Relational Trust and Rural Education: A Qualitative Study on How Educational Leaders Can Enhance Levels of Trust in an Elementary Setting

by

Maria D. Telford

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Dr. Jim Parsons, Faculty Supervisor
Faculty of Education,
Vancouver Island University

Dr. David Paterson, Dean, Faculty of Education,
Vancouver Island University

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Abstract

The current study examines the concepts that impact relational trust in a rural elementary setting from the perspective of school personnel. The trust relationship between school staff and the principal is emphasized in this investigation. The findings are significant because they contribute context-specific data that educational leaders can use to inform practice and enhance a culture of trust within their settings. Qualitative methodology and content analysis were used in this study. Open-ended written response surveys were used to collect data from teachers and support staff working in four elementary schools in the interior of British Columbia. Findings show that factors that influence trust in the rural education setting complement the existing research done in the urban environment. These factors include: promotes an inclusive environment, demonstrates effective communication skills, models best practice, demonstrates strong leadership skills, is a person of integrity, has a growth mindset, takes time to build and maintain personal connections, is approachable, and has a strong work ethic, emerged as central themes impacting relational trust in the school environment. To strengthen the results of this study and generalize the results to other rural areas, it is suggested that similar research be conducted in elementary schools located in other small towns in British Columbia.

Keywords: rural education, relational trust, qualitative research, content data analysis, principal’s role, elementary education, trust in schools
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Background to the Study

If you have ever been a student, you have likely experienced varying degrees of discomfort or stress during the process of learning something new. Acquiring a new skill or gaining the understanding of a new concept can and should be challenging; and, it inevitably involves making mistakes. Exposing one’s vulnerabilities and risking failure in a public setting, such as a classroom, is a powerful experience. For instance, it can cause anxiety, illicit feelings of shame or embarrassment, and cause students to develop sophisticated avoidance tactics; on the other hand, it can be an exhilarating experience, inspire pride and confidence, and allow students to develop resourceful learning strategies centered on personal strengths. In many cases, the extent to which students are willing to ‘put themselves out there’ in the learning process is greatly influenced by the level of relational trust that exists in their learning environment. Ultimately, when students understand that their mistakes and weaknesses will not be used against them they are more likely to embrace the learning process and take advantage of educational opportunities.

As a person who has experienced the education system as a student, a teacher, a principal and as a parent, I fully understand why trust is crucial. As a student, I have persevered in the face of adversity in environments where I have trusted that my teacher believed in me and would offer support and guidance. As a teacher who has worked in a remote First Nations community, I have witnessed how longstanding mistrust can result in strong defense mechanisms built to protect and caution learners from exposing vulnerabilities amongst outsiders. As a principal, I have known how top-down processes can cause skepticism, and alternately, how difficult the logistics of inclusive and transparent decision-making can be. Last, as a parent, when I feel the
professionals in the building know and care for my child, I am more willing to participate in the school community, share personal information, and offer the benefit of the doubt in times of strife.

Over the years I have experienced learning environments both marked by high levels of relational trust and those weighted by mistrust. The most striking differences between the two that I noticed is that, when one enters a space where everyone has positive intentions and the atmosphere is friendly, learning becomes fun and people want to work together. Trusting relationships create a space where all learners can grow from mistakes instead of being ashamed of them and allows individuals to be proud of their differences, share ideas, and seek help in times of need. On the contrary, when trust is replaced with mistrust, suspicion or doubt, people become guarded and defensive, the environment becomes closed off and tense, and ultimately uninviting. Current research echoes these sentiments (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Halbert & Kaser, 2009 Tschannen-Moran, & Gareis, 2015; Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2000).

Over the years I have become more curious about the concept of relational trust and the processes that impacts it within the school setting. It is seemingly easy to know why trust is an essential element in a learning environment. Arguably, it is even easier to feel, or sense, the presence of trust or mistrust within a school culture. On the contrary, it is not easy to know how to cultivate, to protect or to repair a foundation of trust within a hierarchical system that is structured around many dynamic and interconnected roles and responsibilities.

Further complicating the issue is that schools are transient environments with ongoing staff transfers. In my role as an administrator, I have been assigned to three different elementary schools in six years and have directly seen the struggles that staff, students, and parents experience when adapting to a new presence and style of management. For example, I began my
career in administration at the age of 32 as the vice principal of a dual-track elementary. I was transferred one year later to be the principal of a small rural school that, due to the district’s financial challenges, was in jeopardy of being closed. The school did close at the end of that year and I was transferred back to my original position. Two years later, due to unforeseen circumstances, I was transferred again to be the principal of another medium-sized elementary in the area. This transfer happened quite suddenly one month into the school year and resulted in me taking over for a colleague who had held the principalship for over fifteen years. Although the circumstances around each transfer were unique, the changes in administration caused significant levels of stress in the work environment because everyone, including myself, worked through an extensive adjustment period as relationships formed and expectations were communicated.

Through the above experiences I have noticed some obvious factors that influence trust. Being honest and truthful about your intentions and actions, respecting others’ opinions and feelings, and willingness to help in times of need are factors that come to mind. However, as I navigated different school environments and worked to gain the trust of a new community, I often wondered if my priorities were in line with the needs of my teachers, support staff, students, and parents. I was curious to know, from the perspective of the school staff, what factors they felt impacted relational trust in an educational setting, especially in times of change. What did they feel they needed most from their principal and from their colleagues to create a safe and productive environment in which everyone could thrive, learn, and grow?

As an educational leader I appreciate Kaser and Halbert (2009) advice to focus on trust before anything else because “strong levels of trust and respectful relationships are preconditions
for successful school improvement initiatives” (p. 43); However, I wonder if some initiatives are more effective than others in fostering relational trust within my school?

**Research Context**

More than ever, there is a need for trusting relationships within the school community. First, the Canadian education system is going through major organizational and system change. Second, teaching in the 21st century is highly complex and educators are striving to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population in a fast-changing, information and technology-rich world, where communication is instant and knowledge is immediately accessible (BC Ministry of Education, 2016). Third, in response to the modern world, schools are moving away from traditional methods of teaching and “new models of schooling are emerging based on collaboration, networking and multi-agency working” (Harris, 2008, p. 14). As educators adapt to system reform and new styles of pedagogy, it will be vital that schools build high levels of trust so that teachers feel safe to take the necessary risks involved in changing long-standing practices (Seashore, 2007).

British Columbia’s redesigned curriculum is a powerful example of system-wide reform that will certainly test interpersonal relationships within the community. In the fall of 2016, the Ministry of Education mandated a redesigned curriculum for grades K-9, with grades 10-12 following shortly after. “Deep understanding and application of knowledge is at the centre of the new model, as opposed to the memory and recall of facts that previously shaped education around the globe for many decades” (BC Ministry of Education, 2016). To accommodate this shift, the redesign takes the focus away from the traditionally rigid grade-specific content and learning outcomes, to a concept-based and competency-driven model that values skills transference and critical thinking.
The goal of the redesigned curriculum, as expressed by the Ministry, is to develop core competencies (intellectual, personal, and social skills) in a flexible learning environment that engages students in personalized learning through authentic tasks that connect learning to the real world. Through this approach, students will achieve the deep learning necessary to become an educated citizen in the modern world (BC Ministry of Education, 2016). For many experienced teachers, the concept-based, competency-driven curriculum is a significant shift in approach to teaching and learning, and implementing these changes will have its challenges. Educators will no longer be teaching from a textbook or relying on the stand-and-deliver methods of lecturing that the majority of teachers and students have been accustomed to. Students will have more choice in the topics they study, more options in the format in which they demonstrate their learning, and increased involvement with their assessment. To meet these new demands, it will be vital that schools are marked by a culture of trust where professionals are supportive of one another and willing to model the vulnerability and risk involved in learning something new.

As an elementary principal in rural British Columbia, I value adaptive teaching; however, I am concerned about how the upcoming changes in pedagogy might impact my staff, students, and parents. As we work toward educational reform, it is likely that the entire school community will experience an increased stress. The classroom environment will be altered as educators reframe their approach to teaching and learning. Simultaneously, as teachers develop and implement new strategies, students will be adjusting to a ‘new’ school experience as they learn their ‘new’ role as students. As teachers move along the change continuum, students will have more influence over their learning and the student role will look and feel much different from what they are used to. Concurrently, parents might also experience levels of discomfort as their
children participate in activities that are different from the way they were taught. To parents, the interim between designs might appear messy and unpolished, potentially raising anxiety and doubt in the capabilities of British Columbia educators and the system as a whole.

To facilitate these changes, districts will require people in leadership roles to help school communities’ transition to the new system design. Considering the substantial body of knowledge that identifies relational trust as a necessary precursor to system reform (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Louis, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015), it will be even more important that administrators cultivate a culture of trust in their buildings. Focusing on the factors that will strengthen trusting relationships is needed because “When adult relationships in schools are characterized by trust, the stories about change shift from indifference or negativity to possibility and hope” (Halbert & Kaser, 2009, p. 43).

Research Purpose and Question

The current study explored the factors that impact relational trust between professionals within a rural elementary education setting with special attention placed on the principal-staff relationship. The concept of trust was examined through the point of view of teachers and support staff on two domains: trust between staff members and trust between school staff and the principal. The research questions that guided this research were:

1) What factors do staff in an elementary schools consider to be most important in building relational trust?

2). How are principals in rural communities developing trusting relationships with their staff?

Over the last twenty years, a substantial body of research has investigated the role of relational trust in enhanced school functioning and substantive school improvement (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Coleman, 2012; Kaser & Halbert, 2009; LeFevre, Timperley, Ell, 2015;
Seashore, 2007; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Leading researchers in the field agree that it is the principal’s role to set the tone and overall climate in the school (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Halbert & Kaser, 2009; Hallman, Smith, Hite, Hite & Wilcox, 2015), and advise that a culture of trust be established before reforms initiatives are implemented (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Kaser & Halbert, 2009; Seashore, 2007). Relational trust has been shown as a key indicator to school success because it provides the path to the cooperative behaviour and mutual respect that is necessary for success in highly social environments based on interdependent relationships (Coleman, 2012; Hallman, Smith, Hite, Hite & Wilcox, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

A wide body of knowledge exists around relational trust within the urban educational setting. Within the relational trust literature, a compelling body of research indicates key factors that impact levels of trust. Specifically, after extensive case studies and longitudinal statistical analysis in urban school districts, relational trust has been discerned across four dimensions (respect, personal regard, competency, and integrity) (Bryk & Schneider, 2003) and has been defined as having five fundamental facets (benevolence, honesty, openness, competence, and reliability) (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

While there is extensive research about the importance of relational trust in educational leadership, few studies have been done in rural educational settings. The current study will add to the literature of leadership in rural schools and advance the research on relational trust theory as it pertains to rural education in Canada. Another benefit of this study is that it could provide the framework for professional development and growth for administrators looking to enhance levels of trust in their school community. This study provides context-specific information to
help formal leaders discern how they are perceived by others and in turn use this knowledge as a tool to strengthen current relationships with their staff.

One limitation in this study is that it utilized a comparatively small sample size, which limits its generalizability. Although generalizability was not the main focus, as much information as possible was provided about the participants and the school environment so that the readers could determine the extent to which the study might relate to their own settings and circumstances. Another limitation of the study is that, due to ethical concerns regarding a power-over scenario seen to be embedded in the work, a written response survey, as opposed to personal interviews was enlisted as a data collection method. This style limited the personal insights of participants into their own thoughts and feelings. Due to the safeguard protecting the anonymity of participants, the researcher was unable to perform member checking to ensure the interpretation of the data and findings were in fact true representations of participants’ answers. Although direct quotes from participant answers are included in the findings, the current study is solely the researcher’s interpretation and understanding of the written responses provided by school staff.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter described interpersonal relationships within the school setting that impact student success and overall school functioning and established that change is a stressor on the system. The chapter also provided context specific information regarding educational reform initiatives that will require schools in British Columbia to have strong levels of trust. The purpose of the study and research questions were identified, and the benefits and limitations of the study were discussed. The next chapter will explore trust as a multi-dimensional construct, which has played a key role in social functioning over the last century. Chapter two will also
focus on why relational trust is important for effective school functioning and establish that it is the principal’s role to build a culture of trust that, in turn, will positively impact student success.
Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Chapter Introduction

This chapter focuses on trust as it relates to relationships within schools. To clarify the meaning of trust, a multidisciplinary analysis is employed. Articles across the disciplines of psychology, sociality, philosophy, economics, organizational science, and education are discussed in this chapter in relation to trust as it pertains to societal functioning over the last century. Additionally, a purpose to this chapter is to explore the critical components and recurring themes that compose a reliable definition of trust. Research investigating the role of relational trust in organizational settings is established. First, levels of trust between role relationships and school functioning is analyzed. Second, the impact of high and low levels of relational trust on school reform and student achievement is explored. Finally, the role and responsibility that school leaders play in developing and sustaining a culture of trust within the school community is examined.

History of Trust

Trust has been recognized by scientists and scholars as playing a key role in social functioning for more than a century. “Common sense tells us that interpersonal trust is an important variable affecting human relationships at all levels: relationships between governments, between majorities and minorities, buyers and sellers, patients and therapists, parents and children, and so on” (Rotter, 1980, p. 1). Trust has been given considerable attention because it manifests in situations where one must rely on the competence and willingness of others to protect, nurture, and educate that which is most precious to them (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p.17). And, because no one person is self-sufficient, trust effects everybody in all areas of life (Baier, 1986).
Supporting these assertions, (Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) outlined the pervasive nature of trust:

We count on people who grow and process our food and medicines to do so properly; we depend on those who build our houses to do so sensibly; we rely on other people with whom we share the roadways to obey traffic laws; we trust those who hold and invest our money to deal with us honestly; we depend on our government to maintain the safety of our infrastructure and to protect us from aggressors. In short, in every facet of our lives, we are dependent on other people to behave in accordance with our expectations. (p. 549)

Over the years, changing social dynamics and economic realities have inclined researchers from various backgrounds to investigate the role of trust in societal functioning (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). For instance, in the early to mid-1900s, philosophies regarding trust were discussed by psychologists and sociologists who examined trust within naturally occurring groups and within ordinary people in society (Louis, 2007; Simmel, 1906). At this time, researchers were interested in organic trust, which manifests in close-knit societies and operates on common moral structures and highly-personalized connections (Louis, 2007) consisting of interconnecting relationships that are in constant interaction (Simmel, 1906). Leading theorists during this era conceptualized trust, as a perception based on reciprocal social exchange, which exists in a varying state depending on when, where, and with whom the interaction is happening, and emphasized positive expectation as an important condition for trust to emerge (Klaussner, 2012; Simmel, 1906).

In the publication, The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies, Simmel (1906) demonstrated the power of organic trust in early societal functioning with his assertion that trust
was related to knowledge and that peoples’ behaviour with each other was dictated by their confidence in knowing what the other person would do. According to Simmel (1906), the degree to which we participated socially was highly dependent on what we would get out of it for ourselves. For instance, people decided how they would act and the information that they would share based on what they knew about “fragments of the other person” and based on the other person’s reaction within the communication (Simmel, 1906, p. 442). Simmel (1906) emphasized, because it is impossible to know exactly another individual’s thoughts and feelings fully, one must rely on trust to guide social interactions.

The role of expectancy, as described in Simmel’s (1906) theory, has been universally confirmed as a critical component in the definition of trust (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998). Although generalized expectancy plays a significant role in organic trust, it is difficult to gauge within interactions between individuals who do not have a lot of past history or knowledge of each other (Rotter, 1980). Therefore, as the modern world evolved and relationships became increasingly complex, the traditional form of organic trust that prevailed in closely related groups of people with similar values and belief systems no longer sufficed, and other forms of trust emerged. Interestingly, “most modern sociologists argue that this form of organic trust still exists in an individual’s circle of family and friends, but has been supplemented by social trust as a society grows large enough to allow anonymity” (Louis, 2007, p. 3).

According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000), as life became more complex and the availability of and the desire for negative information grew, life became less predictable; people became increasingly suspicious of contemporary institutions, and authorities; and, as a result, people began to notice trust more. The philosopher Baier (1986), confirmed suspicion as a cause
Consequently, researchers in the mid to late-1990s shifted their focus to analyze the role of trust in social functioning from a political, economic and organizational viewpoint, and investigated how trust was generated and maintained in complex interdependent working environments (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Louis, 2007). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) contend that empirical studies of trust and mistrust were executed in response to escalating suspicions created by the Cold War, changing economic realities, and changing societal norms, such as soaring divorce rates and radical changes in the American family (p. 549). In concurrence, Deutsch (1958) reiterated the arms race for heightened suspicion in society at large, in addition to, mental illness and juvenile delinquency, for ensuing investigations of the phenomena of trust.

In the same vein, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) identified major advancements in technology during the 1990s as the next shift motivating researchers to place an impetus on social forms of trust. The investigations in this era confirmed that social forms of trust allowed for increased levels of cooperation and communication necessary within interdependent organizations (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000); especially, organizations that “depend on groups and individuals with whom they have limited or no contact and where an increasing number of groups are “virtual” or computer-based” (Louis, 2007, p. 3). At this time, educational and organizational scientists engaged in systematic studies that analyzed the role of trust within interdependent environments for improved management, team functioning and performance (Coleman, 2012; Covey, 2006; Lencioni, 2002; Louis 2007; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).
Like other public institutions operating in the modern world, schools struggled to keep stride with the fast-paced changes, increased demands, new standards, and strict measures of accountability that had been placed on them (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Tschannen-Moran (2014) expounded that, as the economy developed into a highly competitive global market, schools were expected not only to produce a higher percentage of graduates but also to provide those graduates with advanced skillsets to meet the needs of a stronger workforce. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) further contended, when the new expectations were not met fast enough, negative attention from the media not only damaged trust but exasperated the problem by increasing society’s distrust of schools and their mission. In response to growing concerns over poor performance, current educational researchers began examining the role of trust in reform initiatives, with an emphasis on instruction, accountability, leadership and social interaction (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Coleman, 2012; Cosner, 2009; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer’s (1998) extensive multi-disciplinary analysis of trust in social functioning established, “Trust is important in a number of ways: it enables cooperative behaviour; promotes adaptive organizational forms, such as network relations; reduces harmful conflict; decreases transaction costs; facilitates rapid formulation of ad hoc work groups; and promotes effective responses to crisis” (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998, p. 394).

**Defining Trust**

For decades researchers across psychology, sociology, political science, economics and education have studied the role of trust in various contexts and methodologies. Granted, the concept of trust has received attention in numerous scientific fields; but, what exactly is trust? A simple and easily accessible definition of trust is found in The Merriam-Webster Dictionary as an
“assured reliance on the character, ability, strength or truth of someone or something (retrieved March 9, 2018). Although the Merriam-Webster’s definition might be useful for a quick reference or interpretation, this definition does not do justice to the complexity of the term. As demonstrated in the literature, because of its multidimensional qualities, trust is not easily defined. Veteran researcher in the field of education, Tschannen-Moran (2014), hints at the elusiveness of the definition in her description:

Trust is a multifaceted construct, meaning that many elements operating simultaneously are what drive the overall level of trust. Those drivers, or facets, may vary somewhat depending on the context of the trust relationship. Trust is also dynamic in that it can change over the course of a relationship, as expectations are or are not fulfilled and as the nature of the interdependence between two people changes. (p. 19)

Depending on the perspective many variations of the definition of trust exists. For instance, philosophers connected the act of trusting to morals and symbiotic relationships. Supporting this assertion, Baier (1986) conceptualized trust as an intentional mental phenomenon where one allows another to get into a position where they could potentially harm what is most precious (our own life, health, reputation, and our children) because that is also the position required to help take care of those same things. From this perspective, people are forced to make decisions about who to trust, and with what to trust them with, based on the common ground that no one person is never completely self-sufficient (Baier, 1986). Baier (1986) determined, because we all must rely on others for support, trust “is accepted vulnerability to another’s possible but not expected ill will (or lack of good will) toward one (p. 235).

From an economic viewpoint, trust is a rational calculation of cost and benefits, and “warranted when the expected gain from placing oneself at risk to another is positive, but not
otherwise” (Williamson, 1993, p. 463). In education, trust builds social capital, which allows for resilient social exchange and cooperative behaviour (Cosner, 2009). A definition indicative of many others in this field is provided by Louis’ (2007); “Trust is a confidence in or reliance on the integrity, veracity, justice, friendship, or other sound principle, of another person or group (p. 3).

In psychology, trust has been defined as “a generalized expectancy held by an individual that the word, promise, oral or written statement of another individual or group can be relied on” (Rotter, 1980, p. 1). In investigating the relationship between personality traits and trusting behaviour, Deutsche (1958) expanded the definition of trust to include the element of risk and asserted, individuals continually assess levels of trust and will withhold or withdraw their participation in a relationship or event based on the extent they believe they will be worse off or harmed as a result. Similarly, “once trust is established, the confidence one holds in the intentions and capacity of the other person to fulfill one’s expectations results in feeling a greater sense of ease in the interdependence and a willingness to take risks” (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015, p. 257).

