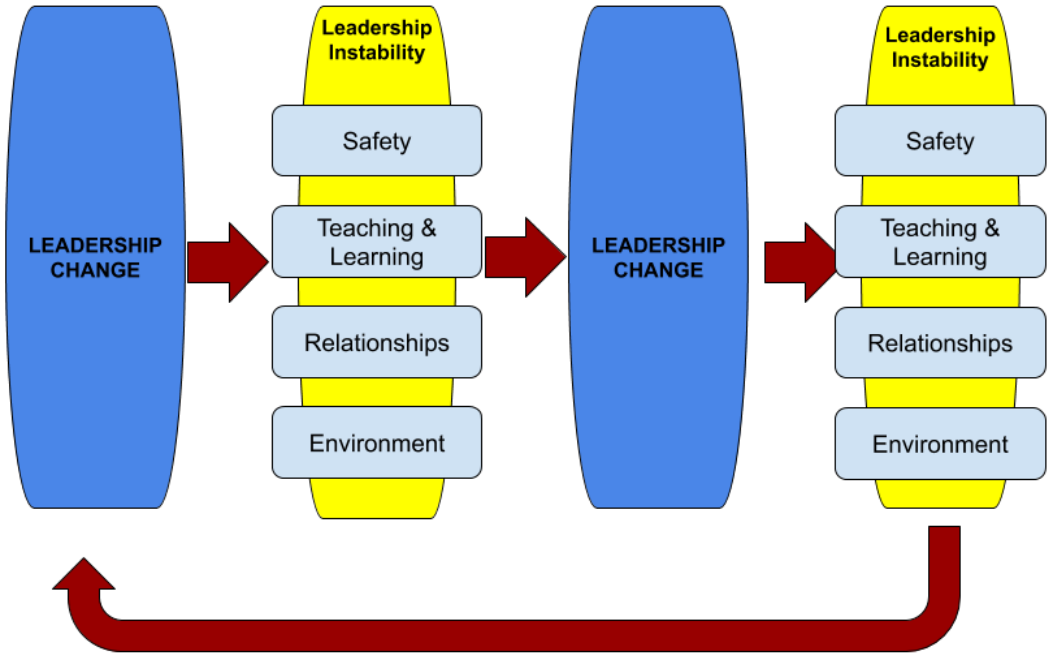
The purpose of this study was to analyze the impact of leadership change, at the principal level, on school climate through a framework established by Cohen et. al. (2009) which identified four major components of school climate: safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment. In this study, 1,465 Maine teachers, a stratified sampling of all National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) locale codes, responded to 24 questions on a 1-4 Likert scale based on the four constructs of the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework. Teachers were asked to compare current and former administrators when looking at the ways in which they did or did not support safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment. The hope was that the data collected could shed light on the impact that leadership change at the principal level has on school climate given that Maine has a documented leadership crisis (2016), and almost one of five principals leaves the position after one year (Bradley & Levin, 2019). Data collection took place during the spring of 2021 in order to address the following research questions:

1. How does leadership change at the principal level affect school climate, specifically through key components such as safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment?
2. Does leadership longevity or continuity lead to less disruption in school climate?
3. What factors, including teacher longevity, grade span, content specialty, and rural or urban schools' status, are most affected by a change in leadership?

The framing of the findings is based on the theoretical and conceptual framework of this study which is built around the theory that consistent turnover in leadership will lead to instability in school climate as leadership stability has been shown to have positive long-term