The social interactionists affirmed, human interaction is not based on objective behaviour but rather on one’s own “subjective perception and interpretation of perceived behaviour” (Klaussner, 2012, p. 419). In research on change management Klaussner (2012) asserted, because thoughts and behaviours are deeply rooted in expectancies, which are derived from past experiences and the social and cultural context that the interaction is embedded, trust is never static. Proponents of this philosophy view trust as “an interactional state characterizing the relationship in a way that both individuals accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of the other” (Klaussner, 2012, p. 418).
In organizational science, “trust is fundamental to developing strategic relationships between organizations and managing issues of power, control and risk” (Coleman, 2012, p. 85). From this viewpoint, Lencioni (2002) distinguished predictable trust (based on previous experience) from vulnerable trust (a person’s willingness to expose their weakness, insecurities and ask for help) and determined that trust directly impacts team functioning because honest interactions based on positive intention is essential for healthy conflict, a willingness to cooperate, and results in a higher level of commitment to the group. In contrast, the inability to build trust breeds distrust, which is damaging because distrust is distinctly marked by negative intention and suspicion of one’s integrity, ability, competence and agenda (Lencioni, 2002). Lencioni found that teams defined by low trust achieve poor results because copious amounts of time and energy is invested in managing behaviour rather than focusing on important issues. In concurrence, Covey (2006) reported, when distrust prevails a win-lose mentality persists where individuals are concerned with protecting and defending their personal interests over the greater good of the group (Covey, 2006).

As demonstrated in the literature the definition of trust is abstract and elusive. In a multidisciplinary review that examined over fifty scholarly articles, Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer (1998) confirmed there is no universally accepted definition of trust; however, their research found that scholars across all disciplines agreed that “confident expectation and a willingness to be vulnerable are critical components of all definitions (p. 394). Furthermore, this analysis uncovered the agreement, for trust to arise, the condition of risk (the perceived probability of loss, as interpreted by the decision maker) and interdependence (the interests of one party cannot be achieved without reliance upon another) must exist (p. 395).
Coleman’s (2012) investigation of trustworthy leadership across organizational partnerships affirmed, there is no universal definition of trust. Coleman (2012) found six recurring themes, which cut across multidisciplinary literature: 1) trust is a means of managing uncertainty, risk and vulnerability; 2) a basis for increasing interdependency and reducing independence; 3) confidence that the other party will not behave opportunistically; 4) a belief that another’s actions will not be detrimental to one’s own interests; 5) a belief that the other is both benevolent in attitude and competent in deed; and, 6) trust is a belief in the authenticity of the other (p. 86).

After more than two decades of extensive qualitative and quantitative examination of the impact of trust in schools a reliable definition of trust is provided by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000); “Trust is the willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the other party is benevolent, honest, open, reliable, and competent” (p. 257). Through this work, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) established scientific proof that five facets characterize trusting relations; all of which are assessed simultaneously and come together to form one coherent construct.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) provided a comprehensive description of each facet: Benevolence is the confidence that one’s well-being, or something one cares about will be protected and not harmed by the trusted party, even when the opportunity is available. Reliability is being able to consistently predict behaviour and knowing what to expect from others. Competence goes beyond good intentions to include possessing the ability or skill to fill expectations. Honesty speaks to a person’s character, integrity and authenticity. For instance, statements that are made are truthful, one accepts responsibility for their actions, and a correspondence between one’s actions and words are maintained. Openness is the extent to
which relevant information is not withheld, and a confidence that neither the information nor the individual will be exploited (p. 557-558).

Central to this definition is the understanding that “trust will not be the same at all times and in all places” and that each of the five facets depends on the context of the relationship between the participants (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) further demonstrated trust, as a dynamic construct with the additional finding, “Trust may be based on one’s disposition to trust, on moods and emotions, on values and attitudes, on calculative motives, on institutional supports for trust or on knowledge of or a sense of identification with the other person” (Tschannen- Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 558).

**Relational Trust**

Relational trust is a highly complex form of social trust and refers to the interpersonal social exchanges that take place in a group setting where people rely on one another for something they need or care about (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer (1998) provided a comprehensive description of the elements characterizing relational trust in their cross-discipline review, which illustrates the complexity and breadth of the construct. First, the researchers assert, relational trust results from ongoing and repeated interactions marked by cycles of exchange, risk taking, and fulfillment of expectation, which provides information about the reliability and dependability of another and forms the basis of the trust relationship. Additionally the researchers found, relational trust involves faith in the intention of the other party, which includes one’s beliefs about the others’ positive intentions, as well as one’s beliefs in the absence of negative intentions; both of which can be exasperated by experiences over time. Furthermore, “Emotion enters into the relationship between the parties, because frequent, longer-term interaction leads to the formation of attachments based upon
reciprocated interpersonal care and concern” (p. 399). Finally, the researchers noted, this form of trust is not highly circumscribed or easily reinforced by deterrents such as punitive consequences, which often terminate the relationship once a violation occurs. Conversely, relational trust can be quite resilient, and unmet expectations can be survived when a foundation of trust is built, and effort to repair damage is instigated (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998).

Cosner (2009) stressed relational trust is critical in organizational settings that “rely on regular interactions, coordination, and cooperation between various members of the organization for work to be completed and for organizational goals to be attained” (p. 251). Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) supported this claim and observed that relational trust has a significant impact on school functioning because schools are highly social and mutually dependent environments that require collaboration and extensive partnerships to reach their aim.

Bryk and Schneider (2002) reiterated, relational trust is the dominant form of trust operating in schools, and illustrated this point by comparing and contrasting the underpinnings of relational trust with two other forms of social trust found in modern institutions, organic trust and contractual trust. Bryk and Schneider (2002) determined both organic and contractual trust are relatively simple and limited in scope; therefore, neither have the breadth required to accommodate the complex and dynamic social exchange happening in today’s schools.

First, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, organic trust is established in closed, small-scale communities and grounded in common moral structures and highly personalized connections (Louis, 2007). “In such social systems, individuals give their trust unconditionally; they believe in the rightness of the system, the moral character of its leadership, and all others who commit to the community” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 16). Bryk and Schneider (2002)
reported that this form of social trust is uncommon in modern institutions because, contrary to an earlier era, membership tends to be open and most often comprised of a diverse group of individuals with varying backgrounds, experiences and worldviews. Thus, organic trust, which operates around a strong sense of identity established within a core set of shared beliefs and values (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), does not adequately cover the social dynamics within today’s multicultural and inclusive school settings.

The second form of social trust differentiated by Bryk and Schneider (2002) is contractual trust, which is also identified as the most common form in modern institutions. Contractual trust happens between commercial transactions and is based on social exchange governed by a contract, which clearly defines the actions to be taken by the parties involved, and the scope of work to be undertaken, or the specific product that is to delivered (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Bryk and Schneider (2002) clarified, unlike organic trust, the outcome of the exchange is not a perception grounded in one’s morals, beliefs, or social-emotional motivation; and, as a result, it is easy to evaluate the extent one’s expectations and obligations have been met. Consequently, behaviour within the social exchange is highly predictable because if one party does not uphold their contractual agreement they are held accountable by embedded sanctions and potential negative consequences, such as, legal action and redress. Bryk and Schneider (2002) contended that, although contractual trust governs much of modern social life, it does not fit well in the school system because: the aims of schools are multiple and interrelated, education is not a single product or service to be procured, schooling happens over a long period of time and across many different contexts, objective evidence and records are not easily attained, and there are no universally accepted standards for good professional practice (p. 18-19).
According to Bryk and Schneider (2002), relational trust is grounded on both beliefs and on observed behaviour and is the intermediary between organic trust (unquestioning beliefs) and contractual trust (material and instrumental exchanges) (p. 21). Similar to organic trust, expectations within interpersonal exchanges are assessed on a regular basis and validated by actions; however, relational trust expands these judgments to include behaviour, intentions and motivations. (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). These discernments are further impacted by one’s personal and cultural beliefs, their historical perspective of the institution, and previous experiences in the workplace (Bryk & Schnieder, 2002). Bryk and Schneider (2002) explicated, “Fulfillment of obligations entails not only ‘doing the right thing,’ but also doing it in a respectful way, and for what are perceived to be the right reasons” (p. 21).

Within their research, Bryk and Schneider (2002) also determined that relational trust is organized around a distinct set of role relationships in which each party in the relationship maintains an understanding of his or her role obligations and holds some expectations about the role obligations of the other (p. 20). In school, distinct role relationships characterize the social exchange; for instance, teachers have reciprocal relationships with their colleagues, their students, their parents, and their principal, who also has relationships with all groups within the school community (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, 2003; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Bryk and Schneider (2002) emphasized that schools work best when “synchrony is achieved within all of the major role sets that comprise a school community” (p. 21).

It is well-established in educational literature that, given the interdependency between the role sets, it is imperative to school functioning that relational trust be maintained across the school community (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Cosner, 2009; Coleman, 2012; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). For instance, if one role set within the community does not fulfill its obligations
and expectations, the result can have a negative impact of the overall functioning of the school because, unlike organic and contractual trust, instances where expectations are not fully satisfied do not result in the dissolution of the relationship. On the contrary, within interdependent organizations, such as schools, relationships persist through violations of trust; however, the relationships are impaired by withdraw of trust or the imposition of distrust, and a weakening of the relationship results.

Leading researchers agreed that relationships marked by low levels of trust hampers organizational functioning and overall effectiveness (Cosner, 2009; Covey, 2006; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Lencioni, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Tschannnen-Moran & Gareis, 2015). Bryk and Schneider (2002) explicated that within organizations where people must rely on one another, social relations are not just a mechanism of productivity but are a valued outcomes in their own right and powerful in that they provide opportunities for self-identification and affiliation. Strong social relations are needed in schools because effective functioning requires cooperative efforts between all role relationships:

Teachers, for example, rely on maintaining good student rapport as a resource for teaching. Teachers also need parental support to promote their children’s sustained engagement in instruction. While principals hold formal authority over teachers, principals nonetheless remain quite depended on teacher’ cooperative efforts to maintain the social order of the school and its reputation in the community. Similarly, teachers must sustain cooperative relations with each other for coherent schoolwide instructional practices to emerge. (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 20)

Within their work, Bryk and Schnieder (2003) identified four specific considerations that people use to discern levels of relational trust: respect (genuine listening, people feel valued);
personal regard (the willingness to go beyond formal requirements of the job or union contract); competence in core responsibility (professional capacity); and, personal integrity (morals and ethics guide one’s work and high commitment to the welfare of children) (Bryk & Schneider, 2003, p. 42). For instance, as people interact with each other, they are constantly discerning the intentions embedded in the actions of the other:

They consider how others’ efforts advance their own interests or impinge on their own self-esteem. They ask whether others’ behaviour reflects appropriately on their moral obligations to educate children well. These discernments take into account the history of previous interactions. In the absence of prior contact, participant may rely on the general reputation of the other and also on commonalities of race, gender, age, religion or upbringing. (Bryk & Schneider, 2003, p. 42)

In summary, with the juxtaposition of the three forms of social trust, Bryk and Schneider (2002) established relational trust as the dominant form of trust operating within the complex web of social exchange in today’s schools. Relational trust is a highly-complex form of social trust that exists within contexts where people need to rely on one another to achieve a common goal. Strong levels of trust across the community are of particular importance because they impact collective group functioning and overall effectiveness by dictating the degree to which people cooperate. Levels of trust are discerned between distinct role relationships within the organization across four domains (respect, personal regard, competence and personal integrity) and on a regular basis. These discernments, which also take into account an individual’s previous experience, personal values, and cultural beliefs, provide information about how much trust one has for another, which can change over the course of the relationship.

Trust and Schools
As the modern world has emerged the topic of trust has received significant attention in the field of education. Not only are educators battling societal distrust that has marred the system as a whole (Tschannen-Moran, 2014), they are also experiencing an increase in the number of people with whom they are required to work closely with and these relationships are highly affected by trust (Cosner, 2009). Divergent to the traditional education system, which was staunchly hierarchical, ridged in bureaucratic procedures, and functioned mostly in isolation from other organizations, the modern system has become increasingly collaborative, reflexive, and marked by mutual dependence and continuous social exchange (Bryk, & Schneider, 2003; Coleman, 2012; Hallam, Smith, Hite, Hite, & Wilcox, 2015; Klaussner, 2012; Tschannen-Moran, & Gareis, 2015).

Literature in educational research named the shift to an accountability-driven system (Cosner, 2009) and extended partnerships (Coleman, 2012) as conditions requiring higher levels of trust in schools. Tschannen-Moran (2014) noted that, for schools to be effective, the principal needs the trust of the parents and community, teachers need to trust their administrator and their colleagues; and, due to the changes that are happening at the classroom level, students need to trust their teachers. Because we live in a time of partnership and collaboration, the success of the school community is determined by efficient and positive social exchange within all members of the team (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Coleman, 2012, Cosner, 2009).

Tschannen-Moran (2014) illustrated the importance of trust in today’s schools, “When teachers and students trust each other and work together cooperatively, learning follows from the climate of safety and warmth that prevails” (p. 153). Kaser and Halbert (2009) verified that, if schools are to accomplish the task of educating a diverse group of students in a changing world, all community members must come together in a productive, respectful and cooperative manner.
where genuine communication can grow. Tschennen-Moran and Gareis (2015) reiterated the power of cooperation and explained that, “trust is increasingly recognized as an essential element in vibrant, well-performing schools … because trust undergirds the cooperative behavior necessary for cultivating high performance” (p. 257).

Cosner (2009) substantiated trust as a mechanism for cooperative behaviour, “Trust supports myriad forms of interactions within an organization, whether interactions are between individuals, within teams or subgroups, or amongst an entire staff, by reducing uncertainty and predisposing people to cooperate” (p. 252). Moreover, Cosner’s (2009) study outlined the cooperative power of trusting relationships and the varied benefits that resulted. Cosner (2009) reported: when trust exists between members 1) collective action, such as problem-solving and decision-making, is more productive; 2) the exchange of essential information is promoted, and people are more likely to share accurate and complete information; 3) conflict resolution is enabled; 4) disagreement is less likely to evolve into relationship conflict or personal attack; 5) individuals are more likely to engage in team learning behaviours including feedback seeking, help seeking, and speaking up about concerns, and mistakes; 6) satisfaction levels are increased; and, 7) emotional attachment to the organization is strengthened (p. 252).

In the same vein, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) observed the contrary: “Distrust tends to provoke feelings of anxiety and insecurity, causing people to feel uncomfortable and ill at ease and to expend energy on monitoring the behavior and possible motives of others” (p. 550). As the researchers further expound, distrust is also costly because people must engage in self-protective actions, such as withholding information, using deception or resorting to control mechanisms, such as contractual agreements, to guard against betrayal and minimize vulnerability (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).
Furthermore, Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) noted that distrust had a detrimental effect on student and adult learning. They determined, continually making provisions for the possibility of opportunistic behaviour, negatively affected student achievement because the students are distracted from learning, and the teachers are less likely to collaborate, share important information or join professional learning opportunities. It is also reported, in environments where distrust prevails, that administrators are dissuaded from helping teachers solve problems, and more inclined to resort to bureaucratic organizational control methods, which are designed to minimize inclusive decision making and enforce compliance (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Tschannen-Moran (2014) outlines the domino effect of distrust and why it is costly to schools:

Without trust, teachers and students are both unlikely to take the risks that genuine learning entails. Moreover, students who do not feel trusted by their teachers and administrators may create barriers to learning as they distance themselves from their school and build an alienated, rebellious youth culture. (p. 13)

Within the relational trust literature, a compelling body of research also stressed a culture of trust as a prerequisite to change initiatives (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Cosner, 2009; Kaser & Halbert, 2009; Louis, 2007; Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Bryk and Schneider (2003) determined that relational trust is important for reducing the sense of risk associated with change by fostering a safe and supported environment where educators are more likely to try new things and engage in open and honest professional conversations with colleagues (Bryk & Schnieder, 2003). Cosner’s (2009) findings echoed this point and suggested, trust between colleagues contributed to psychological safety, which had a positive impact on workplace learning because relationships based on trust provided a confidence that people’s mistakes and weaknesses would
not be used against them. In this regard, benevolent relationships opened up channels of communication where essential information, which is relevant, accurate, and complete, is exchanged allowing school professionals to learn from one another and support each other in the change process (Cosner, 2009; Bryk & Schnieder, 2003; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Another benefit of relational trust is that it fosters an environment that allows for respectful and collective decision-making with broad teacher buy in, which is also essential for lasting educational reform and improvement initiatives (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Leferve and Timperley’s (2015) work on school improvement highlighted the importance of co-constructing knowledge in the process of change initiatives, “Teachers need to be included in the reasoning and analysis that underpins decisions or they do not accept their validity” (p. 10). Cosner (2009) agreed, trusting others by including them in decision-making enhances school reform because otherwise decisions are interpreted as top-down, resentment and doubt within the school culture is created, and effective team functioning is deteriorated. Furthermore, Louis (2007) determined, when leaders include subordinates in all phases of the change process (planning, implementing and adjusting as change is carried out), the effect is twofold, in that, being inclusive strengthens the trust relationship while distributing ownership and increasing commitment to the change.

Another widely-recognized advantage of high levels of relational trust is that it supports the moral imperative to take on the difficult work of school improvement (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Kaser and Halbert (2009) stressed that trust allows educators to take on the intense moral purpose that will promote the changes that will improve student achievement while increasing commitment and accountability levels, all of which are needed for lasting transformation. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) also acknowledged the significance of moral imperative and stressed, “Bonds of trust help create the conditions that inspire teachers to move to higher
levels of effort and achievement” (p. 258). Increased levels of teacher commitment and embedded community support is vital to school functioning in times of change because, without positive and a caring environments teachers will succumb to the old ways of doing.

William and Siobhan (2015) support this assertion and believe the answer lies in disrupting the habitual nature of teaching. Ultimately, changing classroom strategies and the approach to teaching and learning requires teachers to alter “polished routines [that are the] result of hundreds, thousands, and sometimes even hundreds of thousands of repetitions” (William & Siobhan, 2015, p.18). As William and Siobhan (2015) argued, the act of change is highly complex because changing one’s habits effect several domains at once and requires extreme amounts of effort. In essence, such change is hard. Therefore, for change to be lasting educators must go beyond sharing best practice strategies and focus on building trust within integral structures and supports, which are needed to help create new habits (William & Siobhan, 2015).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, leading researchers have found high levels of relational trust to be linked with school growth and improvements in student achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2003, Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). In an extensive study spanning a decade and examining over 400 schools, Bryk and Schneider (2003) correlated levels of trust with student achievement. They found that students in schools with strong relational trust had marked improvements in reading and math, and perhaps most significantly, they found that schools with chronically weak trust had virtually no chance of improving (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Likewise, in a widespread review of the impact of collegial trust on education over the past twenty years, Cosner (2009) affirmed trust as a factor for improved student achievement. Cosner’s (2009) results also linked collegial trust to organizational citizenship, healthy and open school climates, organizational mindfulness and
organizational justice (p. 253). Coleman (2012) echoed these results and identified the presence of trust to be beneficial in areas such as student achievement, positive interpersonal relationships, sharing good practice, and learning between professionals.

**Principal’s Role**

“Trust can no longer be taken for granted in schools. It must be consciously cultivated and sustained” (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p.13). In an earlier era, working in education was a relatively low stress job because schools held “implicit trust of its communities” and the judgement of school officials were accepted and reinforced by parents (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 8). Principals were highly-respected and largely unquestioned members of society, and teachers were valued as professionals with specialized knowledge and skills; both of whom knew what was best for children (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Tschannen-Moran (2014) recognized, like other organizations and social institutions operating in the modern world, schools and the professionals working in them have come under unprecedented scrutiny.

Fullen (2000) agreed with Tschannen-Moran’s observation and remarked, “The walls of the school have become more permeable and transparent. Teachers and principals now operate under a microscope in a way that they have never had to do before” (p. 582). He reiterated that the external forces, such as parents and community, technology, corporate connections, government policy, and the wider teaching profession, creates a complex and unpredictable environment with increased demands for better performance and greater accountability.

What’s more, Tschannen-Moran (2014) recognized, the value of equal opportunity has taken on even greater prominence and, as people gain access to more information, they are no longer content to accept the role of passive client (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Tschannen-Moran (2014) explained:
With growing awareness, those who are less powerful also wish to feel less vulnerable to the professionals whose greater power vitally affects them … With expanding access to information … parents are conducting their own research and feeling ever more empowered to advocate for their children’s interest within the education system and to question the professional knowledge and expertise of school personnel. (p. 10)

In addition, today’s schools bear mounting pressure to perform well; however, in many instances, schools have not been able to meet the new demands and rising expectations, which has caused society at large to distrust the system and blame school personnel for lack of performance (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Expounding the problem, “Attention from the media has produced negative perceptions of the contribution schools are making to society and has led to increasing distrust of school and their mission” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 550). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) warned that once distrust is established it has a strong tendency to be self-perpetuating because, “when one is interacting with a distrusted person [organization], even normally benign actions are regarded with suspicion. The behaviour of the distrusted person [organization] is systematically interpreted in such a way that distrust is confirmed” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000, p. 550).

Today’s schools have evolved into increasingly collaborative and interdependent organizations that are expected to work in partnership and maintain high accountability standards (Bryk, & Schneider, 2003; Coleman, 2012; Hallam, Smith, Hite, Hite, & Wilcox, 2015; Klaussner, 2012; Tschannen-Moran, & Gareis, 2015). In these organizations, it is imperative that relationships are built on a foundation of trust, for schools stand little chance of restructuring without strong bonds of trust among members (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Furthermore, Bryk and Schneider (2002) stated, “Relational trust is especially important for organization that operate in
turbulent external environments that depend heavily of information sharing for success” (p. 33). While reiterating the essential role trust plays in partnership working between school and with other agencies, Coleman (2012) argued, “trust mitigates leaders’ and followers’ vulnerability in times of uncertainty, supports risk taking and serves as a bridge across organizational boundaries” (p. 101).

If schools are to meet new demands of today’s society, they will need to take advantage of the beneficial effects of a trusting environment. Tschannen-Moran (2014) further argued, if schools are to benefit from an environment where all school members, parents, and community agencies can work together, it is the responsibility of the principal to build and sustain strong interpersonal relationships and develop a culture of trust where cooperative behaviour prevails (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Supporting this assertion, Kaser and Halbert (2009) advised that responsible leadership puts relationships first, especially in a time when innovative learning environments are needed to meet the changing needs of today’s learners. “In a context of increasingly demanding and fast paced reforms, leaders who have trusting relationships with parents and with staff can moderate and manage the stress and feelings of vulnerability that come from high levels of uncertainty” (Kaser & Halbert, 2009, p. 45). Louis (2007) agreed; to repair distrust and create productive school environments “School leaders need to view trust as the bridge that reform must be carried over” (p. 19).

Bryk and Schneider (2002, 2003) draw attention to the great human significance in the act of schooling and suggest, for principals to be effective, they must concentrate on relationships over other bureaucratic and administrative tasks. Furthermore, to effectively create a culture of trust within the school community, it is imperative that school leaders fully understand why trust is such a valuable resource for cultivating productive schools, and then be
diligent in day-to-day efforts to strengthen interpersonal relationships in their building (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, Louis, 2007). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) echoed this point, “As trustees of our nation’s children, school personnel need to understand the complex dimensions and dynamics of trust … and the effects of trust on increasing the efficiency of organisations” (p. 551).

Although schooling in the 21st century is highly-collaborative and marked by an increase in community partnerships and inclusive decision making (Coleman, 2012; Cosner, 2009), the business of schooling remains to be a hierarchal organization in which administrators hold formal power over decision making, and hold a supervisory role over staff and students in their building. “Because principals have greater power within the relationships in a school, they have greater responsibility for the establishment and maintenance of a culture of trust” (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 43). Also, because they are in a leadership position within the system they are in direct contact with all groups and partnerships within the school community, and “in the best position of any school actor to positively alter the level of trust in a school” (Hallam, Smith, Hite, Hite & Wilcox, 2015).

It is well-established that trust is an organizational resource for school reform, enhanced student achievement, and a necessary element in well-functioning schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Coleman, 2012; Cosner, 2009; Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Because principals are ultimately responsible for the school and its success (or lack thereof), it is within their mandate to attend to levels of trust in their building. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) expound:

A school principal is charged with a wide array of responsibilities, including the development of a shared vision for the school and stewardship of that vision, fostering an
environment conducive to student learning, engaging all members of the school community, managing the organization, ensuring the effectiveness of the faculty, and doing these things with integrity and fairness…principals are ultimately held accountable to student learning in their buildings. (p. 257)

Another factor indicating it is the responsibility of the principal to foster trusting relationships is evident from the growing body of research showing that principals significantly impact the overall culture and climate of the school community. As Coleman (2012) and Tschannen-Moran (2014) affirmed, the level of trust teachers have for the principal sets the tone in the building. Bryk and Schneider (2003) and Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) agreed, the principal sets the tone of the school and plays a key role in developing and sustaining relational trust within the school community by influencing how teachers relate to one another, to students, and to the community at large.

Tschannen-Moran (2014) explained, because of the interdependence of relationships in schooling and the authority that principals exercise, staff members tend to pay particular attention to the trustworthiness of their principal. “Where the principal has established high trust relationships, teachers are more likely to perceive that they can trust their colleagues as well. Conversely, where trust in the administrator is low, trust in colleagues is likely to suffer as well” (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015, p. 258). Collegial trust is significant in school functioning because when teachers trust each other they are more likely to collaborate, engage in constructive responses to conflict, and exhibit greater effort, persistence, and resilience in the face of difficulties (Tschannin-Moran, 2014, p. 151).

Tschannen-Moran (2014) also ascertained that the principal significantly altered school culture by modeling the desired behaviour, “To be trusted, principals need to be willing to extend
trust to teachers, staff, students, and parents” (p. 44). Supporting this study, Coleman (2012) and Hallam, Smith, Hite, Hite and Wilcox (2015) determined that trusting others developed mutually trusting relationships and reported, when principals showed trust in their teachers by distributing strategic and operational responsibilities, there was a positive effect on teacher motivation, self-esteem, and professional capabilities. Coleman (2012) also reported the extension of trust had the positive result of an increased sense of loyalty to the school and the principal. While reiterating increased levels of commitment Tschannen-Moran (2014) also contended, “Teachers need trust from their principal and colleagues to cope with the stress of changing expectations and demands that the accountability movement places on them” (p. 252).

Not only is teacher trust in the principal positively related to teacher trust in colleagues (Hallam, Smith, Hite, Hite, & Wilcox, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015), there is also a strong correlation between faculty trust in the principal and faculty trust in students. For instance, “Where the adults trust one another, they are more likely to extend trust to their student as well” (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015, p. 258). Teachers’ trust in students is extremely important because it directly effects the students’ propensity to trust in their teachers, which “is strongly related to students’ identification with school, their feelings of safety, their perceptions of academic press at school and at home, and their attendance rates” (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 184). Furthermore, Tschannen-Moran (2014) reported, “students need trust to engage productively with their learning environment at school and to access the opportunities made available to them. Without trust student’s energy is diverted toward self-protection and away from the learning process” (p. 252). Consequently, the reciprocal trusting relationship between teachers and students directly impacted student achievement (Tschannen-Moran, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015).
Because extensive benefits can be realized in schools, principals need to be persistent in their efforts to cultivate trust. Through extensive research Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) recognized that most educational leaders acknowledge the importance of trust in their work, but contrariwise, observed that the pressures of accountability often squeezed out these qualities and drove administrators to impatience and anxiety, which negatively impacted the school climate and interfered with student and adult learning. In contrast, schools that were able to uphold professional relationships characterized by positive intention created a climate of trust where strengths were amplified, curiosity and a love of learning flourished, and student and teacher learning was enhanced (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015, p. 257).

Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015) demonstrated trust as a powerful variable in enhanced learning:

School leaders who create bonds of trust help create the conditions that inspire teacher to move to higher levels of effort and achievement. In contrast, when teachers and principals do not trust one another, each seeks to minimize their vulnerability and risk by adopting self-protective stances. The result can be disengagement that consequently diminishes student learning. Few other variables examined by educational researchers come close to the level of predictive power of trust on student achievement. (p. 258)

Kaser and Halbert (2009) echoed Tschannen-Moran’s (2014) findings and explained that, in schools where principals took the time to establish high levels of trust, staff were inspired to “demonstrate a strong moral obligation to work together for the benefit of their young” (p. 46). Additionally, when there are high levels of earned trust, decision can be made more readily and with greater collective understanding, staff members develop the expectation that productive
work by every individual is the norm, and principals are placed in a position where they are able to spend less time on ‘managing’ and ‘directing’ behaviour (Kaser & Halber, 2009, p. 46).

Another factor imploring principals to attend to levels of trust in their buildings is presented in the fact much of their work happens in the public eye, and one’s reputation can precede them. Tschannen-Moran (2014) illustrated, “a reputation of trustworthiness is a valuable asset for individuals and organizations alike and can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Strong initial trust based on the good reputation of the parties involved may, in turn, lead to a stronger motivation for trustworthy behaviour to sustain and build in the benefits of that trust” (p. 52).

Tschannen-Moran (2014) expounded, as an administrator a good reputation should not be understated because within the structure of the system educators tend to continue to work within the same network of people. This social network can exert control by encouraging or discouraging others to act in a trustworthy manner. Moreover, within a closely related group, people tend to be more alert to negative gossip, however, “When many people perceive that an individual has a good reputation, it is more difficult for a negative event to significantly reduce a high level of trust in that individual” (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 53).

Taking the time to build trusting relationships based on respect, personal regard, personal integrity, and competence in core responsibilities can be a powerful resource in highly interdependent, accountability-driven profession.

**Chapter Summary**

The aim of this chapter was to demonstrate trust as a reciprocal multifaceted construct that plays a significant role in societal functioning. The literature established that, although there is no universal scholarly definition of trust, there is an agreement across disciplines that expectation and a willingness to be vulnerable are critical components. Also, a condition of risk
and mutual dependence must exist for trust to arise. The research literature supports that benevolence, honesty, openness, reliability and competence are five facets that characterize trusting relationships.

The research literature further establishes that trust is discerned on a regular basis across four dimensions (respect, personal regard, competence and personal integrity) and is impacted by one’s previous experience, personal values and cultural beliefs. Relational trust allows the cooperative behaviour necessary for effective team functioning, lasting reform and enhanced student and adult learning within increasingly complex and highly interdependent school systems. Finally, due to the leadership position within the school community a principal’s responsibility is to build strong interpersonal relationships and cultivate a culture of trust across the school community so that schools reap the rewards of a supportive environment.
Chapter 3 – Procedures and Methods

Chapter Introduction

Qualitative research is at the heart of this study. The goal of the project was to gain insight about the concepts that impact relational trust from the participants’ point of view. I chose a qualitative approach because it allowed for curious investigation that was open to new learning. The methodology used in this study was designed to elicit subjective opinions and experiences from elementary school staff while being sensitive to the fact that the study was being conducted by a person in a formal leadership role within a small community.

To strengthen the credibility of the study, safeguards were put in place to maintain discretion and anonymity of the participants. Also, to enhance the dependability of the results a thorough code-re-code process was implemented. The goal of this study was to collect and analyze context specific evidence that could be used by educators to inform best practice strategies that would help build and maintain a culture of trust within their setting.

This chapter provides the background to the methodology used to investigate the questions in this research project:

1). What factors do staff in elementary school settings consider to be most important in building relational trust?

2). How are principals in rural communities developing trusting relationships with their staff?

This chapter will also discuss the merits of qualitative research as a valid means to collect and analyze data for this study. Included will be a brief description of the five stages of Spirals of Inquiry and how these stages were used as a framework to focus and guide the decisions throughout this study. Also, details about participants, the data collection method, and the
analysis procedures will be outlined, along with a description of how ethical issues and trustworthiness of the study were addressed.

**Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is a broad method of study that “uses narrative, descriptive approaches to data collection to understand the way things are and what the research means from the perspectives of the participants in the study” (Mills, 2014, p. 6). In her textbook, Merriam (2009) explains that “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 24). Unlike quantitative methods, which are focused on numerical data and have well-established formulas and hypothesis-testing protocols, qualitative methods focus on the subjective human experience and draw from a plethora of heuristic analytic strategies (Saldana, 2014).

Not surprisingly, qualitative research has its history rooted in early studies in anthropology and sociology where researchers went into the field to observe the environment, interview the people, and collect artifacts to acquire data for their inquiry (Merriam, 2009, p.6). Both Merriam (2009) and Polkinghorne (2005) identify the emergence of qualitative research as we know it today with the 1967 publication of *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* by sociologists Barney Glaser and Anslem Strauss. Merriam (2009) notes that this book was pivotal in growing the field because it deepened understanding of the practice by providing a “theoretical framework and practical strategies for doing research” (p. 7). After this publication other professional fields that engage directly with people’s lives, such as education, psychology, nursing and social work, began to use this inquiry approach (Merriam, 2009, Polkinghorne, 2005, Saldana, Leavy & Beretvasd, 2014). Since the publication of this book, the field has
expanded, and many publications such as textbooks, handbooks, and journals, have been
dedicated to this field of study.

Because the aim of this study was to acquire candid thoughts and opinions from the
perspective of those immersed in the educational setting, a qualitative approach was preferred
over a quantitative one. In this case, I felt that a quantitative study would be limiting in two
important ways. First, a quantitative measurement of the level of trust in a school would only
provide reliable data for a short period of time and would not necessarily be generalizable to a
larger population. Because schools are highly social environments, and in a constant state of
social change as staff is frequently transferred and families are constantly coming and going, the
results would only provide a snapshot of one point in time. Conversely, the openness of a
qualitative research method would allow for the flexibility needed to capture meaningful data
that could be applied across staffs in the local area and be relevant over a significant period of
time. Because qualitative research uses personal narratives, “contingent on context and multiple
perspectives” (Saldana, 2014, p. 23), this method embraces the issue of fluctuating variables
within the school and focuses on ‘why’ and not ‘if’ relational trust exist.

Second, I felt that a quantitative approach would be limiting in that many of the
measurement tools, such as a Likert-type Scale, rely on questions that try to predict factors and
are generated by researchers outside of the specific environment I was investigating. Rather than
predict factors, the qualitative approach that has been applied offers participants the freedom to
share their story and explain what is most important to them and why. The power in this type of
data is that it gives an authentic voice to the participants and allows the researcher, “to come to
insight and understanding about social life, not necessarily to predict or control it” (Saldana,
In this sense, the information gained is valuable because it is contextually rich, relevant, and generalized to other rural elementary schools in the interior of British Columbia.

**Basic Qualitative Research**

Over the last fifty years a plethora of methods and interpretive techniques have emerged. Polkinghorne (2005) explains, “The youthfulness of the resurgence permitted creativity and experimentation by qualitative researchers” (p. 137). Accomplished researcher and renowned educator, Johnny Saldana (2014), described qualitative research as, “an umbrella term for a wide variety of approaches to and methods for the study of natural social life” (p. 3). Saldana helped to clarify the complexity and array of approaches by likening them to literary classifications in that they can vary in type or kind. Saldana (2014) contended, “Just as there are multiple literary genres (short story, poetry, novel, drama, etc.), and literary elements (symbolism, metaphor, alliteration, etc), and literary styles (realism, comedy, tragedy, etc.), so are there multiple genres, elements and styles of qualitative research” (p. 4).

Saldana’s analogy to genre is helpful considering more than 40 known approaches exist (Merriam, 2009). Although there are a handful of well-known approaches, such as narrative, ethnography, case study, phenomenology and grounded theory, this research project uses the type of approach known as the basic qualitative research method. According to Sharan Merriam (2009), with over thirty years of experience teaching and advising students about qualitative research, the basic qualitative study is the most common type used by students new to the field and probably the most common form found in education. According to Marriam (2009), “A central characteristic of qualitative research is that individuals construct reality in interaction with their social worlds … Here the researcher is interested in the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved” (p. 23). She continues to explain that data analysis involves identifying
recurring themes or patterns in interviews, observations or written documents, which form the findings of the study. In this study, I collected data through an open-ended written survey questionnaire and analyzed the responses through a coding process which categorized recurring themes into main ideas that interpreted the meaning. In summary, the “overall interpretation of the data [is my understanding] of the participants’ understanding of the phenomenon of interest” (Marriam, 2009, p. 25), which in this study is the concept of relational trust in an educational setting.

Survey Questionnaire and Ethical Issues

For the purpose of this study, a written response survey with four open-ended questions was used to collect contextually rich data (Appendix B). Question number one was directed toward the relationships between co-workers. Participants were asked to think of a successful relationship and, “Explain what this person does on a professional level that allows you to trust them.” Questions two and four were directed toward the factors influencing relational trust between school staff and the principal. In these questions participants were asked to identify key character traits or actions that impacted the relationship and give advice to principals who were entering the profession or transferring to a new school. Finally, question number three was more general in that it asked for participants to elaborate on key factors they thought had the greatest impact and why. The repetition of similar questions was advantageous in that it increased the overall credibility of the study by allowing participants the opportunity to expound on their opinions and experiences and verify their true meaning (Krefting, 1991, p. 220).

Due to the supervisory role I held within the school district, collecting data through a written response questionnaire was vital to the integrity of the study. When I started this project, I was a principal of a medium-sized elementary school in a close-knit rural community. In this
case, other qualitative methods to collect data such as an interview or focus group was not possible due to the ethical concerns regarding a power-over scenario. Therefore, a written response questionnaire was utilized to gather open and honest responses from those working in elementary schools in the local area.

The questionnaire method of data collection proved valuable in that I was able to mitigate the potential risks to participants, as outlined in the cover letter (Appendix A), by embedding several safeguards to protect anonymity and ensure that all participation was strictly voluntary. For instance, to guarantee there could be no actual or perceived repercussions for participating (or not to participating) it was clearly stated that all responses were to remain free from name identification. As an extra measure ensuring persons could not be identified through handwriting or be associated with a specific school I had a neutral party transcribe the completed questionnaires and email participant responses back in a Word document.

**Groundwork and Ethics Approval.** Before commencing the study, an extensive research application was submitted to Vancouver Island University (VIU) Ethics Review Board. The application included a project description with background information and purpose of the intended research, study methods and design, identification of the risks and benefits, the population and recruitment procedures, how the researcher planned to gain consent, as well as, specific and well-thought-out safeguards to protect the participants’ privacy and anonymity. Upon approval from VIU’s Ethics Review Board (Appendix D) I submitted an application to the superintendent of schools to seek permission to conduct research in School District #27 (Appendix C).

**Distribution.** Once permission to conduct research was granted, I contacted the principals of each of the four schools that I was planning on distributing my survey questionnaire. An
explanation of the research project was given and a date to drop off the research package in staff mailboxes was set. The research package contained a cover letter (Appendix A), the survey questionnaire (Appendix B) and an envelope for participants to seal their responses in. In contacting the principals of each school, I was able to answer any questions they had and request permission to have their secretaries’ aid in the collection process.

**Recruitment and Data Collection.** Participants for the study were recruited through the use of a detailed cover letter that was placed in staff mailboxes at each worksite. The cover letter outlined the purpose of the research project, explained that participation was completely voluntary and anonymous, and gave instructions of how to hand in the completed survey.

The guarantee of anonymity was accomplished by embedding three important safeguards assuring participants the researcher would never know their identities. First, it was made clear that no identifying factors should be included in their responses. Second, the researcher would never see the hand-written copies of the survey because they were sealed in an envelope and then given to the school secretary, who would then mail them to the Board Office where they would be collected by the transcriber. The third safeguard instructed the transcriber to blackout any identifying factors, such as names, which might have accidently been included. The transcriber would keep the original paper copies on behalf of the researcher until they were no longer needed and instructed to destroy them.

**Transcription and Storage.** To complete the process of data collection, a neutral party picked up the sealed envelopes from the Board Office and transcribed the responses into an electronic Word document. The transcriber organized the questionnaires into two groups, support staff and teachers, and then created a carbon copy of the participants’ answers. Once completed, the transcriber emailed the electronic document to the researcher for analysis. The original paper
copies of the responses were kept by the transcriber for reference until the researcher indicated that they could be destroyed, at which time the paper copies were shredded.

Participants

The participants of this study were teachers and support staff working in a small community in the interior of British Columbia. In total, 86 survey questionnaires were circulated. Approximately 57% of potential participants were teaching staff, including classroom and specialty teachers. Forty-three percent were individuals in support staff roles, such as education assistants, strong start coordinators, secretaries and custodians.

To gain a holistic understanding of relational trust in an educational setting, it was important that all staff members had the opportunity to share their thoughts and opinions on the topic. The overall participation rate was approximately 30%, with a total of 26 survey questionnaires being completed. Fourteen participants identified themselves as teacher (54%), 11 as support staff (42%), and one unknown (4%).

Specific details, such as the age, gender, ethnicity, years of experience, etc., of the participants are unknown in this study. Due to ethical concerns already discussed, it was of upmost importance to the integrity of the study that participants remain strictly anonymous. Safeguarding participants’ identity ensured that the study satisfy the ethical standards set by VIUs Research Ethics Board by minimizing the risk to participants that may be present in a power-over scenario. Maintaining anonymity ensured that all participation in the study was completely voluntary and alleviated any pressure staff members might feel to participate. Protecting identity not only mitigated any perceived or actual repercussions for choosing not to participate, but it also allowed participants to share their thoughts and opinions freely.
Although exact information about the participants is unknown, some general facts about the school demographics are helpful. It should be noted that the targeted elementary schools ranged in size, both in student and staff population. One school was smaller with approximately 50 students and 10 staff members. Two schools had between 170 and 200 students and an average of 25 staff members. The fourth school was a dual-track school and the largest in the study with approximately 350 students and more than 45 staff members. It is also important to note that some educators worked at more than one work site, such as the occupational therapist, school counsellor, speech-language pathologist, autism resource teacher, learning support district coordinator, youth care worker, as well as teachers on call.

All schools' staffs were comprised primarily of Caucasian females, with approximately 20% of the population being male. Also, each school staff contained a range of experience levels from just starting out in their career to having served many years in the same job and often with many years in the same school.