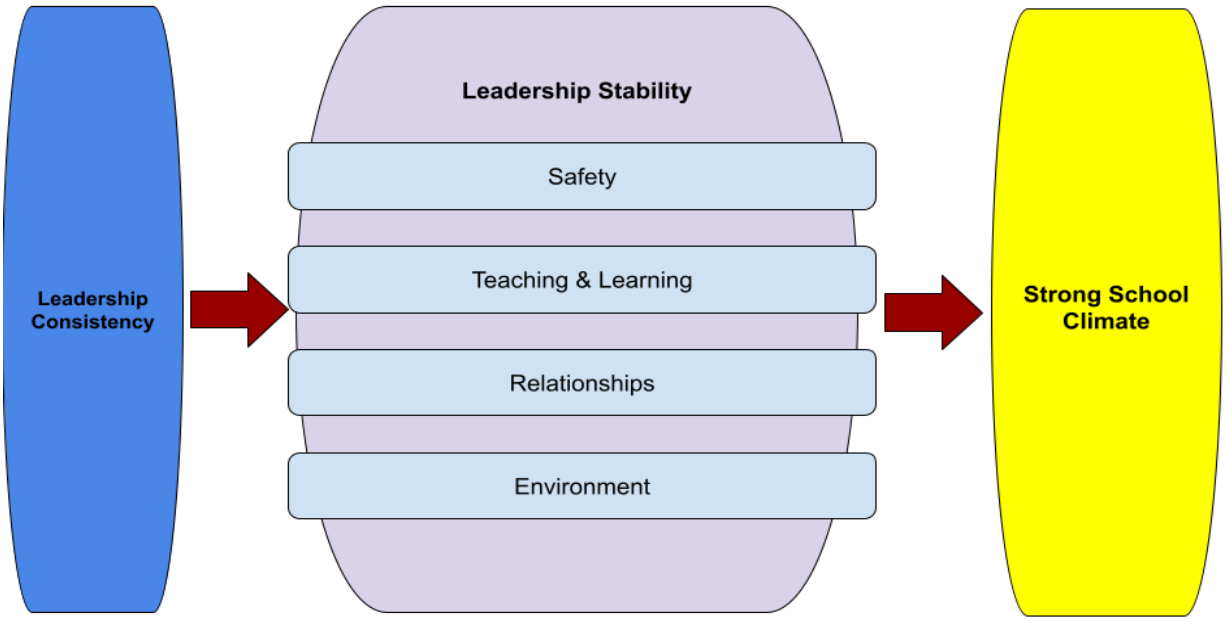
effects on social organizations (Tafvelin, Hyvönen, & Westerberg, 2014). Figure 1 illustrates the researcher's theory of leadership instability and the impact on school climate.

Figure 3
Leadership instability and the impact on school climate



Without leadership stability, safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment will all be negatively impacted. Leadership stability, however, will lead to stability of the four components of the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework. Figure 2 illustrates this theory.

Figure 4
Leadership stability and the impact on school climate



The findings can be summarized into three general themes: (1) leadership change at the principal level has the highest impact on relationships, and the lowest impact on the school environment; (2) leadership longevity or continuity has a mixed effect on factors of school climate, having a larger impact on certain components of the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework, but not consistently with the number of administrators a teacher has experienced in his/her career; and (3) all factors studied were impacted by leadership change, but mostly through relationships and the school environment.

This chapter includes a discussion of the major findings as related to literature on school climate, as well as what implications may be valuable for educators, both those who wish to pursue leadership roles, and those who are in schools with frequent leadership turnover

Leadership Change and the Effect on Safety, Teaching and Learning, Relationships, and the School Environment.

When analyzing the data for research question one, the researcher noted that teachers gave the highest overall score to the school environment and the lowest overall score to relationships. In the context of the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework, the environment is defined

as cleanliness, adequate space and materials, aesthetic quality of the school, and curricular/extracurricular offerings while relationships are defined as "respect for diversity," "school community and collaboration," and "morale and connectedness" (p. 184).

The school environment having the highest mean score shows that overall, teachers agreed that the environment was impacted least by leadership change. This discovery is somewhat inconsistent with literature relating to its importance. Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield (2009) noted the importance of the physical structure of the building and the impact on teacher morale, and Uline and Tschannen-Moran (2008) also indicated the importance of the school facility on student achievement, but teachers in this study, most frequently, had the most positive responses to the school environment under both the current and the previous administrator. The school environment does not explicitly relate to just the physical structure of the building but also to cleanliness, positive relationships, and adequate supplies. It appears that changes in leadership have the least impact on these components possibly due to the fact that districts would have a larger role in the state of the building, including repair and replacement, as well as budgeting for adequate supplies.