**Spirals of Inquiry Framework and Research Design**

I used the inquiry design and expertise presented in *Spirals of Inquiry: For Equity and Quality* written by master educators Halbert and Kaser (2013) as a framework for this study. Halbert and Kaser (2013), internationally recognized leaders in innovative education, created this handbook with the support of the BC Principals and Vice-Principals’ Association for fellow inquiry-oriented educators interested in bettering the school experience. The procedures and thoughtful processes outlined in this inquiry design provided me with the tools I needed to focus my research and gather relevant evidence, which was needed to guide my decision making throughout this study.
The Spirals of Inquiry model is a learner-centered research design that bases decision making on “thoughtful evidence from direct observation” through the continued use of three important questions: What’s going on for our learners?” “How do we know?” and “How does this matter?” (Halbert & Kaser, 2013, p. 48). Halbert and Kaser (2013) summarize their model as comprised of five often-overlapping stages that focus on the experiences of the learner. The key stages are: scanning, focusing, developing a hunch, new professional learning, taking action, and checking to see if what you did made a difference. Through this inquiry design, the overarching idea and questions for the research project was born.

The following gives a brief description of each stage of the Spiral of Inquiry and how the information gained from each stage was used to narrow the focus, generate the questions, and guide the process of this study.

**Scanning. The Big Picture. “What’s going on for our learners?”** (Halbert & Kaser, 2013, p. 48).

At the onset of this project, I was the principal of a medium-sized elementary school. It was my belief that the principal played a chief role in shaping the culture in a school and should be an active participant in moving learning forward. At this point in time, the Ministry of Education had launched the Redesigned Curriculum, which looked and sounded quite different from the former prescribed learning outcomes that teachers were used to. In general, I felt there was a sense of apprehension and unease as educators in the area navigated the changes. Therefore, I used the Spirals of Inquiry as a framework to explore ways to help educators during this transitional period.

Through the scanning process, I noticed that the changes happening in the curriculum were challenging teachers to take risks in their teaching by trying new strategies and
incorporating highly collaborative and inclusive approaches to learning. Through staff meetings, professional development days, and general conversations with educators, I also noticed varying levels of understanding and experience with the Core Competencies, Big Ideas, and Learning Standards presented in Building Student Success - British Columbia’s New Curriculum (BC Ministry of Education, 2017). Furthermore, comfort levels in navigating and implementing the changes in “BC’s New Curriculum” fluctuated along a continuum from educators feeling overwhelmed to very confident.

Focusing. “Where are we going to concentrate our professional energies so that we can change the experiences and results for our learners?”... “Gaining clarity about the problem to be addressed is at the heart of the focusing phase” (Halbert & Kaser, 2013, p. 51).

In the focusing phase I took the “Big Picture” ideas revealed in scanning and began to look at the evidence from the perspective of how a principal could help the school community traverse the impending changes in pedagogy. Simultaneously, I was learning about the importance of relational trust in building an effective team (Lencioni, 2002; Covey, 2006) and working effectively with change (Quinn, 1996). In theory, a school with a strong culture of trust would provide an optimal learning environment where everyone feels safe and open to taking the necessary risks involved in collaborating, networking, and experiencing new learning.

Although the changes in curriculum were the impetus behind the beginnings of this project, I recognized there would always be changes and other challenges that educators would face. It became clear that the investigation needed to be about how a principal could foster, maintain, and repair relational trust within the school setting, and sustain a supportive environment that is resilient and responsive to change. With this in mind, the focus of the study
narrowed to investigating the concepts and factors influencing trust across two types of relationships: teachers and administration, teachers and co-workers.

**Developing a Hunch.** “Getting views onto the table in a way that can be discussed and tested is fundamental to moving forward together” (Halbert & Kaser, 2013, p. 52). “The hunch phase requires inquiry teams to stand back and take a serious look at what is contributing to the situation for learners. We need to consider how we are contributing to the situation – in a way that opens up thinking rather than slamming the door shut on curiosity” (Halbert & Kaser, 2013, p. 53).

It was time to invite others to offer their point of view. Instead of assuming which factors impacted relational trust within an educational setting, I set out to hear directly from those involved. To acquire this information, a survey questionnaire was distributed to staff mailboxes in four elementary schools. The responses to the questions would serve as qualitative data for the study. The questions were designed through an appreciative lens and intended for participants to highlight the factors that positively impact relational trust. The hope was to use value-based stories (Lencioni, 2005) that were sensitive to individual vulnerability (Brown, 2012) and honoured what was working (Barrett & Fry, 2005) to provide constructive feedback and inform best practice strategies. The procedures used to collect data, gain informed consent, and safeguard anonymity are discussed later in this chapter.

**New Professional Learning.** “How and where can we learn more about what to do?” (Halbert & Kaser, 2013, p. 53).

To learn more about what to do and how to do it, I needed to gain a deeper understanding about the opinions, stories, and experiences shared by respondents. To accomplish this goal, I applied the methods involved in content analysis to reduce and interpret the vast amount of
contextually rich data collected through the written response questionnaire. In this regard, qualitative content analysis is at the heart of ‘New Professional Learning’ because it provided the systematic processes needed to make meaning of the data. The steps involved in content analysis will be explained in detail later in this chapter. The importance, at this stage of the spiral, is that through content analysis I was able to unveil concrete answers to the inquiry question and gain a deeper understanding of the data, which provided a pivotal stepping stone in moving forward with the inquiry. Halbert and Kaser (2013) expound:

Changing practice in deeply informed ways involves new learning of both theory and practice. [Principals] need to know ‘why’ the new practice is more powerful than what they did before. This is the theory part. Theory matters because teaching effectively isn’t just about using a set of discrete strategies; teaching involves an integrated and holistic approach to promoting learning. Knowing ‘how’ also matters in changing practices and in developing greater adaptive expertise” (p. 54).

**Taking Action.** “At this stage in the spiral where new learning leads to new practices. Now that we have the evidence and the knowledge about the practices that will help our learners, it’s time to jump across the knowing-doing gap”” (Halbert & Kaser, 2013, p. 56).

The Taking Action stage for the purpose of this study is the presentation of the results in the form of a thesis to the superintendent of School District #27. In this respect, the thesis will be a document that educators could use to support their own professional growth. Ideally, the literature review will provide the background on why relational trust is an essential element for school success and offer useful resources for further professional learning on the subject. Also, the results of the data analysis will provide specific information that principals can use to reflect
on their current practice and ‘take action’ in custom designing strategies that will enhance levels of relational trust within their context.

**Checking.** “In this part of the spiral we need to ask whether we are making enough of a difference” (Halbert & Kaser, 2013, p. 57).

I performed the ‘checking’ stage several different times throughout this study to make sure I was on the right track. As mentioned earlier, the stages in the inquiry can often overlap and I revisited this stage several times to help maintain the integrity of the study. For example, numerous times throughout the process I would pause and check to make sure my methodology was accurate and thorough, and that my labour was focused on answering the intended research questions.

Another strategy was deliberately taking extended breaks from my work. These breaks helped with the checking process by allowing a fresh set of eyes and clear outlook for when I reviewed my progress and planned my next step. Time breaks were especially helpful during the lengthy and intensive processes of content analysis and in implementing Krefting’s (1991) strategies to increase the rigor and trustworthiness of the study. Another checking tool that I utilized frequently throughout the research was keeping my advisor up to date and informed of my progress and utilizing the advice that was offered.

**Content Data Analysis**

I utilized content data analysis in this study to answer the research questions. To ensure a thorough investigation and reduced the data in a systematic yet flexible format, I used accomplished researcher Margrit Schreier’s step-by-step guide in the textbook, *Qualitative Content Analysis in The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis* (2013).
To further increase the consistency and validity of my findings, I also relied heavily on Marriam’s (2009) *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. Specifically, I found Marriam’s five criteria for category construction extremely useful in building, evaluating, and refining my classification scheme. Marriam (2009) emphasized that, for categories to be reliable, they must go through several stages of revision until they meet five criteria: 1) be responsive to the purpose of the research, 2) be exhaustive in that all relevant data will fit into a category, 3) be mutually exclusive in that one unit of data should fit into only one category, 4) be sensitizing in that an outsider should be able to gain some sense of then nature by the title, and, 5) be conceptually congruent in that all categories have the same level of abstraction (Marriam, 2009, p. 186).

Finally, to increase the rigor and trustworthiness of the study, I referred to accomplished researcher and scientist Laura Krefting’s (1991) advice on increasing the merit of the qualitative process and findings. Krefting (1991) summarized four criteria researchers need to be aware of to enhance the worth of their findings: credibility (confidence in the truth of the findings; the researcher is aware of his or own experiences with and/or close relationship to the subject matter and social environment); transferability (the degree to which the finding can be applied to other contexts and settings); dependability (consistency of the findings; can another researcher repeat the study); and, confirmability (can another researcher arrive at a comparable conclusion given the same data and context). In attempts to establish trustworthiness, a variety of strategies were employed to address and satisfy Krefting’s (1991) four criteria and will be described as they pertain to the process of the study.

**Definition.** Data analysis is the process used to make sense of the data and answer the research question. In qualitative content data analysis the answers to research questions are
revealed through a lengthy process of coding and sorting relevant data segments into a classification scheme. According to Schreier (2013), qualitative content analysis is “a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data … by assigning successive parts of the material to the categories of a coding frame … that feature the description and interpretation of the material” (p. 170). She continues to describe it as a lengthy process that requires careful data selection and multiple coding trials to test the quality of the category definitions that should be both concept and data driven (Schreier, 2013, p. 171). Marriam (2009) refers to this process as category construction and clarified that category construction is the data analysis, in that, the categories are the themes, patterns, and/or findings that are responsive to the research question.

**Process.** Understandably, building the coding frame for this research project took a significant amount of time. The process of interpreting answers and fleshing out themes responsive to the research question, while being careful to meet Marriams’s five criteria for effective category construction and Krefting’s advice for enhancing the trustworthiness of the study, was arduous. Satisfying these standards required a significant amount of time and stamina. The following is a detailed account of steps I took to create the categories and answer the questions in this research project.

**Step 1 – Preliminary Reading and Reformatting.** My initial engagement with the data was an informal reading. Not only was I curious to know the answers to the four survey questions, I also wanted to get a feel for the material and formulate a plan of attack. I printed the 20-page Word document containing a total of 26 completed surveys and thoughtfully read through each one as it was originally transcribed. The responses ranged in style from bulleted words and short phrases that summarized thoughts and opinions, to explanatory paragraphs that retold experiences and conveyed individual points of view.
Next, to prevent “cognitive overload,” I took Schreier’s (2013) advice and broke the material into four smaller sections according to topic (p. 175). For example, each question in the survey became the heading for a new document under which all participant answers to that question were copied and pasted. The result was four separate data files (each containing four to five pages), which could be examined individually. Within this restructuring, participant answers were also organized into three subgroups: Support Staff, Teacher, and Unknown, to help systemize the analysis and allow the opportunity to easily compare and contrast the types of answers given between each group.

**Step 2 – Open Coding.** After constructing a document that organized participant answers according to topic (question one through four) and role within the school (teacher, support staff or unknown), I performed the second reading. However, this time I made notes in the margin about words or phrases that struck me as interesting, relevant, or important and underlined the words and phrases that repeated frequently (Marriam, 2009, p. 178). Merriam (2009) called this process “open coding” because at this stage the researcher is open to anything and everything and should “identify any segment of data that might be useful” (p. 178). Upon completion of this step, I reviewed my notes and noticed that several main themes were already beginning to emerge.

**Step 3 – Structuring and Generating.** The next stage involved creating the skeleton of the coding frame, which would provide the foundation to begin to interpret, organize and reduce data in a meaningful way. Schreier (2013) described this step in building the coding frame as structuring and generating, “where structuring refers to creating the main categories and generating to creating the subcategories for each main category” (p. 176).
To start, I adhered to Schreier’s (2013) advice and structured the data table into two main, concept-driven categories: Character Traits and Actions. The idea behind concept driven is “basing the categories on previous knowledge: a theory, prior research, everyday knowledge, logic, or an interview guide” (Schreier, 2013, p. 176). The main categories were effective because, not only did they consolidate and reduce the amount of data, but they also helped to satisfy Marriam’s (2009) first, fourth, and fifth category criteria (p. 186). First, the categories were responsive to the research question in that both of the main categories were factors that were directly embedded within the survey questionnaire. Respectively, the main categories were sensitizing in that both character traits and actions are concepts that are easily understood by individuals outside of the research project. And, last, the main categories are conceptually congruent in that they are equally abstract in nature.

After structuring the main categories of the coding frame, I began generating subcategories under each main category. This process proved to be a lengthy and continued to evolve throughout the analysis. To begin, I went back over the notes I had made in Step 2 – Open Coding and started grouping the open codes according to themes that were responsive to the survey question. I then entered the ‘theme’ as a subcategory in the data table respective to the appropriate main category. Marriam (2009) refers to this step as analytical coding and explains that the master list of subcategories “constitutes a primitive outline or classification system reflecting the recurring regularities or patterns in your study. These patterns and regularities become the categories or themes into which subsequent items are sorted” (p. 181).

Once the initial subcategories were entered into the table, I continued to refine the groupings by examining the material one survey question at a time. With this edit, I populated the data table using subsumption, a data-driven strategy that repeats a five-step process until no
new concepts can be found (Schreier, 2013, p. 176). Schreier (2013) outlined the steps used to subsume data on page 176:

1. Read the material until a relevant concept is encountered.
2. Check whether a subcategory that covers this concept has already been created.
3. If so, subsume this under the respective subcategory.
4. If not, create a new subcategory that covers this concept.
5. Continue to read until the next relevant concept/passage is encountered.

The process of subsumption resulted in a data table comprised of 14 subcategories under *Character Traits* and 31 subcategories under *Actions*.

*Step 4 – Defining.* Simultaneously, as I generated a master list of subcategories in my data table, I worked to building category definitions. The definitions consisted of “a category name, a description of what is meant by that name, and positive examples” (Schreier, 2013, p. 176). For instance, when I found a new concept, I named it in a manner that “provided concise description of what [the] category referred to” (Schreier, 2013, p. 176) and then stated the features that characterized the category and indicator words that exhibited the presence of the phenomenon (Schreier, 2013, p. 177). Finally, I provided direct quotes from the transcript that illustrated the subcategory and further clarified the concept.

Specifying definitions and providing concrete descriptions of the subcategories was an important aspect to increasing the overall consistency, rigor, and trustworthiness of the study (Krefting, 1991). In explicitly providing discerning criteria for my coding frame, I was able to enhance the dependability of my findings by clearly documenting the exact means used to code the data, thus increasing the ability of another researcher to repeat the study. The strict criteria also heightened the confirmability of my findings by ensuring that “another researcher could
repeat the study and arrive at a comparable conclusion given the same data and context” (Krefting, 1991, p. 221). Trifold, providing direct quotes acted as a modified member checking strategy, which enhanced the credibility of the study by ensuring that informants would recognize their experience in the findings (Krefting, 1991, p. 219). Due to the necessity of protecting the anonymity of participants, it was not possible to ask if my interpretation of data was correct. Therefore, including direct quotes gave an authentic voice to participants and ensured the meaning of their experiences would not get lost in the researcher’s translation.

Because a high number of subcategories existed, the indicator words and examples also helped fulfill Marriam’s (2009) third criteria that all data be mutually exclusive by ensuring one unit of data fit into only one category (p. 186). For example, as I coded data, I could double-check that the segment matched the subcategory criteria and, if I found an overlap, I could refine the definition or create a new subcategory to rectify the discrepancy.

**Step 5 – Revising.** At this point in the analysis, I felt like the material was becoming ingrained and my ability to examine data objectively was waning. Krefting (1991) warned that qualitative researchers would need to be cognizant of their ability to remain objective throughout the study as their close relationship with the subject matter, environment, and informants could potentially skew their judgment and impact the overall credibility of the findings. To address this problem, I decided to take a break from the research and clear my head. After a few weeks, I returned with a fresh outlook to tackle the process of revision. To maintain the credibility of the study and ensure I was on the right path, I also enlisted the help of my faculty advisor, Dr. Jim Parsons, an experienced qualitative researcher who was able to give me unbiased feedback on my process and findings. Krefting (1991) describes this strategy as peer examination and adds that it also functions to enhance credibility by allowing the researcher the opportunity to “discuss
the evolving design of the study” and potentially “contribute to deeper reflexive analysis” (p. 219).

Upon returning from an extended break, I reviewed my coding frame and determined that there were too many subcategories to effectively make meaning of the data. Further inspection revealed that several of the existing 45 subcategories contained significant overlap and convoluted the answer to the research question. Marriam (2009) recommended, “the fewer the categories, the greater the level of abstraction, and the greater each with which you can communicate your findings to others” (p. 187). To merge closely-related themes, I began hand drafting a visual model that connected subcategories to a central concept. For example, the subcategories open and honest, true to oneself, dependable, and fair married together and described the overarching concept of a person of integrity.

According to Marriam (2009), the synthesis of subcategories to formulate overarching main concepts demonstrates a pivotal shift in thinking. She elaborated that moving away from describing concrete material to thinking about the data in an abstract level shows the researcher moving towards a more theoretical view point. This important step aids analysis because it “allows the researcher to draw inferences about future activity” (Marriam, 2009, p. 188). This evolution greatly helped in gaining a deeper understanding about what the data was telling me and propelled me one step closer to answering the research questions.

Now the coding frame consisted of two main categories (Character Traits and Actions), with four central concepts (subcategories) under Character Traits and five central concepts (subcategories) under Actions. A sample of the coding frame can be seen in Table 3.1 and shows the hierarchy of categories and the description used to define them. In this section, ‘Is a Person of Integrity’ is classified under the main category Character Trait and is comprised of the four
sub-subcategories: Open and Honest, True to Yourself, Dependable, and Fair. For the complete
version of the coding frame please see Appendix E.

(Table 3.1) Sample of the Competed Coding Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Trait</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition: character applies to the aggregate of moral qualities that make up and distinguish an individual apart from intelligence, competence or talent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is a Person of Integrity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description: firm adherence to a moral code; refusal to deceive in any way; implies trustworthiness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Indicator words: open, honest, forthright; admit weakness; admit when you don’t know something; asks for help |
| Example: She will be open with you even if she knows her decision will disappoint you. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>True to yourself</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator words: be yourself, know yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: if they didn’t believe in the changes they didn’t push us to do them</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator words: follow through, do what you say you will do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: Followed through with what was said; actions speak loudly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicator words: fairness, fairly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: doing things in a manner that would work best even if it might mean some grumbling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 6 – Pilot Phase and Trial Coding. At this point, the coding frame was ready to test. Schreier (2013) explained that the pilot phase is “crucial for recognizing and modifying any shortcoming in the frame before the main analysis is carried out” (p. 178) because, once you enter the main analysis, the coding frame can no longer be altered. Before I took time to run a complete trial coding session, I selected approximately half of the material from each survey question and checked to ensure my categories and subcategories held up.
As I ran the material through the pilot, I was evaluating the consistency and validity of my categories by assessing the ease by which I was able to assign data segments to the frame (Schreier, 2013, p. 179). If I were at all uncertain between which sub-subcategory a data segment should be placed in, I flagged the problem and revised the definition for those groupings. Often, the solution was found by adding an indicator word to clarify the discrepancy. In case where I found two sub-subcategories that could be used interchangeably, I took the time to set decision rules so there was a clear placement for the data segment (Schreier, 2013, p. 179). An example can be seen in the sub-subcategories ‘Good Listening Skills’ and ‘Values My Opinion’. These two ideas have significant overlap, but can be distinguished by the context in which they are found. By adding decision rules, any ambiguity between where a data segment should be placed is removed, thus increasing the dependability (ability for someone else to repeat the study) and confirmability (the ability of another researcher to arrive at a comparable conclusion) of the study (Krefting, 1991). The example of the decision rules defining these two sub-subcategories demonstrate how the explicit language allows the researcher to consistently code material:

**Good Listening Skills**: focused on being receptive when others come to you with concerns or ideas; open door policy; people leave feeling like they have been heard and respected; especially in times of conflict

**Values My Opinion**: focused on asking for input and valuing others’ opinions and past experience; take advice and learns from others

When I became confident that my coding frame would produce consistent and valid results for anyone who attempted to code the material, I entered the first full round of trial coding. A fresh copy of participant responses was utilized, and I applied the material to the coding frame one question at a time. To enter the data, I used the process of segmentation by
“dividing the material into units in such a way that each unit fits into exactly one (sub)category of the coding frame” (Schreier, 2013, p. 178). I used the highlighter tool in my word processor to highlight individual data segments that would then be copied and pasted into the coding frame (data table). By using the highlighter function, I gained the advantage of being able to visually show where one unit of data ends and another begins. This process guaranteed all pieces of data were accounted for and the point of saturation was reached. This action justified Marriam’s (2009) criteria that categories must be exhaustive, in that all relevant data would fit into the coding frame.

Highlighting the data segments also proved useful in tracking the responses per participant group. For instance, I used a blue highlighter to tag Support Staff responses, a green highlighter to tag teacher responses, and a yellow highlighter to tag the unknown respondent. Tracking each participant groups’ answers helped with organization and allowed opportunities to compare and contrast answers later in the analysis, if so desired.