Relationships, consistently, received the lowest positive scores from teachers under current administrators, and even lower scores under the previous administrator as well. Data collected from the survey is in line with the literature regarding the importance of relationships and the connection to school climate. Relationships in schools are well defined for the impact they have on school climate (Carter, Armenakis, Field, & Mossholder, 2013), communication (Rafferty, 2003), and student achievement (Allen, Grigsby, & Peters, 2015). Frequent changes in leadership have also shown to have a strong negative impact on school morale (Meyer, Macmillan, & Northfield, 2009). One of the goals of administration is building capacity within the building, and part of that is making connections with all stakeholders, including students, families, and staff. Teachers giving the lowest score to this construct shows that both sets of administrators – current and previous – need to do a better job of relationship building within

their schools as this was echoed across all demographics including grade span, school leadership, gender, probationary or veteran status, experiences with leadership change, and NCES locale classification.

The other constructs of the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework, teaching and learning, and safety, were rated second and third, respectively, when comparing mean scores. The literature on teaching and learning is specific in how the school administrator has an effect on student achievement (Nettles & Herrington, 2007), and in how the school climate affects students' academic success (Johnson & Stevens, 2006). Additionally, the literature is specific in how safe school climate affects social disorder (Welsh, 2000), test scores (Laurito, Lacoe, Schwartz, Sharkey, & Ellen, 2019), and student aggression (Goldstein, Young, & Boyd, 2007). Yet these two constructs were overshadowed by high mean scores related to the School Environment, and the low mean scores related to Relationships.

Teacher gender also provided interesting insight into how males and females view changes in leadership. Consistently, females had a less positive view of the current administrator than males, but a more positive view of the previous administrator. All mean scores under the current administrator between males and females showed statistically significant differences. While literature around school climate focuses more on the school as a whole and not specifically on gender (Anderson, 1982; Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013), recent research into the American teaching force has found that demographically, more females are entering the teaching profession than ever (Ingersoll, Merrill, Stucky, & Collins, 2018). Yet this does not account for females having less positive views of leadership change and school climate than males, a facet of this study which deserves further exploration. Education is becoming a more female dominated profession, and females, as observed in this study, are more affected by leadership change than males. Additionally, according to recent studies (Bradley & Levin, 2019), principal turnover is occuring at an annual rate of one in five. Therefore, educators and researchers need to be much more attuned with gender trends as we can expect to see

leadership change having a greater impact on education as a whole unless more work is done to encourage consistency of leadership.

Teachers who had formal leadership roles also fared better with changes in leadership than those who had no formal leadership roles in schools. They had more positive responses to both current and previous administrators than their counterparts, plus the data showed statistical significance in the overall means related to relationships under the previous administrator between teachers who did and did not have formal leadership roles. Leadership roles in this survey specifically identified formal leadership such as teacher leaders or department heads. Teachers in leadership roles may work more closely with the school administrator and therefore have different interactions that impacted their responses to the survey. Beachum and Dentith (2004) found that teachers in leadership positions often felt heard and appreciated regarding school matters, and the willingness of an administrator to seek out teacher leader opinions fostered strong collaboration between both groups. Barth (2011) wrote of the importance of the teacher leader, and the teacher leader as an extension of the school leadership, so the connection between teacher leaders having more positive responses aligns with the literature.

Leadership Longevity and Continuity in the Context of School Climate

Data related to leadership continuity and its impact on school climate through the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework was used to address the second research question. Maine teachers reported that they worked with an average of two and a half principals, though the majority of respondents had only worked with one administrator. The majority of respondents had worked at their current school for three to seven years, and the majority of respondents had thirteen or more years of teaching experience. Teachers who had worked with only one administrator reported the most positive scores in safety, teaching and learning, and the school environment (though they had the second highest score for relationships). Teachers who worked with more than one administrator were less positive about leadership overall.

The literature emphasizes the importance of leadership longevity and the impact of strong leadership on individuals who have worked with an impactful leader for a long time (Tafvelin, Hyuvönen, & Westerberg, 2014). Participants in the study agreed that working with one administrator over time leads to stronger feelings of safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment than working with multiple administrators. Meyer, Macmillan, and Northfield (2009) reported a similar conclusion where they found that consistent principal succession led to weaker relationships, tension in the school, and poor morale.