The final evaluation of the coding frame was performed twelve days after the first round of trial coding, as suggested by Scheier (2013, p. 179). At this time, the second round of trial coding was executed with the exact same procedure as in the first round. The next day, I compared the results of trial number one with the results of trial number two, again looking for consistency and validity between findings. For the comparison I employed two strategies, which closely examined the segmentation between the two trials. First, I checked that the units were the same size and interpreted in the same way. Second, I counted the number of times an entry was made per sub-subcategory, totalled the results, and compared the frequency with which each sub-subcategory was cited. A few minor tweaks were made to further clarify category definitions and consolidate themes, and I was ready for the main analysis.
Step 7 – Main Analysis. The main analysis involved applying the coding frame to all the material in the exact same process outlined in the pilot phase. The results of the main analysis are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Summary

The intention of this chapter was to introduce the reader to the philosophy behind qualitative research and explain how The Spirals of Inquiry provided the framework for the research design. A thorough discussion regarding basic qualitative research as a methodological approach and the procedures of content analysis demonstrated how this study was grounded within the context of qualitative research. Specifically, I provided details outlining how participants were recruited, the ethical considerations and safeguards that were implemented, and the rationale behind the application of a written response survey questionnaire.

Issues surrounding trustworthiness and rigor of the study were addressed through the use of strategies such as peer examination, reflexivity, modified member checking, and code re/code processes. I explained how these strategies worked to enhance four criteria essential to increasing the merit of qualitative research (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability). I also expounded on the five criteria (responsive to the research question, exhaustive, mutually exclusive, sensitizing, and conceptually congruent) used to enhance the consistency and validity of the categories in my coding frame. To conclude the chapter, I provided detailed steps outlining the process undertaken to analyze the vast amount of contextually rich data collected in this research project.
Chapter 4 – Results

Chapter Introduction

This chapter will briefly review the significance of the written response survey questionnaire as a means to collect qualitative data for the investigation, and recapitulate the participants in the current study. Next, the structure and components of the coding frame will be discussed and the dominant themes of the coding frame will be established as the overall results of the data analysis. Last, various data tables designed to organize and compare the results of the coding frame will reveal the frequency that each main idea (subcategory) and theme (sub-subcategory) was tagged during the main data analysis.

Methodology Review

As described in the previous chapter, qualitative research was used to investigate the questions in this research project:

1). What factors do staff in elementary school settings consider to be most important in building relational trust?

2). How are principals in rural communities developing trusting relationships with their staff?

A written response survey questionnaire was used to acquire candid thoughts and opinions about the factors that impact relational trust from the point of view of those working in an elementary school setting. The survey contained the following four questions that were designed to illicit context-specific information about key factors impacting trust in relationships between co-workers and in relationships between school staff and the principal:

1. Think of colleague or co-worker with whom you have high levels of relational trust. Explain what this person does on a professional level that allows you to trust them.
2. Think of a principal that you have worked with. What character traits and/or actions did this individual demonstrate that allowed you and/or your colleagues to gain relational trust in them?

3. In your opinion, what factors have the greatest impact on relational trust? Why?

4. A man/woman is new to administration and has just been assigned their first principalship in your community. What advice would you give to this person as they work to build relational trust with their staff?

Because of the researcher’s role in the school district where the research was being conducted, the application of a written response survey was vital to the integrity of this study for several reasons: 1) it allowed the researcher to explore the trust relationship between school staff and the principal within a rural educational setting without jeopardizing the safety and well-being of the participants; 2) it permitted participant anonymity, which ensured all participation was voluntary and that there would be no actual or perceived repercussions for participating; 3) the safeguard of anonymity allowed for participants to speak honestly and freely; and, 4) the ability to collect unbiased and genuine answers provided contextually rich, evidence-based data that could be analyzed to provide valuable information to educational leaders looking to build and sustain a culture of trust in their setting.

The participants of this study were teachers (classroom teachers, librarians, student-support specialists, and teachers on call) and support staff (education assistants, secretaries, custodians) working in a rural community in the interior of British Columbia. In total, 86 survey questionnaires were distributed to school staff throughout four schools in the area, and a total of 26 survey questionnaires were completed and submitted for analysis. Of the 26 completed
surveys, 14 participants identified themselves as teacher (54 %), 11 as support staff (42 %), and one unknown (4 %).

Participant responses were transcribed into a Word document by a neutral party and then submitted to the researcher. The responses ranged in style from bulleted words and short phrases that summarized thoughts and opinions, to explanatory paragraphs that retold experiences and conveyed individual points of view. The vast amount of data in the transcribed document was worked through the process of qualitative content analysis, which included an extensive coding and re-coding process that assigned data segments to a coding frame. The categories within the coding frame underwent several stages of revision to produce a comprehensive three-tiered classification system that would effectively reduce and interpret the data in a manageable, reliable, and meaningful way.

The Coding Frame

The hierarchical organization of the three-tiered coding frame used in the main analysis of this study is presented in Table 4.1. The coding frame was structured around two content-driven main categories: Character Traits and Actions. The second tier of the coding frame consisted of nine abstract themes divided between the two main categories. The subcategories under Character Trait are: Is a Person of Integrity, Has a Growth Mindset, Is Approachable, and Has a Strong Work Ethic. The subcategories under Action are: Demonstrates Effective Communication Skills, Promotes an Inclusive Environment, Models Best Practice, Demonstrates Strong Leadership Skills, and Takes Time to Build and Maintain Personal Connections.

The subcategories in the coding frame represent the central ideas embedded within participant responses that were uncovered during the data analysis. The third tier of the coding frame consists of data-driven sub-subcategories (illustrated in green font) and are words and
phrases directly copied from participant responses that characterize the central ideas (subcategories) in the coding frame. To clarify, ‘Is a Person of Integrity’ is a subcategory classified under the main category Character Trait and is comprised of the four related subsubcategories: Open and Honest, True to Yourself, Dependable, and Fair.

Table 4.1. Three-Tiered Coding Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Trait</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is a Person of Integrity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Demonstrates Effective Communication Skills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open and Honest</td>
<td>Maintains Confidentiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True to Yourself</td>
<td>Good Listening Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependable</td>
<td>Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Effective Communication &amp; Transparent Decision Making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Has a Growth Mindset</strong></td>
<td><strong>Promotes an Inclusive Environment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>Team Player</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-Minded</td>
<td>Shares information &amp; Collaborates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
<td>Presents a Common Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is Approachable</strong></td>
<td><strong>Models Best Practice</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approachable</td>
<td>Lead By Example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>Shows Respect for Everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Humor</td>
<td>Professional Dress &amp; Conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humble &amp; Kind</td>
<td>Follows Communication Protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Has a Strong Work Ethic</strong></td>
<td><strong>Demonstrates Strong Leadership Skills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Working</td>
<td>Takes Charge, Shows Strength and Control and Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated</td>
<td>Knowledgeable / Visionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Expectations</td>
<td>Is a Confidence Builder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Takes Time to Build and Maintain Personal Connections</strong></td>
<td>Proactive Problem Solving / Thoughtful Decision Making Disciplinarian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As described in Chapter 3, to ensure the reliability, dependability, and transferability of the coding frame, the categories underwent several stages of revision. For instance, to ensure consistent data analysis, definitions, descriptions, indicator words, examples, and, in some cases,
decision rules were added to each category to create clear and concise groupings that were: 1) responsive, 2) exhaustive, 3) mutually exclusive, 4) sensitizing, and 5) conceptually congruent (Marriam, 2009). Furthermore, the indicator words and examples used to outline the categories were copied directly from participant responses, which proved to be a valuable device for increasing the trustworthiness of the study by 1) ensuring that informants would recognize their experience in the findings and 2) by giving an authentic voice to participants, which ensured the meaning of their experiences would not get lost in the researcher’s translation. The complete version of the coding frame, which was used in the main analysis of this study, is presented in Appendix E.

The completed coding frame is essential to the purpose of this chapter because it contains the results of the data analysis. To clarify, the categories within the coding frame reduced and organized the data into a manageable format that could be communicated to the reader and understood in a meaningful and productive way. The subcategories in the coding frame are vital elements in this study because they are the overarching concepts and central ideas found in participant responses and because they provide answers to the research questions. The sub-subcategories are also pivotal because they include the recurring words and phrases that characterize the central concepts, and deepen the overall understanding of the data by providing insight into key factors that might have a greater impact on relational trust over others. For example, the sub-subcategories that repeat most frequently throughout the collective data set may be of greater concern or priority to an educational leader looking to strengthen trust-based relationships.

The completed coding frame is lengthy; for the purpose of this chapter the coding frame will be dissected into its main components for closer inspection. A synopsis preceding each table
will highlight a key feature of the coding frame that worked to improve the trustworthiness of the data analysis.

Table 4.2 highlights the first component of the coding frame and focuses on the two main categories, Character Traits and Actions, which provide the overall structure of the classification scheme and the primary means of sorting data. The main categories are clearly distinguished from one another through the use of an explicit definition, which proved as a useful guide during data analysis to delineate subsequent categories in the frame. Another important aspect of the coding frame helping to organize an impressive amount of data is the colour scheme that continues throughout the analysis; subcategories classified under Character Trait are coded in red font and subcategories classified under Action are code in blue.

Table 4.2. Main Categories Provide Structure of the Classification Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Completed Coding Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Character Trait</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition:</strong> character applies to the aggregate of moral qualities that make up and distinguish an individual apart from intelligence, competence or talent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition:</strong> a thing done; the accomplishment of a thing usually over a period of time, in stages, or with the possibility of repetition; behaviour or conduct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 4.3 through 4.7 highlight the main components of the coding frame that house the central themes (subcategories) uncovered during data analysis, their respective sub-subcategories, and the descriptors that characterize each idea. Notably, the description provided under each subcategory is an important feature of the coding frame because it clarifies the meaning of the central concept as it pertains to this study. Furthermore, the description works to clarify the researcher’s interpretation of the data for the reader and for others that might replicate the study.
Table 4.3. Descriptors and Criteria for Central Themes: Is a Person of Integrity and Demonstrates Effective Communication Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is a Person of Integrity</th>
<th>Demonstrates Effective Communication Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> firm adherence to a moral code; refusal to deceive in any way; implies trustworthiness</td>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> makes oneself available for others to bring concerns forward and is willing to listen and respect others’ points of view; creates an environment that is safe to share sensitive information; actively and effectively uses verbal and/or written communication to relay information to staff, students and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open &amp; Honest</strong></td>
<td><strong>Maintains Confidentiality</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> open, honest, forthright; admit weakness; admit when you don’t know something; asks for help</td>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> keeps confidence; maintains discretion; privacy; does not disclose; you feel safe to talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> She will be open with you even if she knows her decision will disappoint you.</td>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> does not disclose information I may have relayed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>True to yourself</strong></td>
<td><strong>Good Listening Skills</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> be yourself; know yourself</td>
<td><em>Decisions rule:</em> focused on being receptive when others come to you with concerns or ideas; open door policy; people leave feeling like they have been heard and respected; especially in times of conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> if they didn’t believe in the changes they didn’t push us to do them</td>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> listens; open door policy; hears both sides; my concerns are important; non-judgemental; does not criticize;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Listens and doesn’t constantly take over the conversation or criticize; listens to me when I need to talk or I have questions without making me feel silly or dumb; Ability to listen to and understand (and value) all sides of a situation, issue, dispute, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependable</strong></td>
<td><strong>Available</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> follow through, do what you say you will do</td>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> available; made time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Followed through with what was said; actions speak loudly</td>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> ALWAYS have time, no matter how busy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fair</strong></td>
<td><strong>Effective Communication &amp; Transparent Decision Making</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> fairness, fairly</td>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> inform staff and community; discuss expectations; clear communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> doing things in a manner that would work best even if it might mean some grumbling</td>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Effective communication with staff and parents and keep the lines of communication open at all times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another important feature of the coding frame, demonstrated in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4, is the inclusion of decision rules for those sub-subcategories that contain significant overlap. The decision rules provide explicit scenarios and/or discerning words to guide the researcher and to avoid confusion or uncertainty during the data analysis. Good Listening Skills (see Table 4.3) and Values My Opinion (see Table 4.4) are examples of very closely related sub-subcategories that can be discerned by the decision rules outlining the context of which the action of ‘listening’ happens.

Table 4.4. Descriptors and Criteria for Central Themes: Has a Growth Mindset and Promotes an Inclusive Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Has a Growth Mindset</th>
<th>Promotes an Inclusive Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong>: a belief that success is based on hard work; failure is part of learning; an understanding that everyone has a unique set of strengths and weaknesses</td>
<td><strong>Description</strong>: takes a team approach to completing tasks and works toward a common goal; the understanding that professional sharing and collaboration improves success for all; everyone in the school has an important role and their perspective and opinions are valued; everyone has a voice; inclusive discussions and decision making practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Compassionate</strong> <em>Decision Rule</em>: focused on the ability to connect to or relate with another individual’s tribulation; does not criticize mistakes</td>
<td><strong>Team Player</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator words: Understanding; empathy; compassion; mistakes; supportive</td>
<td><strong>Team Player</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: Shows compassion and empathy; my mistakes are not horrible or unique, and give me the impression that they have made many of the same in their career lives</td>
<td>Indicator words: does their fair share; works as a team; Helps out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open-Minded</strong> <em>Decision Rule</em>: the word ‘open’ or ‘willing’ is used when describing the ability to hear/listen to others opinions</td>
<td>Example: Joined in and helped out; doesn’t just delegate; we work with them, not for them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator words: considers others ideas; compromise, accepting; open to new things; open to hear good and bad</td>
<td><strong>Shares information &amp; Collaborates</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: open to ideas or opinions on what has/hasn’t worked in the past; Tries new ideas and learns from mistakes</td>
<td>Indicator words: concrete strategies; sound advice; student performance; resources; shares when needed; reports back; keeps me informed; bounces ideas; invites me to class during teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Attitude</strong></td>
<td>Example: shares professional resources and talks about how they have worked in their classes; keeps me informed of situations at work and shares why he/she thinks/does something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator words: positive outlook</td>
<td><strong>Presents a Common Front</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indicator words: has your back; stand up for me; backing up staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As demonstrated in Table 4.5, indicator words depicting individual traits or mannerisms often sufficed in defining and setting apart one sub-subcategory from another. The advantage of this feature, is that indicator words taken directly from the data set could be used as a matching tool for the researcher during the coding process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example:</th>
<th>has a positive attitude</th>
<th>Example:</th>
<th>Demonstrate he/she has their teachers backs in actions and words to parents, other staff and students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Values My Opinion</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Decision Rule – focused on asking for input and valuing others’ opinions and past experience; take advice and learns from others</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> includes everyone; welcome; part of the school; included in discussions; seeks and respects input; consult; values my opinion; learns from others; asks questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Example: He made me know that my opinions and concerns were valued;</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Treats Everyone Equally and Makes Me Feel Included</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Indicator words: Consistency in relating to all staff; favoritism; support all workers; EAs are part of the team; sense of balance; includes everyone; welcome; important part of the school team</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Example: Sometimes support staff gets treated differently than the rest of the staff; included EA’s as part of the teaching team of the school; I feel welcome and part of the school team</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4.5: Descriptors and Criteria for Central Themes: Is Approachable and Models Best Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Is Approachable</strong></th>
<th><strong>Models Best Practice</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> easy to speak to or deal with; friendly</td>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> words, actions and appearance demonstrate a high professional standard and code of ethics; model the behaviour you would like to see in others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approachable</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lead By Example</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator words: easy going; approachable</td>
<td>Indicator words: showed confidence; assumes best intentions; leads by example; models high level of trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: mild mannerism in the body language</td>
<td>Example: assumed / trusted I was doing the best job I could; Demonstrated through actions that the entire staff is a “team”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friendly</strong></td>
<td><strong>Shows Respect for Everyone</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator words: friendly, courteous, congenial</td>
<td>Indicator words: mutual respect; never use authority as power; not condescending; respectful; demonstrates or shows all opinions are respected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: did their fair share with a smile</td>
<td>Example: if you speak or act disrespectfully I will no longer trust you as a leader, and may be nervous to relay information or ask questions for fear of reprisal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sense of Humor</strong></td>
<td><strong>Professional Dress &amp; Conduct</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator words: humour</td>
<td>Indicator words: conduct, prepared, organized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: Used HUMOUR in appropriate situations.</td>
<td>Example: navigate the rough with style and grace; be a person of respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humble &amp; Kind</strong></td>
<td><strong>Follows Communication Protocol</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator words: humble; kind</td>
<td>Indicator words: talk behind back; betrayal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example: be humble, be kind</td>
<td>Example: They speak directly to colleagues when they have concerns; Does not talk negatively about other colleagues around me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another key feature strengthening the trustworthiness of the coding frame is the ‘example’ that illustrates each sub-subcategory. The sub-subcategory ‘example’ complements the indicator word and is powerful because it gives an authentic voice to the participants while illustrating the point.
### Table 4.6. Descriptors and Criteria for Central Themes: Has a Strong Work Ethic and Demonstrates Strong Leadership Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Has a Strong Work Ethic</strong></th>
<th><strong>Demonstrates Strong Leadership Skills</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> a set of values centered on the importance of doing work; desire or determination to work hard</td>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> a person who has the experience and knowledge to make informed decisions in the best interest of others; takes charge and shows strength of character in appropriate situations;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hard Working</strong></td>
<td><strong>Takes Charge, Shows Strength and Control and Confidence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> hard work; pride</td>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> decisive; resolute; shows strength of purpose; take charge; strong; control of emotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Example:</em> works hard and shows pride in the job</td>
<td><em>Example:</em> Speaking skills need to show professionalism, confidence, and authority; Calmness - even on his worst day, he would appear cool and collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dedicated</strong></td>
<td><strong>Knowledgeable / Visionary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> devoted, dedication, commitment; part of the community</td>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> is knowledgeable; wisdom; experience teaching; vision; common goals; guide school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Example:</em> Demonstrated a commitment to the job by getting to work early, leaving later</td>
<td><em>Example:</em> understands the difficulties (and great things) about being a classroom teacher; enveloping a cohesive staff so everyone has the same goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Expectations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Is a Confidence Builder</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> high expectations</td>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> complement, praise, confidence builder; encouraged me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Example:</em> High levels of expectations for themselves, staff, and children</td>
<td><em>Example:</em> was encouraging with an honest demeanor and regularly gave praise and recognition when due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proactive Problem Solving and Thoughtful Decision Making</strong></td>
<td><strong>Disciplinarian</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> facilitates problem solving; takes initiative; implement solutions; decisions affect others; hasty decisions</td>
<td><em>Indicator words:</em> fair but firm; holds staff accountable; consistent consequences; administrative presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Example:</em> did not come across as authoritarian, but rather as a facilitator; acting upon important matter to solve problems; ability to think through the consequences of an action and not make hasty, knee-jerking decisions</td>
<td><em>Example:</em> enforcing the supervisory role to reassure the staff that the principal “will deal with the problem...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The last key feature of the coding frame is that the total subcategories and sub-subcategories are not necessarily proportionate. For instance, as demonstrated by the blank cell in Table 4.7, there are a total of four subcategories under Character Traits and a total of five subcategories under Actions. By the same token, fourteen sub-subcategories quantify Character Trait, compared to twenty-one collective sub-subcategories comprising Action. The discrepancy is the result of a category construction process that was responsive to the data at hand, and in this regard, represents one of the biggest strengths of the coding frame. To clarify, the categories in the complete coding frame are reflective of the thoughts and opinions shared by participants in the study and not the result of a contrived attempt to produce a symmetrical and aesthetically pleasing analysis tool.

Table 4.7. Descriptors and Criteria for Central Themes: Takes Time to Build and Maintain Personal Connections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description: Takes Time to Build and Maintain Personal Connections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> Makes a point to interact with others outside of work; shows an interest/caring for how others are doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Builds Personal Relationships</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> greet; show interest; shares personal info; get to know everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Spend some quality time with staff outside of school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Takes Time to Check In</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> checks in to see how you are doing; show you care; personal concerns; takes time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Sometimes a person just checking to make sure that you are okay makes it easier to get through your day and go home feeling good about your job and yourself.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Makes Children a Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> best interest of children; encouraging attitude; raise enthusiasm; incorporate family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Positive interactions with children; able to relate on their level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organization and Comparison of Results

The main data analysis in this study involved the application of participant responses to the coding frame. Through the method of subsumption described in the previous chapter, a total of 409 data segments were entered into the coding frame. To increase the trustworthiness of the study, and to ensure that all the data was accounted for and consistently entered into the coding frame, each data segment was colour coded according to participant group, and copied and pasted into the coding frame under the proper sub-subcategory. To clarify, each of the 409 data segments entered into the coding frame were organized according to the question of the survey and represented by the colour of the participant group. The fifteen-page document of the main data analysis, which includes copied and pasted data units from each participant group into the coding frame, can be seen in Appendix F.

Upon completion of the main data analysis the results of the coding frame were further inspected. First, the total number of data segments entered per subcategory were totaled and listed in Table 4.8. Like the colour scheme presented the coding frame (see Table 4.1), the blue font is representative of sub-categories under the main category Actions, and the red font is representative of the sub-categories under Character Traits. The value beside each sub-subcategory (green font) indicates the number of data segments entered under that grouping.

For instance, the category ‘Team Player’ was tagged eleven times in the main data analysis; Shares information and Collaborates was tagged 15 times; Values My Opinion was tagged 22 times; Presents a Common Front was tagged nine times; and, Treats Everyone Equally and Makes Me Feel Included was tagged 15 times, for a combined total of 72 data entries under the main concept ‘Promotes an Inclusive Environment.’ It is important to note, because of the open-ended written responses and the criteria for mutually exclusive data segments, it was
common that one participant’s answer to a single question produced more than one data entry in the coding frame.

Table 4.8. Subcategory Order of Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategory Order of Frequency</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promotes an Inclusive Environment (72)</strong></td>
<td>Takes a team approach to completing tasks and works toward a common goal; the understanding that professional sharing and collaboration improves success for all; everyone in the school has an important role and their perspective and opinions are valued; everyone has a voice; inclusive discussions and decision making practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Team Player (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Shares information and Collaborates (15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Values My Opinion (22)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Presents a Common Front (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Treats Everyone Equally and Makes Me Feel Included (15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstrates Effective Communication Skills (69)</strong></td>
<td>Makes oneself available for others to bring concerns forward and is willing to listen and respect others’ points of view; creates an environment that is safe to share sensitive information; actively and effectively uses verbal and/or written communication to relay information to staff, students and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Maintains Confidentiality (16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Good Listening Skills (29)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Available (10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Effective Communication &amp; Transparent Decision Making (14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Models Best Practice (64)</strong></td>
<td>Words, actions and appearance demonstrate a high professional standard and code of ethics; model the behaviour you would like to see in others; Lead by example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Lead by Example (15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Shows Respect for Everyone (28)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Professional Dress &amp; Conduct (14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Follows Communication Protocol (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstrates Strong Leadership Skills (52)</strong></td>
<td>A person who has the experience and knowledge to make informed decisions in the best interest of others; takes charge and shows strength of character in appropriate situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Takes Charge, Shows Strength and Control and Confidence (17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Knowledgeable / Visionary (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Is a Confidence Builder (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Proactive Problem Solving and Thoughtful Decision Making (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Disciplinarian (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is a Person of Integrity (49)</strong></td>
<td>Firm adherence to a moral code; refusal to deceive in any way; implies trustworthiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Open &amp; Honest (25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-True to yourself (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Dependable (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Fair (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Takes Time to Build and Maintain Personal Connections (37)
*Description:* Makes a point to interact with others outside of work; shows an interest/caring for how others are doing
- Builds Personal Relationships (21) - Takes Time to Check In (9) - Makes Children a Priority (7)

Has a Growth Mindset (36)
*Description:* A belief that success is based on hard work; failure is part of learning; an understanding that everyone has a unique set of strengths and weaknesses
- Compassionate (15) - Open-Minded (18) - Positive Attitude (3)

Is Approachable (20)
*Description:* Easy to speak to or deal with; friendly
- Approachable (6) - Friendly (8) - Sense of Humor (5) - Humble & Kind (1)

Has a Strong Work Ethic (10)
*Description:* A set of values centered on the importance of doing work; desire or determination to work hard
- Hard Working (3) - Dedicated (5) - High Expectations (2)

Likewise, Table 4.9 lists the frequency that sub-subcategories were tagged in the main data analysis and, like the previous table, is colour coded to match the colour scheme in the coding frame (see Table 4.1). Table 4.10 summarizes Table 4.9 and lists the top five sub-subcategories under each main category.

**Table 4.9. Sub-Subcategory Order of Frequency**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Subcategory</th>
<th>Frequency Cited</th>
<th>Sub-Subcategory</th>
<th>Frequency Cited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good Listening Skills</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Available</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shows Respect For Everyone</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open and Honest</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Presents Common Front</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values My Opinion</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Takes Time To Check In</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builds Personal Relationships</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open-Minded</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Follows Communication Protocol</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes Charge/Strength/Confidence</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Makes Children a Priority</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidentiality</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Approachable</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Knowledgeable / Visionary</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shares Information/ Collaborates</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Disciplinarian</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.10. Top Five Sub-Subcategories Per Main Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Traits</th>
<th>Frequency Cited</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Frequency Cited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open and Honest</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Good Listening Skills</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Minded</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Shows Respect For Everyone</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Values My Opinion</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependable</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Build Personal Relations</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Takes Charge</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned, during the main analysis the data segments that were copied and pasted into the coding frame were also colour coded according to the participant group that cited them. This colour coding allowed for the comparison of responses between the participant groups. Table 4.11 and Table 4.12 compare the frequency of subcategories cited under Character Traits and Actions across three domains: All Participants Combined, Support Staff, and Teacher. For instance, during the data analysis 49 units of material were entered into the coding frame under ‘Is a Person of Integrity’ and 27 of those units were cited in support staff responses and 22 were cited in teacher responses. It should be noted, there is a discrepancy between the sum of the support staff and teacher data units, and the combined total for the sub-categories: Demonstrates Effective Communication Skills, Promotes an Inclusive Environment, Demonstrates Strong Leadership Skills, and Takes Time to Build and Maintain Personal Connections. The discrepancy
indicates the number of the data segments in those categories that were cited by the ‘unknown’ participant.

Table 4.11. Character Trait Subcategory: Frequency Cited Comparison Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>All Participants Combined</th>
<th>Support Staff</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Is a Person of Integrity (49)</td>
<td>Is a Person of Integrity (27)</td>
<td>Is a Person of Integrity (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Has a Growth Mindset (36)</td>
<td>Has a Growth Mindset (20)</td>
<td>Has a Growth Mindset (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Is Approachable (20)</td>
<td>Is Approachable (10)</td>
<td>Is Approachable (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Has a Strong Work Ethic (10)</td>
<td>Has a Strong Work Ethic (2)</td>
<td>Has a Strong Work Ethic (8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12. Action Subcategory: Frequency Cited Comparison Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>All Participants Combined</th>
<th>Support Staff</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Promotes an Inclusive Environment (72)</td>
<td>Promotes an Inclusive Environment (41)</td>
<td>Demonstrates Effective Communication Skills (43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Demonstrates Effective Communication Skills (69)</td>
<td>Demonstrates Effective Communication Skills (25)</td>
<td>Models Best Practice (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Models Best Practice (64)</td>
<td>Models Best Practice (22)</td>
<td>Demonstrates Strong Leadership Skills (37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Demonstrates Strong Leadership Skills (52)</td>
<td>Demonstrates Strong Leadership Skills (14)</td>
<td>Promotes an Inclusive Environment (28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to outline the three-tiered hierarchical structure of the coding frame used to reduce and interpret the vast amount of contextually-rich data collected in this study. The coding frame is a vital element in this chapter because the central concepts and themes that comprise the coding frame are the results of the data analysis; and, therefore, they provide answers to the research questions being investigated in this study. Second, the results are further refined through the use of data tables that organize and compare the frequency of which recurring themes and concepts were found in participant responses. The next chapter will examine the data tables presented in this chapter and discuss the findings of this study.
Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

Findings and Current Literature

The results of this study illustrate what school staff from a rural area in British Columbia consider to be the most important factors impacting the trust relationship between co-workers, and between staff and the principal in an elementary school setting. Findings both complement and contribute to the literature described in Chapter 2.

Central Themes. The findings of this study, which emerged through the process of content data analysis, revealed nine central concepts that impact relational trust (see Appendix E) and complement the literature discussed in Chapter 2. The findings from the current study fit well with Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) theory that trust is discerned across four specific considerations (respect, competence in core role responsibility, personal regard and personal integrity), and Tschannen-Moran and Hoy’s (2000) five facets of trust (benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty and openness).

Participants in this study saw the importance of promoting an inclusive environment and demonstrating effective communication skills as essential elements to building and sustaining a culture of trust in a school environment. They repeatedly reported themes such as values my opinion, treats everyone equally, makes me feel welcome and included, shares information and collaborates, and genuinely listens when I come with concerns as key factors that impact trust. One participant stated, “He made me know that my opinions and concerns were valued.” Another participant recognized genuine listening as a key factor in a high-trust relationship and explicated, “They listen to me when I need to talk or when I have questions without making me feel silly or dumb.”
Many participants also identified a strong need for balanced inclusion and equal recognition that “EA’s are part of the teaching team of the school.” This finding supports Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) work that posits respect as one of four considerations from which trust is discerned. Within a school environment respect is characterized by 1) the recognition of the mutual dependence between roles in the school; 2) the emphasis that each person in the school plays an equally important role in educating children; 3) the consistent genuine listening to what people have to say; and, 4) the basic valuing of other peoples’ ideas (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 23).

Along the same lines, the study found that showing respect for others by including both support staff and teachers in the decision-making process was vital to a healthy trust relationship between school staff and the principal. Both participant groups described “seeks your input and opinions, and often, acts on them,” and “includes me in some discussions” as important to feeling like a valued team member. A teacher further described, “The consultation phase feels like they value input and do not just dictate.” Conversely, the statement, “Support staff are not included in meetings that have information about the students they work with,” indicated the damaging effect of being looked over and excluded from such discussions.

These results are supported in the literature that asserts for educational leaders to gain trust they must extend trust to others by being open and forthcoming with information, and by getting staff on board with plans by engaging them in a participative, strength-based visioning process (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Tschannen-Moran (2014) explained, engaging faculty in developing a collective vision to which all are committed and then including staff in the development of the plan allows the principal to be engaged with teacher improvement without being disrespectful.
A second theme that emerged from this study was the expectation that administrators show strong leadership skills and have the ability to do their job well. The findings indicated being decisive and resolute; showing strength of purpose; taking charge and acting on problems; demonstrating professional, confident, and authoritative public speaking skills; having knowledge, experience, and understanding the challenges of being a classroom teacher; having strong mediating skills to help with staff conflict; and implementing fair but firm consequences with students were essential elements in effective management and key factors impacting the level of trust that staff had in the principal. The literature confirms, in interdependent environments where people rely on others to accomplish goals, good intention is not enough and to garner the trust of others individuals one must be competent in performing tasks as expected and according to appropriate standards (Tschannen-Moran, 2014).

Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) work supports this finding and identified competence in core role responsibility as another consideration for discerning trust. They cautioned, because of the complexity of schooling, poor performance is much easier to judge; and, if gross incompetence persists within any given role in the school environment the trust relationship is damaged and efforts toward improvements will be undermined. This erosion of trust is supported in the findings of this study when the participants were able to explicitly describe negative actions they had experienced with a principal, such as a condescending attitude, speaking down to others, belittling staff in front of parents, and yelling at adults and children alike. Furthermore, participants reported the effects of gross incompetence in this area resulted in a nervous school culture where people were withdrawn and made deliberate efforts to avoid interactions with the principal. One support staff participant explained, “If you speak or act disrespectfully I will no longer trust you as a leader, and may be nervous to relay information or ask questions for fear of
reprisal.” Likewise, a teacher asserted, “If you choose to bully your way through – you will pay a price. Others will NOT respect your direction(s).”

According to Bryk and Schneider (2002), a third consideration in discerning levels of trust within a social exchange is personal regard, which pertains to benevolence and the attempt at reducing feelings of vulnerability. This domain features one’s willingness to extend themselves beyond the formal requirements of the job and show a genuine caring and concern for the personal well-being of others (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). The importance of personal regard is supported in the finding of this study when the participants reported “taking time to show you care,” “being compassionate,” and “building personal relationships” as key factors impacting the trust relationship. One participant indicated, “Sometimes a person just checking to make sure that you are okay makes it easier to get through your day and go home feeling good about your job and yourself.” Other participants cited, “Spending some quality time with staff outside of school,” “Took the time to know me on a personal level,” “Shares some personal information,” and “Is considerate in inquiring about the personal concerns we often are experiencing,” as important components in building trust. Several participants also described the positive effects of a principal who took the time to show they cared by visiting everyone before school started to see how things were going and if there was anything she could do to help.

Participants also discussed the importance of being a person of integrity and modeling best practice as a means to garner trust. In the creation of a trusting environment, being “open and honest at all times” and making sure to “follow through with anything you say you will do” was essential. Participants warned, “Your actions say more than your words,” and stressed “lead by example,” “have positive interaction with children,” and “fight for the best interest of your students.” This supports the literature that contends personal integrity, which is consistency
between what people say and what people do, is another discernment of a trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). As Bryk and Schneider (2002) asserted, this domain implies reliable interpersonal behaviour, that a moral-ethical perspective guides one’s work, and that all decisions are made in the best interest of children. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) also established honesty, “which speaks to a person’s character, integrity, and authenticity” (p. 558) as being linked to faculty trust in schools and affirm that “many scholars and researchers see honesty as a pivotal facet of trust” (p. 558).

Trust as a Dynamic Construct. The interpretation of the data in this study resulted in nine central concepts that coincide with Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) four considerations of trust and Tschannan-Moran and Hoy’s (2000) five facets of trust. The analysis of the participants written responses indicated significant overlap in the main concepts that were identified, indicating that many factors come together simultaneously to form the concept of trust. This overlap supports the literature that concludes, “among teachers and principals, all aspects of trust seem to carry significant importance … and form a unitary and coherent concept of trust in schools” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Furthermore, the examination of the written responses revealed that it was common for participants to cite multiple factors and themes in their answer to a single question in attempts to convey what they believed impacted relational trust. These findings support the literature that posits trust is “a dynamic interplay among four considerations: respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity, [and] Individual school community members simultaneously analyze the behaviour of others through all four lenses” (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 23).

An important finding in this study is that support staff and teachers experienced their work environment differently and reported a different viewpoint on which factors impacted trust
the most. This finding was not a surprise to me because, although teachers and support staff work side-by-side toward shared goals, each group operates as its own entity with its own contractual protocols, union body, and threshold qualification, and plays a different role set within the school. For instance, teachers are expected to deliver a set of curriculum through innovative lessons designed meet the social-emotional and academic needs of a diverse student population, assess student learning, and report out on student progress. In contrast, although they play a vital role in student learning, educational assistants are not held accountable by parents for student achievement. Another difference in the experience of the education environment is that elementary teachers often have their own classrooms over which they exercise significant ownership and control. On the contrary, education assistants are required to adapt to multiple styles of teaching and be flexible to changing routines as they enter and exit multiple learning spaces throughout their day while working closely with our most vulnerable students.

Both groups are of equal importance and rely on each other to accomplish school goals; however, the differing role sets bring a distinct perspective and a different set of experiences in the work setting. Examining the responses separately, it appears that each group put differing amounts of weight on the themes that were reported. The results of this study suggested that promoting an inclusive environment was of great significance to the support staff in this study. For example, the support staff cited ‘Promotes an Inclusive Environment’ in 36% of their responses, which was 14% more common than the next highest subcategory in their analysis. In addition, support staff in this study repeatedly referenced the sub-subcategories ‘Shows Respect for Everyone’ and ‘Treats Everyone Equally and Makes Me Feel Included’ as the most important factors impacting trust. The common perspective reported was, “Sometimes support staff gets treated differently than the rest of the staff.” Participants in the support staff group documented
that principals with whom they had high trust “Included EA’s as part of the teaching team of the school” and “Emphasized to teachers how EA’s and other support staff were an important element of the ‘team’.” This participant group also advised that principals looking build trust should make an effort to maintain “Consistency in relating to all staff.”

Comparatively, the teachers in this study cited ‘Promotes an Inclusive Environment’ in 16% of their responses, and reported the sub-subcategory ‘Treats Everyone Equally and Makes Me Feel Included’ twice, both of which is noticeably less than their counterparts. In contrast, the teachers put the majority of emphasis on the central theme ‘Demonstrates Effective Communication Skills,’ and placed a heavy focus on the importance of having good listening skills. Teachers reported that trust was earned by a principal who had an “Open-door policy;” “Was always willing to listen/lend an ear;” “Had the ability to listen to and understand (and value) all sides of a situation, issue, dispute, etc.;” “Would not brush off any concerns or issues;” and, “Listened and did not constantly take over the conversation or criticize.”

The substantive difference in the frequency that some themes were cited between each participant group supports the literature, which contends that, “although all of these facets of trust are important, their relative weight will depend on the nature of the interdependence and consequent vulnerability in the relationship” (Tschannen-Moran, 2014, p. 39). Tschannen-Moran (2014) clarified, “People at different hierarchical levels examine and weigh sources of trust-relevant information differently” (p. 41). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) also assert, “Trust may be based on one’s disposition to trust, on moods and emotions, on values and attitudes, on calculative motives, on institutional supports for trust, or on knowledge of or a sense of identification with the other person” (p. 558). My findings support this literature because 1) support staff are at a different hierarchical level within the school system, and therefore have an
increased vulnerability within their relationships with teachers, and their relationship with the principal, and viewed factors that influence trust differently; and, 2) within the 26 participants there are a multitude of personalities, backgrounds, experience levels, and personal history influencing social exchange at all hierarchal levels within each school setting, thus swaying individual perspectives.

**Current Findings and Change Literature.** The current findings in this study also support change literature that emphasized the need for strong interpersonal relationships based on trust before the implementation of reform initiatives (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Kaser & Halbert, 2009; Louis, 2007). The participants in the current study spoke to trust before change in their responses to the fourth question in the survey asking, “What advice would you give to [a new principal] as they work to build relational trust with their staff?” Participants identified the need for principals to be patient and build relationships, get to know the staff, students and their families, as well as take time to understand the culture of the school and why things have been done in the past before making changes.

The literature confirms this patience and suggests that administrators need to assess levels of trust prior to making any significant change, and address low trust issues before moving ahead with organizational improvements (Louis, 2007). Because trust helps to moderate the stress and vulnerability that comes from high levels of uncertainty associated with change (Kaser & Halbert, 2009), it increases the moral imperative needed to put in the extra effort required for lasting change (Tschannen-Moran, 2014) and it provides a cooperative social network to support the inevitable dip in performance and lower moral that often comes in the initial stages of change (Louis, 2007).
In addition, the participants saw hasty changes as disrespecting the hard work that had been done and ignorant to the specialized knowledge that long-standing staff had about the students, their families and the surrounding community, which “teachers have learned, sometimes the hard way.” Furthermore, the participants warned that principals who do not include others in the change process and who are not willing to ask questions, listen, and learn from others will lose respect from both the staff and parents. One participant advised, “Learn about the school culture first. Find out how things have been done in the past. Learn about the community. Then consult with staff about what direction the school should go in.”

As discussed earlier in this chapter, losing respect would be damaging to the culture of trust in the building because, as the findings of this study indicate, showing respect for everyone and valuing other peoples’ opinions are important components of trustworthy behaviour. The literature confirms a lack of respect is damaging to the trust relationship (Bryk and Schneider, 2002) and emphasizes that strong levels of trust and respectful relationships are essential elements in productive schools (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Furthermore, the literature contends the importance of maintaining respectful relationships is even more pronounced for educational leaders working in small towns where everyone knows each other because a trustworthy reputation can be a self-fulfilling prophesy. Tschannen-Moran (2014) advised, the power of a good reputation should not be understated because it can either encourage or discourage trustworthy behaviour within an entire social network, and environments marked by low levels of trust have little chance of improving performance or accomplishing lasting change.

In summary, the findings of the current research complement the literature establishing trust as a multidimensional construct that is discerned in social exchange across four considerations: respect, competence in core responsibilities, personal regard and personal
integrity. Second, the results coincide with literature that contends that multiple facets of trust come together to form one concept, and that although each facet is important its weight is dependent on who is being trusted, the nature of the interdependence, and levels of vulnerability between the parties. The findings also supported the literature in change research that emphasized the need for educational leaders to build a culture of trust that would foster a supportive and cooperative environment before embarking on reform initiatives.

**Unique Contributions of the Current Study**

This study contributes to the literature in the field of educational research by connecting the results of existing research on the role trust plays in school functioning and improvement to small towns and rural settings in British Columbia.

To date, a plethora of valuable information, such as the facets that define the concept of trust and the role that trust plays in school functioning and school reform have come from intensive case studies and longitudinal research conducted in urban school environments in the United States of America (Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Louis, 2009; Tschannen Moran, 2014). This study was designed to investigate key factors that impact relational trust in schools that operate in rural school environments in Canada. The findings of the current study contribute to the existing research by confirming the key factors impacting relational trust in rural school environments coincide with the results of the larger studies done in urban settings.

The small town setting of the study is significant because the urban school environment differs from rural school environment in a number of ways. First, urban schools in the United States operate in high density areas, where the population density is at least one thousand per square mile (2600 people per square kilometer); therefore, they have districts with much higher enrolment and contain schools with larger student populations (Kincheloe, 2004). In contrast,
rural schools operate in towns and municipalities outside the commuting zone of larger urban centers and typically have schools with comparatively smaller populations. In Canada, urban populations are considered to be centers with 10,000 or more people (Statistics Canada, 2016). The striking difference in population density from urban centers in the United States, where the majority of the existing trust research has been conducted, and rural areas in Canada is demonstrated by the elementary schools in this study, which serve an area that contains approximately three people per square kilometer.