Just as consistently, teachers who worked with two administrators had the most positive views of the previous administrator when compared to all other teachers. These teachers could have been hired by the previous principal, and therefore would have a connection of loyalty. Literature around the principal as a human capital manager (Kimball, 2011) identifies the principal as finding those who share a vision or mission, therefore teachers who have worked with two administrators may have a stronger connection to the previous principal.

Leadership longevity clearly has an impact on teacher attitudes in the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework. In addition to building strong relationships with teachers, leadership longevity also leads to stronger feelings of safety, more support and trust in the instructional leadership capacity of the leader, and the professional and personal enjoyment that come from a strong, supportive school climate that a leader can build over time. Therefore, if schools are going to foster and enhance a strong school climate, they must find ways to support administrators with longevity in mind. Likewise, administrators need to approach their priorities through long-term planning, viewing their work in schools as a marathon and not a spring. Administrators need to make relationships a priority if they and their staff are going to work cohesively to move the school forward academically, socially, and emotionally.

Teacher longevity, grade span, content specialty, and NCES status

Data on teacher longevity in relation to the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework was used to address the third research question. Newer teachers had more positive views of safety and relationships while experienced teachers had more positive views of teaching and learning and the school environment. Newer teachers' need for support and connectivity aligns with research by Protheroe (2006) that found newer teachers most wanted their principals to be accessible and for their principals to support classroom disciplinary practices. Most new teachers are most concerned with classroom management and routines while veteran teachers, who have well established procedures, would be more invested in the complexity of instructional leadership. Therefore, it is not surprising that experienced teachers would have stronger feelings towards achievement practices (Goddard, Goddard, Kim, & Miller, 2015; Ross & Gray, 2006) and the school environment (Sindhi, 2013).

When analyzing data by grade span, the researcher noted that teachers in K-5 schools had the least positive view of all constructs under the current administrator while teachers in 9-12 schools had the most positive view. Furthermore, teachers in 9-12 schools had the least positive scores for all constructs under the previous administrator indicating that the leadership change they experienced was, by and large, positive. Additionally, through the data, the researcher was able to determine that teachers in K-5 schools have experienced the least amount of turnover while teachers in 9-12 schools have experienced the most. This could indicate that teachers who are more experienced with leadership change are more adept at adjusting to new leadership, but this could also indicate that teachers who experience less changes in leadership place a greater emphasis on relationship building. As students progress in schools and rise in grades, the academic and social focus shifts from a more relationship-oriented connection to a more academically driven expectation as students are prepared for entrance into the workforce or college, a fact which is echoed in how the teachers in these grade spans react to changes in leadership.

School climate has been shown to be a contributing factor in teacher safety in high schools (Gregory, Cornell, & Fan, 2012), and to play a role in mathematics achievement in elementary schools (Bodovski, Nahum-Shani, and Walsh, 2013), so its importance in both grade spans is documented, however, the disparity between the scores warrants further research.

Data, when separated by content specialty, showed that Specialists, a group that included Title I, art, music, physical education, guidance, and gifted/talented teachers, had the most positive views of safety, teaching and learning, and the school environment for the current administrator. Only content specific teachers viewed relationships more positively.

Lastly, NCES locale codes provided interesting insights into the view of city, suburban, town, and rural teachers and how they viewed leadership change though the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework. Teachers, regardless of NCES locale, viewed relationships the least positive for the current administrator while most tended to view the school environment most favorably, the only exception being teachers in city districts who had a more positive view of teaching and learning. More specifically, teachers in rural communities had the most positive view of relationships while teachers in town communities had the least positive view. This is in alignment with the literature around the importance of strong collaboration in rural schools (Preston & Barnes, 2017) as well as literature around rural school success (Barley & Beesley, 2007) while literature specific to urban schools tends to focus on the negative aspects of environment, addressing the school climate as a mitigating effect of social disorder (Welsh, 2000), the impact of safe spaces on student achievement (Laurtio, Lacoe, Shcwartz, Sharkey, &Ellen, 2019), and how school violence affects achievement (Benbenisthy, Astor, Roziner, & Wrabel, 2016).