Additionally, sparsely populated areas in Canada are vast and contain many different types of smaller communities, and are located in varying distances from urban centers; thus, it is difficult for government to easily define the term rural school. However, it is agreed that, because of the lack of resources and infrastructure in the local area, rural schools are often put to shared use and partnership, and are the hub and heart of the community (BC Ministry of Education, 2018). Interestingly, urban centers in the United States average at least one building per two acres (369 buildings per square kilometer) compared to the rural setting in this study, which contains an area that has approximately one and a half buildings per square kilometer (Statistics BC, 2016).

Another difference between the school environments is characterized by population demographics. Urban schools have a higher rate of ethnic, racial and religious diversity, as well as a substantial number of low-income population (Kincheloe, 2004). In contrast, rural schools tend to serve a majority population from similar backgrounds, values, and belief systems. Like many urban schools, rural schools also serve a substantial number of low-income families; however, the low-income families in urban centers are in higher concentration and live in close proximity to affluence (Kincheloe, 2004).
The fourth aspect that differentiates the urban and rural school community is that urban schools experience a higher student, teacher and administrator attrition rate (Kincheloe, 2004). Furthermore, teachers working in urban schools are less likely to live in the same community compared to the teachers in rural systems, and “In this context, teachers become socially, culturally and economically isolated from their student and the parents” (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 7). This occurrence is opposite from the experience in a rural setting where the teaching staff typically live in the surrounding area and are entrenched in the community at large. The teaching challenges in this scenario are of the variety that present between the parent/teacher relationships in small towns where everyone knows each other (BC Ministry of Education, 2018).

**Limitations of the Study**

Consistent with most research, there were limitations to this study. First, this study was limited to twenty-six participants from one rural area in British Columbia. There are many different types of small communities throughout British Columbia and the school staff working in other areas may have a different perspective on the subject. Second, due to ethical considerations, detailed information about the participants was unavailable. Although it was not my main intention to generalize the results, a larger sample size, which also encompassed elementary school staff from multiple rural areas in British Columbia, along with the inclusion of identifying personal information about the participants, such as age, gender, cultural background and years of experience, would have allowed the reader to better apply certain results to their context.

Another limitation of this study was the inability to for the researcher to validate the results. In this case, the safeguard of anonymity was a hindrance because I was unable to ask clarifying questions or confirm with participants that my interpretation of the data accurately
portrayed their thoughts and opinions. In addition, it would have been beneficial to the findings of this study if I could have followed up with participants after the data analysis to gain more information about which emergent themes carried the most weight in each circumstance and why.

**Implications for Principals**

The findings in the current study complement existing research that contends trust is discerned across four domains and is constructed by several unifying and interconnected facets. These findings imply that trust impacts the rural school environment in the same ways that are reported in extensive research conducted in urban school environments, which established trust as an essential element in well-functioning schools. The findings of the larger studies also found a correlation between trust and successful school improvement initiatives, and trust and increased student achievement. Furthermore, current research has found that principals play a chief role in setting the tone and culture in the school community, and that when principals model trustworthy behaviour other stakeholders in the school, such as teachers, support staff, students, and parents, are more inclined to extend trust to others, which cultivates a cooperative, safe and caring learning environment. These findings imply that all educational leaders should be knowledgeable about the constructs of relational trust and the ways trust impacts the complex interdependent environments of today’s schools.

The first implication applies to new principals and existing principals entering a new school environment. First, the finding suggest that concepts of relational trust should be explored in educational leadership programs and that strategies to asses, develop, and sustain a culture of trust within the new school setting should be thought about and planned for before commencing the tenure.
The second implication puts onus on district administration to facilitate an understanding of the construct of relational trust with all principals under their jurisdiction. For instance, district personnel in charge of hiring new principals should be versed in concepts of relational trust so they are able to vet applicants for this specialized knowledge. In a case where a successful applicant is unaware of the concepts and theory of relational trust district personnel should provide the necessary training to the new principal in support of their leadership team, and to increase likelihood of success for the entire school community. To accomplish this task, district administration could provide something as simple as an electronic presentation outlining key ideas or implement a mentor program that is designed to focus on cultivating a culture of trust while coping with the organizational and bureaucratic responsibilities of the job, which can be overwhelming to a person who is new to the role.

Another implication concerns existing principals, especially those who have been in the same school for an extended amount of time. The literature contends that trust is a complex multi-dimensional construct that is based on reciprocal social exchange and discerned across an array of interconnected and fluctuating mediating factors. Consequently levels of trust are never static and need to be monitored and attended to on a regular basis. This contention suggests that, no matter how confident principals feel in their school environment, ongoing assessments of levels of trust need to be performed between all role sets in the school community.

Findings that suggest that people who play different roles within the school experience the environment differently indicates that principals need to be hyper-aware of the ways in which social dynamics are influenced by the hierarchical placement within the system. For instance, the support staff in this study indicated that, as a group, they often get left out of important meetings regarding the students that they work with on a daily basis. This finding implies that principals
need to be sensitive to varying levels of vulnerability between role sets, pay attention to the differing needs of each group, and openly work toward solutions so that everyone feels valued. In this case, existing principals should be afforded professional development opportunities to self-reflect on their current practice, explore the subject area with other members of their association so they can candidly discuss concerns, share stories, brainstorm ideas about how to approach challenging situations, and have time to develop a plan to target low trust scenarios in their school community.

Finally, in regard to the findings within the change literature, which indicates that inclusive decision making and being forthcoming with essential information increases the commitment to a shared vision and supports lasting reform, principals should be candid with their staff about the role that trust plays in daily functioning, academic achievement and effective school change. Considering that British Columbia’s curriculum has recently undergone significant reform, which is challenging educators to alter long-standing practices and adopt new styles and approaches to teaching and learning, the need to be open to discussing the concepts of relational trust is even more pronounced for today’s principals.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Although this topic has been extensively studied, the complex nature of the concept gives liberty to the direction that further research could go. First, it would be beneficial to add to the literature on trust in rural school environments in British Columbia by building on the results of this study. For instance, the results of the current study could be used to develop another survey that school personnel could complete to strengthen the validity of the findings. In addition, interviews of support staff and teaching personnel could be used to further investigate the perspective of each group, clarify opinions, and confirm the interpretation of the findings.
Furthermore, in conducting a similar research design in other small communities throughout the province the results could represent a broader spectrum of people and be generalized to a larger body of school personnel working in rural school settings.

Another direction would be research that examined the different variables that impact trust between male and female principals and their staff. Research could explore behavioural tendencies, stereotypes, societal norms, and preconceptions between gender groups that impact one’s disposition to trust. This study could also investigate leading factors impacting relational trust between same-gendered and alternate-gendered interactions and relationships.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the factors that staff in a rural elementary school believed to be most important in building relational trust in an educational environment, with a special focus on the trust relationship between staff and the principal. The findings in the current study complement existing research that establishes trust as a complex multi-dimensional construct that is based on reciprocal social exchange and discerned across an array of interconnected and fluctuating mediating factors. The implication of these findings suggests that levels of trust within the school environment are never static and need to be monitored and attended to on a regular basis.

The current findings also coincide with literature that contends that multiple facets of trust come together to form one concept, and that although each facet is important its weight is dependent on the nature of the relationship, and levels of vulnerability between the parties. This implication suggests that educational leaders need to be sensitive to varying levels of vulnerability between role sets in the school and pay attention to the differing needs of the multiple groups within the school system. The findings also highlight the need for educational
leaders to purposefully implement respectful and thoughtful decision making strategies so that everyone in the school community feels like a valued member of the team.

This study contributes to the literature in the field of educational research by connecting the results of existing research on the role trust plays in school functioning and improvement to small towns and rural settings in British Columbia. The findings in this study reiterate that relational trust allows the cooperative behaviour necessary for effective team functioning, lasting reform, and enhanced student and adult learning. Furthermore, the findings echo the importance that principals exercise patience and cultivate a culture of trust in the school community by modeling trustworthy behaviour and building strong relationships with staff, students, and parents, before making significant changes.

Additionally, the current findings confirm that it is the principal’s responsibility to build strong interpersonal relationships and cultivate a culture of trust across the school community so that schools reap the rewards of a supportive environment. These results imply that persons in positions of power within the school system, which includes principals and persons in upper management positions within the school district, should be knowledgeable about the constructs of relational trust and the ways trust impacts the complex interdependent environments of today’s schools. Furthermore, in attaining this specialized knowledge educational leaders should be candid with their staff about the role that trust plays in daily functioning, academic achievement and effective school change.
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Cover Letter

Question – What factors do staff members consider to be most important in building a culture of trust within the elementary school setting?

Maria Telford
MEDL Master’s Student
Vancouver Island University

Dr. Paige Fisher, PhD
Supervisor Department of Education
Vancouver Island University
250.753.3245 (ext. 2002)
Paige.Fisher@viu.ca

Dear Elementary School Staff,

As you may be aware, I am completing the second year of the Master’s in Educational Leadership program at Vancouver Island University. Currently, I am organizing my action research for my final project/Thesis where I will be looking at relational trust within the educational setting and the ways that principals can grow this trust within their school community. This topic is important to me because there is growing body of research indicating that high levels of trust is an essential element for school growth and overall success.

In this research I will explore the factors that teachers, support staff and principals consider to be most important for building and maintaining a culture of trust within their schools. The data that is collected in this survey will be analyzed for key themes. Results from this research will be used in my graduate thesis as partial requirements for the Masters of Educational Leadership program at Vancouver Island University. The findings will also be shared with the School District 27 administration, and interested professional colleagues who may want to read the final thesis.

Please note that all participation in this survey questionnaire is completely voluntary. I will be surveying personnel from multiple elementary schools in the South End, including my own. The survey is estimated to take approximately 20-40 minutes to complete. Participants are under no obligation to answer any or all of the questions, with no explanation required.
In recognition that I hold a supervisory role in our district and there is a potential risk for undue influence on participants I will take all measures necessary to ensure that participant anonymity will be safeguarded.

To ensure that participant identity is protected I ask that all questions be answered in a manner that will not disclose identity to myself or anyone else. Also, to guarantee that there can be no actual or perceived repercussions, the action research is structured so that I will never see the complete written forms. I ask that completed forms be sealed in the envelope provided and handed in to the school secretary. The completed forms will then be sent through Board Office Mail to the Williams Lake head office where they will be picked up by a neutral party, transcribed and returned to me via electronic Word document.

In accordance with the Vancouver Island University policy, all data will be securely kept for a period of 3 years. Paper files will be shredded after transcription and all electronic files will be kept on a password protected computer and deleted after the three year time period. Information about the project will not be made public in any way that identifies individual participants.

**Contact for Information about the study:**
If you have any questions or would like more information feel free to contact the Research Supervisor, Dr. Paige Fisher, PhD, at 250.753.3245 (ext. 2002) or myself, Maria Telford by telephone at or my email.

**Concerns about your treatment in the research:**
If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment as a voluntary participant in this action research, please contact the Vancouver Island University’s Research Ethics Officer at reb@vui.ca or by telephone at 250.753.3245 ex. 2665.
Survey Questionnaire

Please indicate your current role in the school:

Teacher ☐ Support Staff ☐ Principal ☐

☐ I have read the cover letter attached to this survey and understand that my responses will be collected and transcribed by a neutral party and then given to Ms. Telford, who may use some or all of the information in her final written research paper.

Please use your personal experiences to help answer the following questions. Specific examples illustrating your point will be useful. To safeguard anonymity please answer questions in a manner that will not disclose identity.

DO NOT include names or other identifying factors in your responses.

Definition:

Relational Trust ~ an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party.

1. Think of colleague or co-worker with whom you have high levels of relational trust. Explain what this person does on a professional level that allows you to trust them.
2. Think of a principal that you have worked with. What character traits and/or actions did this individual demonstrate that allowed you and/or your colleagues to gain relational trust in them?

3. In your opinion, what factors have the greatest impact on relational trust? Why?

4. A man/women is new to administration and has just been assigned their first principalship in your community. What advice would you give to this person as they work to build relational trust with their staff?
February 26, 2017

Attn: Acting Superintendent of Schools

Dear Mr. Wintjes

As you are aware, I am completing the second year of the Master’s in Educational Leadership Program at Vancouver Island University. I am writing this letter to seek the Board’s approval to conduct my action research entitled, *Increasing Relational Trust in an Elementary School Setting*, with teachers, support staff and principals of south-end elementary schools. My research supervisor for this project is Dr. Paige Fisher, PhD, at the Department of Education at Vancouver Island University.

**Title and Description**

As part of the proposed study titled, *Increasing Relational Trust in an Elementary School Setting*, I will be investigating the strategies and factors that have the largest impact on relational trust within the school setting.

The questions I will investigate in this research study are

1. What factors do staff in an elementary schools consider to be most important in building relational trust?
2. What strategies can administrators use to foster a culture of trust within the school community?

The purpose of this study is to focus on levels of relational trust and investigate the strategies and initiatives that will enhance relationships across two domains: teachers and administration, teachers and co-workers. Relational trust is an individual's or group's willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open.
Timeline

I have submitted my research application to Vancouver Island University and currently awaiting approval from the VIU Research Ethics Officer. I expect to hear the results of my application by the end of March. I am requesting that School District #27 consider my application and approve my research pending VIU Research Ethics Approval. I will provide the school district with the required documentation from VIU before proceeding with my project.

If I am granted approval by VIU Research Ethics Officer and School District #27 I will be ready to start my research and data collection on April 3, 2017. Due to the naturally busy schedules of educators I anticipate needing four weeks to complete the data collection.

If the School District requires VIU Research Ethics approval before considering my research application I will need to postpone my data collection to the fall of 2017, with an anticipated start date of mid-October and running through the end of November, 2017.

I am hoping that you will consider my application at this time as I will be on maternity leave for the 2017-2018 school year, which will add complications to the proposed research design.

Rationale

This measurement is important to me, as well as, the School District because there is growing body of research indicating that high levels of trust is an essential element for school growth and overall success (Hallam, et. al. 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015; Kaser & Halbert, 2009; Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Without a foundation of trust school teams will struggle to adjust to the systematic changes coming in education because “trust undergirds the cooperative behavior necessary for cultivating high performance” (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015. p. 257).

Therefore, in order for schools to function as a cohesive unit willing to share ideas and expertise the principal must invest time and energy into building and maintaining relationships over other initiatives within the building. Kaser and Halbert (2009), leading educators in BC and founders of the Network of Performance Based Schools, stress the need to focus on trust before anything else because, “strong levels of trust and respectful relationships are preconditions for successful school improvement initiatives” (p. 43).

Considering that the Ministry of Education has made significant changes in their curriculum and “the teacher’s role is shifting from information provider to facilitator – a professional who helps each student learn how to learn” (Ministry of Education, retrieved Aug. 13, 2016), it will be even more important for student success that schools are anchored in strong inter-relational bonds. Lencioni (2005), a leading researcher in change theory, warns that without high levels of trust teachers will resort to working in isolation and be protective over their leaning environments, and may not be as willing to make the necessary changes in their traditional teaching practice. Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2000) reiterate that trust is the basis for well-functioning teams and provides the pathway for cooperation, effective communication and collaboration.

I chose this topic to inform my practice in hopes of becoming a more effective principal. As our education system adapts to the Ministry of Education’s redesigned curriculum and a modernized approach to teaching and learning, it will be vital that schools are marked by high levels of trust so that teachers feel safe to take the risk involved in changing long-standing practices. I believe it
is largely the principal’s role to create and maintain a healthy climate and culture in their school so that an optimum learning environment prevails. By exploring the facets and factors of relational trust I will be better prepared to lead my school community as we transition toward an increasingly complex and inspiring education model.

Likewise, this research is of value to School District #27 as it will inform best practice strategies that will strengthen relationships within schools and provide the foundation needed for educators to meet two of the four goals set out in the 2016-2019 Strategic Plan (Board of Education of School District No. 27, retrieved Feb. 18, 2017). Namely, Strategic Goal number one aims for Excellence in Education, Choice and Opportunity, which requires educators to strive to provide relevant learning opportunities that accommodate 21st Century/Personalized Learning. Strategic Goal number four targets the Embrace of our District’s Unique Factors, such as supporting our rural and remote schools, and honoring diversity and inclusion. Both of these goals involve a strong element of risk for teachers and students alike, as they work to transition to a model of education that fosters curiosity, student choice, and inquiry based transferable learning for all. My research will help to support the trusting school environment that is needed for these goals to be realized in our district.

**Methodology**

To gain a holistic understanding of the factors impacting relational trust, perspectives from teachers, support staff and principals in south-end elementary schools will be explored. Qualitative data will be collected throughout the project. Participants will complete a survey questionnaire to highlight the factors that positively impact relational trust. The hope is that the responses given will provide insight into ways principals can improve levels of relational trust in their buildings and in turn be better prepared to lead the school community through the changes in educational practices to come.

Upon the VIU Ethics Review Board approval and your approval, I will distribute the Cover Letter (Appendix A) and Survey Questionnaire (Appendix B) to staff mailboxes in the south-end elementary schools. Before delivering the surveys I will verbally contact each principal to explain the research project and check with them about the best time distribute the packages. The participation of the teachers, support staff and principals will be sought through the Cover Letter (Appendix A). Participation will be completey voluntary and anonymous and involve responding to a survey questionnaire that will take approximately 20-40 minutes to complete. In order to ensure anonymity participants will be asked NOT to include any identifying features in their answers and I will never see the written responses. Participants will be asked to seal their responses in a provided envelope and hand deliver to the school secretary. The secretary will place complete surveys into a larger envelope entitled ‘Telford – Action Research’ which will then be sent to the District Office through the Board Mail and picked up by a neutral party to transcribe. I will then receive the transcribed Word document and analyze the responses for key themes. The findings of this project will be presented in a final thesis and shared with the Superintendent of Schools. All participant responses in this action research study will be kept strictly confidential. In accordance with the Vancouver Island University policy, all data will be securely kept for a period of 3 years. Paper files will be locked in a filing cabinet in the school’s Administrative Assistant’s office and will be shredded after this time period. All electronic files will be kept on a password protected computer and deleted after this same time period.
If any aspect of the outlined procedure remains unclear or if you have any further questions or concerns, you are encouraged to contact the Research Supervisor, Dr. Paige Fisher, PhD at 250.753.3245 (ext. 2002) or myself, Maria Telford. In the meantime, if you have any concerns regarding the treatment of the research participants in this project, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at 250-753-3245 (ext, 2665) or by email at reb@viu.ca.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Maria Telford

References
British Columbia Ministry of Education http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12, retrieved August 3, 2016.