Rural schools are seen as places of “hope and possibility” where adults tend to know every student by name (Surface, 2014), and as extensions of the towns in which they are located, rural schools tend to have distinct cultures and established norms (Morford, 2002). These established practices lead to stronger relationships and community pride as rural school

districts are “strongly connected through their schools through formal partnerships, the centrality of the school facilities, and personal investment of community members’ time and money” (Barley & Beesley, 2007).

NCES locale data showed statistically significant differences in responses between teachers in rural districts and teachers in either town, suburban, or city districts in relation to all four constructs of the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework for the current administrator. Interestingly, rural teachers had the highest mean scores for safety, teaching and learning, relationships, *and* the school environment. Studies have proven that rural principal turnover is much higher than principal turnover in other districts (Fuller & Young, 2009; DeAngelis & White, 2011), but research also shows the important role the rural principals play not only as school leaders, but also as highly visible and easily accessible community members (Morford, 2002; Pendola & Fuller, 2018). Higher principal turnover in rural schools might be why rural teachers rate their current administration higher than previous administration – loyalty is an important aspect of teacher and principal relationships. Because other districts do not experience such high turnover, they do not have such significant differences in their mean scores.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The goal of the study was to determine the impact of leadership change on school climate using the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework to specifically analyze how leadership change affects safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment. Maine currently has a leadership crisis, and fewer educators are entering the field of administration. Additionally, recent data determined that the "national average tenure of principals in their schools was four years as of 2016-2017" with "35 perfect of principals being at their schools for less than two years" and even higher turnover rates in high poverty schools (Bradley & Levin, 2019, p. 3). With fewer educators entering administration, and those who do enter administration not staying in the role for a long time, the combined factors of low applicant pools and high turnover rates pose a critical challenge for all school stakeholders (Clifford, 2010). The researcher will explain the implications of the results of this study as they pertain to scholarly practitioner practice, scholarly practitioner policy, and scholarly practitioner research and theory before concluding the chapter with limitations of the study and a summary of the information.

Implications for Scholarly Practitioner Practice

The study revealed interesting findings as they related to leadership change and the effect on school climate. One major finding was the impact that leadership change has, consistently, on relationships. Across all grade spans, school locales, genders, and teachers, relationships were impacted most by leadership change. For those looking to enter the field of administration, building, maintaining, and enhancing relationships with staff should be of utmost importance. An administrator builds a rapport with his/her staff through beliefs, ideas, and practices. The relationships the administrator establishes, positively or negatively, will inherently impact the relationships the staff has with a new administrator (Seashore-Louis, Murphy, & Smylie, 2016). This focus would best be served in administrator preparation programs, classes, professional development, or literature. Knowing the importance of

relationships and the impact of leadership change on these relationships, scholarly practitioners would be remiss in not addressing relationship building, structure, or implications in their work. Robinson, LLoyd, and Rowe (2008) noted that "effective leaders do not get the relationships right and then tackle the educational challenges -- they incorporate both sets of constraints into their problem solving" (p. 25). Working with potential administrators on the interpersonal skills in addition to technical aspects of the position could have profoundly positive effects for new administrators as they enter the principalship, particularly with a focus on building strong relationships. Frontloading this kind of learning might help those who wish to pursue administrator roles on the impact they have on the climate of the school, even before entering the building. By assisting new administrators with this learning, there is a possibility that they would be more likely to stay in the position and therefore decrease the rate at which new principals are leaving the position in the first two years.

Another find of the study was that school locale is important in measuring the effect of leadership change on climate. As observed through collected data, suburban schools – those outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area – have seen the most changes in leadership. Rural schools have experienced the second most changes in leadership, followed by towns and cities, respectively. Additionally, rural schools provided the most significant swings in median scores in each category, and teachers from rural schools made up over 50% of the respondents in this study. With this information, scholarly practitioners should be addressing ways in which rural communities can retain administrators given that they see the second highest turnover rate, but also appear the most impacted by leadership change as it relates to school climate. Rural communities are at a disadvantage as they tend to have more poverty, and thus cannot afford to pay their educators as much as nearby districts with lower free/reduced lunch numbers. Rural districts, however, have much more to offer in terms of the strength of the community (Barley & Beesley, 2007), stronger academic gains for students in poverty (Bickel & Howley, 2000), and the ability to be a social leader (Pendola & Fuller, 2018). Rural communities

need to highlight their strengths to attract and maintain skilled administrators who can assist teachers through their educational leadership, instructional knowledge, and community building.

The study also revealed that changes in leadership are measured differently based on gender, therefore a new administrator also has to consider the demographics of her school. Female teachers in this study made up a majority of respondents, and also had a less positive view of leadership change as it related to safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment. A recent study found that more female teachers are entering the profession than males, with the majority of female teachers at the K-5 level (Ingersoll, Merrill, Stucky, & Collins, 2018). Therefore, a new elementary school administrator has to be aware of the role that gender plays in navigating the challenges of the principalship. Female teachers tend to have a more positive view of the previous administrator, so building relationships with the staff will be an extremely important first step for any new administrator.

Lastly, the study also revealed that the interpersonal characteristics of the leader have a profound effect on how they are viewed by the teachers. While leadership preparation programs have to focus on the nuts and bolts of administration, including data analysis and review, budgeting, and instructional leadership, they also need to focus on the softer skills of leadership including communication, visibility, capacity building, and community relations. In their comments, teachers provided specifics for the practices of their administrators that either make them worthy of support or open to criticism. Building a focus in leadership preparation programs that would address this focus could have positive implications for future leaders.

Implications for Scholarly Practitioner Policy

Given that leadership change is very prevalent in the nation and very much an area of concern in Maine, policy makers need to proactively address ways in which leadership changes affecting school climate can be mitigated to provide more support for new administrators, districts most affected by leadership change, or teachers who experience leadership change on a

very consistent basis. Mentorships provide new teachers and administrators with a link to system knowledge, foundational practice, and support for growth, yet most mentorships are internal and provided through support from within the district. The state should look to partner with districts on a funded mentorship program to build or enhance leader mentorship programs that allow administrators to connect regardless of distance or location. Rural administrators should not be limited to just connecting with other rural administrators. Similarly, administrators in suburban districts can learn from administrators in city districts. If Maine is going to address its leadership crisis and grow leaders, it needs to use practices and procedures that allow for more creative connectivity. Additionally, policy makers could look beyond a single mentor approach to a group or cohort mentorship program where several new administrators could connect throughout the state to grow their leadership, build capacity in their districts, and help create a continuity of the principalship that will hopefully lessen turnover rates, administrator burnout, and inconsistency of direction that impacts safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and the school environment.

Policy can also be looked at to support schools, based on their NCES Locales, with administrator turnover. At the district level, this could be accomplished through school policies and regulations aimed at attracting, supporting, and retaining new administrators. Rural districts, in particular, should work to address leadership turnover as they show the greatest impact to school climate based on turnover. At the state level, policy makers need to focus more on advertising the need for quality administrators in rural districts. The state has the ability to monetarily encourage and incentivize leaders to work in rural districts; they need to make these districts a priority if those districts are going to be able to compete with statewide school choice initiatives. The current Essential Programs and Services formula estimates what school districts should be paying for quality educational services by looking at the “experience of the schools, national literature, and expert testimony to determine the levels of spending needed to meet each of these functions on a per-student basis” (Educate Maine, 2017, p. 6). The formula also

analyzes the local ability to pay for education, local cost of living, special education cost variations, and bussing but it "does not fully account for local ability and willingness to pay for education" (Educate Maine, 2017, p. 7). Based on the EPS formula, and already affluent district stands to gain more state allocation than a rural, lower soci0-economic district. To combat this, the state needs to develop a more robust -- and fair -- funding formula for a more equitable distribution of funds.

Lastly, this study focused on teacher perceptions of leadership change, which showed a definite impact in specific areas of the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework. While most of the implications for practitioner policy are focused on administrators, researchers and policy makers cannot ignore the teachers. Teachers need support with leadership change as well. In this study, teachers indicated that they were most impacted by relationships, which are at the core of successful initiatives and practices (Kilbane, 2009). Changes at the principal level mean changes in the direction of the school, and thus teachers who experience multiple changes of leadership consistently experience changes in focus and direction. These teachers, therefore, not only have to adjust to a new focus for the school, but they have to also implement the focus as it relates to the drive of the leader. This can create a lot of stress for teachers which could lead to stress, burnout, and apathy. For schools experiencing consistent turnover in leadership, the Maine Department of Education should provide professional development for teachers, teacher leaders, and support staff on addressing building climate and when there is prevalent instability.

Implications for Scholarly Practitioner Research/Theory

While the study revealed interesting data and results regarding leadership change and its impact on school climate, the researcher acknowledges limitations and areas of research that could benefit from additional study. Specifically, further work around gender, leadership styles, leadership longevity, and the way the staff felt about the previous administrator could provide more detailed analyses, richer data mines, and more enlightening results to help potential

administrators as they look to enter the principalship, as well as help researchers and policy makers with their plans and practices to keep those new administrators in the position longer.

Further research around gender would be important for several reasons. This study analyzed how teacher gender views leadership change, but gender becomes more evenly distributed as grade levels increase. Therefore, leadership change is viewed differently at different grade spans based on the mix of genders. Research in this study looked at leadership change across the K-12 spectrum, but further research could focus on the grade levels that experience it the most (9-12), or the least (K-5). Additionally, this study did not address the gender of the principal, yet the gender of the teacher was noted when measuring the impact of leadership change. Further research on the gender of the administrator and how that impacts changes in leadership is warranted, specifically, is the impact of leadership change heightened or lessened by the gender of the principal? And is the impact different if the gender of the new leader is the same or different as his or her predecessor? Furthermore, do the leadership styles and leadership traits of men or women impact leadership change differently?

This study looks at leadership as a whole, but leadership has been categorized in multiple designations (Northouse, 2019). Specific leadership styles may lead to less or more disruption in leadership change than others. For example, adaptive leadership may lessen the impact of climate instability when compared to authoritarian leadership, or transformational leadership may lead to a greater chance of principal longevity than servant leadership. Leadership styles that have proven most successful or impactful in schools could be guideposts for new leaders to enter the principalship with the least amount of disruption, as well as provide them with foundational knowledge and preparation as they plan not only for their first year, but for their work going forward.

Additional research around leadership longevity would be important because the researcher's conceptual framework hinged on the idea that leadership longevity led to stronger school climate stability while leadership change led to instability. The data collected was mixed

on this theory as teachers who had experienced multiple changes in leadership reported similar positive feelings towards leadership based on the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework as teachers who had few or no changes in leadership. Teachers agreed, however, that strong interpersonal skills could mitigate some of the negative effects of leadership change.

Lastly, the ways in which a staff views the previous administrator might be a link to how receptive they will be to a new administrator. Did the previous administrator have a positive or negative impact on the school? Was the previous administrator at the school for many years or did the principal only stay at the school for a few years. If the study had identified teacher perceptions of the previous administrator, it might have provided more insight into how leadership change is viewed. Further research could be conducted so that it identifies teacher perceptions of previous administrators and then measures how those perceptions provide insight into the ways leadership change impacts a school. A linear regression model could account for the many variables and to account for a relationship between the previous administrator and the current administrator based on gender, years of experience, years at the school, or any of the facets of the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework.

Limitations

The researcher recognizes that the study has several limitations, notably measuring a single turnover in leadership and not successive turnover. Teachers indicated how many changes of leadership they had experienced, but the research survey only asked them to measure the Cohen et. al. (2009) framework comparatively between the current and previous administrator.

Additionally, the study did not measure gender, age, or experience of leadership. Leadership was viewed as a whole, but identifying the gender of leaders as well as their age and years of experience would have provided interesting and engage details that could be used by future researchers, practitioners, or leaders. By knowing the gender of the leaders, and if that gender impacts change, new leaders could be further prepared for their entrance into the

principalship. The same could be said of age and experience. The experience of an administrator may provide insight into the difficulty of a transition to a new school.

Summary

I entered the principalship in the summer of 2015 after teaching English at a High School for twelve years. I had been handed a few leadership roles in the years leading up to my career change, but none of them had prepared me for the principalship. Yet I approached the position with two general ideas: first, I wanted to have a positive global impact on kids, and second, I wanted to maintain a professional barrier with the staff. Being new to administration, I thought I was supposed to be aloof with the staff, maintain my composure at all times, and see through the implementation of the district's strategic plan. But I forgot the one strength I had that made me such an effective teacher: relationships with students. My first year led to poor morale and teacher tension. As an administrator, I did not honor who I was as a person and unfortunately all of the teachers, staff, and students suffered for it. After much personal reflection, feedback from staff, and professional growth during the summer between my first and second year, I improved my relationships with staff, my understanding of the principalship, and my effectiveness as a leader. But I never forgot the challenges of the first year.

The impetus of this study was to measure the impact of leadership change on school climate because I had seen how my own entrance into the principalship affected a school that already had an established climate and culture successfully implemented by both strong leadership and strong school staff. Given that leadership change at the principal level occurs consistently, and that more and more principals are leaving the principalship after only a few years, schools are going to continuously be challenged by turnover and instability. Hopefully, through this research, we can learn the impacts of these challenges, and how we can better prepare leadership programs, principals, teachers, and schools for this upheaval. Hopefully, we can help more administrators avoid the same challenges I faced as a new principal and therefore

have a much more successful first year, a stronger relationship with the staff and community, and a desire to stay in the principalship for years to come.

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APPENDIX

In what grade span do you teach?

a. K-5
b. 6-8
c. 9-12
d. Other: _____

What type of teacher do you identify as:
a. Classroom
b. Special Education
c. Specialist (Art, Music, Physical Education, Guidance Counselor, Gifted/Talented, Title I)
d. Content Specialist (English, Math, Science, Social Studies)
e. Other: _____

What formal leadership role (if any) do you have:
a. None
b. Teacher Leader
c. Department Head
d. Faculty Advisor
e. Other: _____

With what gender do you identify?
a. Female
b. Male
c. Other: _____

How many years have you been teaching at your current school?
a. Less than 1
b. One to two
c. Three to seven
d. Eight to twelve
e. Twelve or more

How many administrators have you worked with in your current school
a. One
b. Two
c. Three
d. Four
e. Five or more

Survey Instrument
Likert Scale
4 -- Strongly Agree
3 -- Agree
2 -- Disagree
1 -- Strongly Disagree
N/A -- Not Applicable

School Climate: Safety
1. I feel safe at school with my current administrator.
2. I felt safe at school with my previous administrator.
3. Rules are routinely enforced with my current administrator.
4. Rules were routinely enforced with my previous administrator.
5. My current administrator would know what to do in a crisis situation.
6. My previous administrator would know what to do in a crisis situation.

School Climate: Teaching and Learning
1. My current administrator has high expectations for student achievement.
2. My previous administrator had high expectations for student achievement
3. My current administrator has a clear and compelling vision.
4. My previous administrator had a clear and compelling vision.
5. My current administrator supports me.
6. My previous administrator supported me.

School Climate: Relationships
1. My current administrator has positive relationships with adults in the building.
2. My previous administrator had positive relationships with adults in the building.
3. My current administrator has positive relationships with students in the building.
4. My previous administrator had positive relationships with students in the building.
5. My current administrator fosters a good climate in our school.
6. My previous administrator fostered a good climate in our school.

School Climate: Environment
1. The building is clean under my current administrator.
2. The building was cleaner under my previous administrator.
3. Students seem happy to be here with the current administrator.
4. Students were happier to be here with the previous administrator.

School Climate: Additional
1. How has attention to student's social-emotional needs changed with changes in leadership?
2. How has data driven instruction changed with changes in leadership?
3. How has administrative validation of individual learning styles changed with changes in leadership?
4. How much attention is paid to the physical environment of the building (cleanliness, displaying student work) with changes in leadership?

BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Brian Bannen was born and raised in New York on Long Island. After High School, he attended Nassau Community College before moving to Maine in the summer of 2001 to attend the University of Maine in Orono. He graduated in 2003 with a Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education with a concentration in English. He was hired as an English Teacher at Hampden Academy in Hampden, Maine where he taught for twelve years. He earned in Master's Degree in English in 2009, and his C.A.S. in Educational Leadership in 2013. In the summer of 2015, he was hired as the principal of the Mary Snow School where he worked for six years before being transferred to the 14th Street School in 2021. Brian is a candidate for the Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership from the University of Maine in May 2022.