Certificate of Completion

This document certifies that

Maria Telford

has completed the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)

Date of Issue: 1 August, 2016
### Appendix E

#### Completed Coding Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Trait</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is a Person of Integrity</strong></td>
<td>firm adherence to a moral code; refusal to deceive in any way; implies trustworthiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>firm adherence to a moral code; refusal to deceive in any way; implies trustworthiness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open &amp; Honest</strong></td>
<td>open, honest, forthright; admit weakness; admit when you don’t know something; asks for help</td>
<td></td>
<td>makes oneself available for others to bring concerns forward and is willing to listen and respect others’ points of view; creates an environment that is safe to share sensitive information; actively and effectively uses verbal and/or written communication to relay information to staff, students and parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>True to yourself</strong></td>
<td>be yourself, know yourself</td>
<td></td>
<td>makes oneself available for others to bring concerns forward and is willing to listen and respect others’ points of view; creates an environment that is safe to share sensitive information; actively and effectively uses verbal and/or written communication to relay information to staff, students and parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependable</strong></td>
<td>follow through, do what you say you will do</td>
<td></td>
<td>makes oneself available for others to bring concerns forward and is willing to listen and respect others’ points of view; creates an environment that is safe to share sensitive information; actively and effectively uses verbal and/or written communication to relay information to staff, students and parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fair</strong></td>
<td>fairness, fairly</td>
<td></td>
<td>makes oneself available for others to bring concerns forward and is willing to listen and respect others’ points of view; creates an environment that is safe to share sensitive information; actively and effectively uses verbal and/or written communication to relay information to staff, students and parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Available</strong></td>
<td>available; made time</td>
<td></td>
<td>makes oneself available for others to bring concerns forward and is willing to listen and respect others’ points of view; creates an environment that is safe to share sensitive information; actively and effectively uses verbal and/or written communication to relay information to staff, students and parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maintains Confidentiality</strong></td>
<td>keeps confidence; maintains discretion; privacy; does not disclose; you feel safe to talk</td>
<td></td>
<td>makes oneself available for others to bring concerns forward and is willing to listen and respect others’ points of view; creates an environment that is safe to share sensitive information; actively and effectively uses verbal and/or written communication to relay information to staff, students and parents</td>
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<td><strong>Good Listening Skills</strong></td>
<td>listens; open door policy; hears both sides; my concerns are important; non-judgemental; does not criticize</td>
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<td>makes oneself available for others to bring concerns forward and is willing to listen and respect others’ points of view; creates an environment that is safe to share sensitive information; actively and effectively uses verbal and/or written communication to relay information to staff, students and parents</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Effective Communication &amp; Transparent Decision Making</strong></td>
<td>inform staff and community; discuss expectations; clear communication</td>
<td></td>
<td>makes oneself available for others to bring concerns forward and is willing to listen and respect others’ points of view; creates an environment that is safe to share sensitive information; actively and effectively uses verbal and/or written communication to relay information to staff, students and parents</td>
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<td><strong>Compassionate</strong></td>
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<td><em>Decision Rule:</em> focused on the ability to connect to or relate with another individual’s tribulation; does not criticize mistakes</td>
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<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> Understanding; empathy; compassion; mistakes; supportive</td>
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<td><strong>Example:</strong> Shows compassion and empathy; my mistakes are not horrible or unique, and give me the impression that they have made many of the same in their career lives</td>
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<td><strong>Open-Minded</strong></td>
<td><strong>Shares information &amp; Collaborates</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td><em>Decision Rule:</em> the word ‘open’ or ‘willing’ is used when describing the ability to hear/listen to others opinions</td>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> concrete strategies; sound advice; student performance; resources; shares when needed; reports back; keeps me informed; bounces ideas; invites me to class during teaching</td>
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<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> considers others ideas; compromise, accepting; open to new things; open to hear good and bad</td>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> shares professional resources and talks about how they have worked in their classes; keeps me informed of situations at work and shares why he/she thinks/does something</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> open to ideas or opinions on what has/hasn’t worked in the past; Tries new ideas and learns from mistakes</td>
<td><strong>Presents a Common Front</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Positive Attitude</strong></td>
<td><strong>Values My Opinion</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> positive outlook</td>
<td>*Decision Rule – focused on asking for input and valuing others’ opinions and past experience; take advice and learns from others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> has a positive attitude</td>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> includes everyone; welcome; part of the school; included in discussions; seeks and respects input; consult; values my opinion; learns from others; asks questions</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> He made me know that my opinions and concerns were valued;</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary was used to help define categories.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treating All Equally and Makes Me Feel Included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> Consistency in relating to all staff; favoritism; support all workers; EAs are part of the team; sense of balance; includes everyone; welcome; important part of the school team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Sometimes support staff gets treated differently than the rest of the staff; included EA’s as part of the teaching team of the school; I feel welcome and part of the school team</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is Approachable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> easy to speak to or deal with; friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approachable</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> easy going; approachable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> mild mannerism in the body language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friendly</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> friendly, courteous, congenial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> did their fair share with a smile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sense of Humor</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> humour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Used HUMOUR in appropriate situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humble &amp; Kind</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> humble; kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> be humble, be kind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Models Best Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> words, actions and appearance demonstrate a high professional standard and code of ethics; model the behaviour you would like to see in others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lead By Example</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> showed confidence; assumes best intentions; leads by example; models high level of trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> assumed / trusted I was doing the best job I could; Demonstrated through actions that the entire staff is a “team”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shows Respect for Everyone</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> mutual respect; never use authority as power; not condescending; respectful; demonstrates or shows all opinions are respected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> if you speak or act disrespectfully I will no longer trust you as a leader, and may be nervous to relay information or ask questions for fear of reprisal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Dress &amp; Conduct</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> conduct, prepared, organized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> navigate the rough with style and grace; be a person of respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Follows Communication Protocol</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> talk behind back; betrayal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> They speak directly to colleagues when they have concerns; Does not talk negatively about other colleagues around me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has a Strong Work Ethic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> a set of values centered on the importance of doing work; desire or determination to work hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hard Working</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> hard work; pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> works hard and shows pride in the job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dedicated</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> devoted, dedication, commitment; part of the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Demonstrated a commitment to the job by getting to work early, leaving later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Expectations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> high expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> High levels of expectations for themselves, staff, and children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proactive Problem Solving and Thoughtful Decision Making</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> facilitates problem solving; takes initiative; implement solutions; decisions affect others; hasty decisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Example:** did not come across as authoritarian, but rather as a facilitator; acting upon important matter to solve problems; ability to think through the consequences of an action and not make hasty, knee-jerking decisions | **Example:** enforcing the supervisory role to reassure the staff that the principal “will deal with the problem
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Takes Time to Build and Maintain Personal Connections</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> Makes a point to interact with others outside of work; shows an interest/caring for how others are doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Builds Personal Relationships</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> greet; show interest; shares personal info; get to know everyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Spend some quality time with staff outside of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Takes Time to Check In</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> checks in to see how you are doing; show you care; personal concerns; takes time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Sometimes a person just checking to make sure that you are okay makes it easier to get through your day and go home feeling good about your job and yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Makes Children a Priority</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> best interest of children; encouraging attitude; raise enthusiasm; incorporate family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Positive interactions with children; able to relate on their level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix F

### Main Analysis

*The Merriam Webster Dictionary was used to help define categories*

- **Blue highlighter** – ‘Support Staff’ Responses
- **Green highlighter** – ‘Teacher’ Responses
- **Yellow highlighter** – ‘Unknown’ Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Trait</th>
<th>Definition: character applies to the aggregate of moral qualities that make up and distinguish an individual apart from intelligence, competence or talent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Is a Person of Integrity (49)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> firm adherence to a moral code; refusal to deceive in any way; implies trustworthiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open &amp; Honest (25)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> open, honest, forthright; admit weakness; admit when you don’t know something; asks for help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> She will be open with you even if she knows her decision will disappoint you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qu. 1</strong></td>
<td>-Open -open and honest -Tells me when they think it’s good or bad -Asks for assistance in augmenting teaching tools. -Honest -Forthright -Open and honest S-he will be open with you even if she knows her decision will disappoint you -Vulnerability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qu. 2</strong></td>
<td>-open and honest -Everyone has strengths and weaknesses. I appreciate honesty about this more than anything. -principals have admitted they didn’t understand the accounting system. I respect their honesty and work together on it. -Open -Honesty at all cost- Be honest. -Opens up themselves -Open</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Definition: a thing done; the accomplishment of a thing usually over a period of time, in stages, or with the possibility of repetition; behaviour or conduct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstrates Effective Communication Skills (69)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Description:</strong> makes oneself available for others to bring concerns forward and is willing to listen and respect others’ points of view; creates an environment that is safe to share sensitive information; actively and effectively uses verbal and/or written communication to relay information to staff, students and parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maintains Confidentiality (16)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> keeps confidence; maintains discretion; privacy; does not disclose; feel safe to talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> does not disclose information I may have relayed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qu. 1</strong></td>
<td>-does not disclose information I may have relayed -They do not discuss the issue with anyone. -Handels (sic) matters confidential. -Keeps a confidence shared -Confidentiality is established -Confidentiality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qu. 2</strong></td>
<td>-does not disclose information I may have relayed -Confidentiality -Keeps a confidence -Ability to share information only as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qu. 3</strong></td>
<td>-you feel safe to talk, share, deal with items. -Privacy- so important for trusting someone -the greatest impact would be maintaining discretion. If a confidence were leaked, it would greatly impact my trust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
-Openness/honesty

Qu. 3

-Honesty- if someone lies or is too closed mouth I don’t trust them
-always above board, human and honest.
-Honesty

-Openness/honesty
-Honesty

-honest to the staff
Qu. 4
-Ask for help where needed
-Honest

True to yourself (3)

Indicator words: be yourself, know yourself

Example: If they didn’t believe in the changes they didn’t push us to do them

Qu. 1
Qu. 2

-if they didn’t believe in the changes they didn’t push us to do them

Qu. 3
Qu. 4
-be yourself
-must first now themselves

Dependable (12)

Indicator words: follow through, do what you say you will do

Example: Followed through with what was said; actions speak loudly

Qu. 1

-Follows up words with actions
-Does what they say they will do

This person is dependable (follows up on issues she promised to do

Qu. 2
-follows through

-Qui. 3

-Followed through with what was said.

Dependability- your actions say more than your words
-I need to know my principal is going to follow through

Qu. 4

-Follow through on anything you say you will do
-follows through with staff concerns

-I was once told “I can’t (sic) disclose that to you but trust me I’m doing what I can do
-confidentiality
-Confidentiality

Good Listening Skills (29)

*Decisions rule: focused on being receptive when others come to you with concerns or ideas; open door policy; people leave feeling like they have been heard and respected; especially in times of conflict

Indicator words: listens; open door policy; hears both sides; my concerns are important; non-judgemental; does not criticize;

Example: Listens and doesn’t constantly take over the conversation or criticize; listens to me when I need to talk or I have questions without making me feel silly or dumb; Ability to listen to and understand (and value) all sides of a situation, issue, dispute, etc.

Qu. 1

-Listens and considers my suggestion and point of view
-Listens without judging.
-She LISTENS when you speak
-Good listening skills
-listens to me when I need to talk or I have questions without making me feel silly or dumb
-listens and doesn’t constantly take over the conversation or criticize

Qu. 2
-listen to specific issues
-listened to the good and the bad

-my questions and concerns were always listened to and valued

-Open door policy- always willing to listen/lend an ear.
-Non-judgemental (sic)
-listen to and help with any concerns I had

-Ability to listen to and understand (and value) all sides of a situation, issue, dispute, etc.
-Good listener
-Would not brush off any concerns or issues.

Qu. 3

-Ability to listen to and understand (and value) all sides of a situation, issue, dispute, etc

--Good listening skills

-Open door policy to school community
-Good listening without judgement.
-Actions speak louder than words so make sure to follow through on your commitments.
-Be aware that your actions speak loudly
-Follow through

**Fair (9)**

**Indicator words:** fairness, fairly

**Example:** doing things in a manner that would work best even if it might mean some grumbling

-Qu. 1
  -Fair
-Qu. 2
  -Fair
-Qu. 3
  -Treated everyone fairly
  -Fair but firm
-Qu. 4
  -Fair

**Effective Communication & Transparent Decision Making (14)**

**Indicator words:** inform community; discuss expectations; clear communication; explains her reasoning

**Example:** Effective communication with staff and parents and keep the lines of communication open at all times

-Qu. 1
  -gives backup information as to why he/she thinks/does something at work

-Qu. 4
  -Good listening skills
  -Listen! Too many people don’t do this well anymore
  -non-judgemental (sic)
-Open door policy. Listen to people, learn to para-phrase, make that person’s concern important.
-Even if you cannot fix it, explain why and have them leave feeling that they were heard.
  -Listen,
  -more important to listen
  -Good listening skills
-Open door policy appreciated.
  -Listen

**Available (10)**

**Indicator words:** available; made time

**Example:** ALWAYS have time, no matter how busy

-Qu. 1
  -available if I need to ask question (sic) and just to talk with
  -Always accessible
  -Qu. 2
  -Being available
  -They made time for me when I needed it—didn’t act like they were too busy
  -he would ALWAYS have time, no matter how busy
  -They made me feel as though they had time for me
  -Qu. 3
  -available if you need to talk and not feel like you are taking up their time.
  -Making time—trying not to appear too busy for someone
  -Qu. 4
  -Make time (of (sic) pretend to have time) when staff needs you.
  -more important to be available than to “fake — busy

-Qu. 4
  -Good listening skills
  -Listen!
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<tr>
<th>Has a Growth Mindset (36)</th>
<th>Promotes an Inclusive Environment (72)</th>
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<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> Understanding; empathy; compassion; mistakes; supportive; does not criticize my mistakes; accepts that everyone has strengths and weaknesses.</td>
<td><strong>Team Player (11)</strong> <em>(Decision Rule: works as a team; helps out)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Shows compassion and empathy; my mistakes are not horrible or unique, and give me the impression that they have made many of the same in their career lives</td>
<td><strong>Indicator words:</strong> does their fair share; works as a team; helps out</td>
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<td>Qu. 1</td>
<td><strong>Example:</strong> Joined in and helped out; doesn’t just delegate; we work with them, not for them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-If you go to them with an issue, they are supportive -Supportive</td>
<td>Qu. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qu. 2</strong></td>
<td>-Team players not Ego players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Is very honest and forthright with her reasoning</td>
<td>-they do their share of projects that we are working on together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-gives backup information as to why he/she thinks/does something at work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Good communication skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qu. 3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Qu. 4</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Effective communication with staff, students, parents</td>
<td>-Inform community about your wishes for change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Clear expectations need to be established and followed through</td>
<td>-communication effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Communication because a group/individual will feel that they are valued and respected when others are listening and talking</td>
<td>-Keep decisions in the open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-When you have to make a decision others won’t like, be honest and open as to your reasoning, but STAND YOUR GROUND if you know you’ve made the right choice</td>
<td>-Discuss expectations for school/staff that he/she has for the school right from the start (without overwhelming them).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Discuss expectations for school/staff that he/she has for the school right from the start (without overwhelming them).</td>
<td>-Effective communication with staff and parents -keep the lines of communication open at all times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- they do not criticise (sic) my mistakes
- They make me feel as though my mistakes are not horrible or unique, and give me the impression that they have made many of the same in their career lives
- Shows compassion and empathy
  Qu. 2
- Understanding
- Understanding
- They made me feel my mistakes were just part of the professional development process.
  Qu. 3
- Compassion- ability to listen and understand understanding that the feeling of individual staff members (as well as students) are facts that need to be recognized
- Willingness to accept mistakes and share past mistakes.
- Kindness and empathy.
  Qu. 4
‘All the facts are friendly and that feelings are facts’
- compassion and empathy for all
- Be supportive

Open-Minded (18)

*Decision Rule: the word ‘open’ or ‘willing’ is used when describing the ability to hear/listen to others opinions

Indicator words: considers others ideas; compromise, accepting; open to new things; open to hear good and bad; willing to listen

Example: open to ideas or opinions on what has/hasn’t worked in the past; Tries new ideas and learns from mistakes

Qu. 1
- Is open to hear from colleagues concerning bad news as well as good
- accepting of criticism as well as praise.
- Tries new ideas and learns from mistakes.
  - Can self-assess.
  - They try new things
    Qu. 2
- Open to input
- Receptive; willing to listen
  - Possess the successful learner traits.
    Qu. 3
- Willingness to listen to the opinions of others
- Be open to compromise when that choice is available
- openness to treat all facts as friendly

- we are all doing our own thing in our classroom (inverse)
  Qu. 2
- offering, “What can I do to help?” Then does just that
- They step up to the plate, they did not just delegate jobs
- An individual that worked with you
  - joined in and helped out in the classroom.
- Team player, you work “with” them not “for” them.
- They gave me concrete help in navigating areas I was unsure about (organizing field trips, fundraising, etc).
- supported me professionally by providing any needed assistance
  Qu. 3
  Qu. 4
- join in, and help out.

Shares information & Collaborates (15)

Indicator words: concrete strategies; sound advice; student performance; resources; give; shares when needed; reports back; keeps me informed; bounces ideas; invites me to visit class during teaching

Example: shares professional resources and talks about how they have worked in their classes; keeps me informed of situations at work and shares why he/she thinks/does something

Qu. 1
- We openly confide in one another
- We tell one another about the response we have made to an inquiry
- keeps me informed of situations at work that I may not have been aware of
  - They also report back to you with a resolution
  - Bounces ideas off me.
- Invites me to visit classes during teaching sessions
 Share information about individual student performance.
  - Ideas to maximize individual learning.
  - Shares professional resources and talks about how they have worked in their classes.
  - Gives sound advice
  - Provides advice in a non judgemental (sic) without criticizing
  - When I need something they offer concrete strategies to help me work toward a goal.
  - They are good at collaborating

Qu. 2
Qu. 4
- To be open to their ideas or opinions on what has/hasn’t worked in the past
- Willingness to listen to the opinions of others
- Be open to compromise when that choice is available
- Consider others’ ideas and opinions before you shot an idea down
- Keep an open mind
- Be open and flexible to changes
- Keep an open mind

Positive Attitude (3)
Indicator words: positive outlook
Example: has a positive attitude
Qu. 1
- Has a positive attitude
  - Positive attitude
Qu. 2
- POSITIVE outlook

-qu. 4
- Keeps me informed of situations at work that I may not have been aware of
Qu. 3
- Student’s name is brought up it is reassuring to be taken seriously about concerns.
  - Sharing

Presents a Common Front (9)
Indicator words: has your back; stand up for me; backing up staff
Example: Demonstrate he/she has their teachers backs in actions and words to parents, other staff and students
Qu. 1
- Back each other up
- Disciplinary actions with a common front
- Ensure that our own response is supportive (to each other)
- “has your back” in situations where you are in conflict with parents regarding minor issues
Qu. 2
- Unfailingly backing up the staff’s perspective to parents.
- During meetings with parents, doesn’t “throw you under the bus” or blame you for issues
  - Supported me in times of conflict
Qu. 3
Qu. 4
- I need to know you’ve got my back
- Demonstrate he/she has their teachers (sic) backs in actions and words to parents, other staff and students

Values My Opinion (22)
*Decision Rule – focused on asking for input and valuing others’ opinions and past experience; take advice and learns from others

Indicator words: included in discussions; seeks and respects input; consult; values my opinion; learns from others; asks questions
Example: He made me know that my opinions and concerns were valued;
Qu. 1
- Values your opinion
- Value my opinion and ask it often
Qu. 2
- Included me in some discussions
- Showed respect for my opinion
- He made me know that my opinions and concerns were valued.
- Respects your input and opinions, and often, acts on them.
- Seeks your input and opinions, and often, acts on them

Qu. 3
- Support staff are not included in meetings that have information about the students they work with (inverse)
- Consultation phase feels like they value input and do not just dictate
- Respect for others' opinions

Qu. 4
- Listen and learn from their staff members. The staff not only know the students they work with but, also, have interacted with their parents. Teachers have learned, sometimes the hard way, how to approach any concerns that the students are having both academically and socially. Any principal who is not willing to learn from this well-meant advice will lose both the respect of their staff and the parents as well.
- Talk to the staff who have worked at the school. They have a great deal of knowledge to pass on
- Talk to the PAC and parents. What do both want/need?
- Find out what the previous goals were and don’t expect to change these goals until you’ve been there for a while.
- Do not change things immediately. Small changes work best
- Ask questions and learn about the community

LISTEN to your staff, particularly those who know the school, students, parents and community well and make sure your staff knows their opinion is valued.
- Ask staff for their expectations for him/her
- Get feedback on what really has worked well in the past
- Try to include staff input
- Learn about the school culture first. Find out how things have been done in the past. Learn about the community. Then consult with staff about what direction the school should go in
- Staff decision making

Treats Everyone Equally and Makes Me Feel Included

(15)

Indicator words: Consistency in relating to all staff; favoritism; support all workers; EAs are part of the team; sense of balance; includes everyone; welcome; important part of the school team
Example: Sometimes support staff gets treated differently than the rest of the staff; included EA’s as part of the teaching team of the school; I feel welcome and part of the school team

Qu. 1

- making me feel welcome and included in the school setting
- I feel like an important part of the school when asked to help out with events
- Treated me as a valued member of the team
- Support of all workers
- included EA’s as part of the teaching team of the school.
- Emphasized to teachers how EA’s and other support staff were an important element of the “team”.

Qu. 3

- Consistency in relating to all staff
- Creating opportunities for inclusion of all staff.
- Support staff gets treated differently than the rest of the staff.
- Didn’t show favoritism between staff members
- Giving praise and recognition has to be done with a sense of balance and mindfulness so that it doesn’t leave some staff members feeling disconnected or unappreciated, leading to apathy and distrust

Qu. 4

- Include everyone on the staff even if you don’t have a lot to do/work with them. This makes people feel included and part of the team
- Treat everyone equally
- Consistency in relating to all staff
- Be inclusive

Is Approachable (20)
Description: easy to speak to or deal with; friendly

Approachable (6)
Indicator words: easy going; approachable
Example: mild mannerism in the body language

Qu. 1
- approachable (sic)

Qu. 2
- Approachable
- Easy going
- Approachable

Models Best Practice (64)
Description: words, actions and appearance demonstrate a high professional standard and code of ethics; model the behaviour you would like to see in others; Lead by example

Lead by Example (15)
Indicator words: showed confidence in staff; assumes best intentions; leads by example; models high level of trust
Example: assumed / trusted I was doing the best job I could; Demonstrated through actions that the entire staff is a “team”

Qu. 1
- Assumes that I am working to the best of my ability
RELATIONAL TRUST AND RURAL EDUCATION

Friendly (8)
Indicator words: friendly, courteous, congenial
Example: did their fair share with a smile
Qu. 1
-Always friendly
-is friendly
-courteous
-is a friend
Qu. 2
-is friendly, courteous
-friendy
-did their fair share with a smile
Qu. 3
-Congenial

Sense of Humor (5)
Indicator words: humour
Example: Used HUMOUR in appropriate situations.
Qu. 1
-Humor!
Qu. 2
-A great sense of humour- too much seriousness creates a very somber work environment
-Used HUMOUR in appropriate situations
Qu. 3
-HUMOR- not at others (sic) expense.
Qu. 4
-Humour helps!!!

Humble & Kind (1)
Indicator words: humble; kind
Example: be humble, be kind
Qu. 1
Qu. 2
Qu. 3
Qu. 4
-Be humble, be kind.

-likes to keep an
appealing
mild mannerism in the body language
-were always approachable

-(does not) question my absences
-foundation of approach includes a respect for past positive experiences
-assume that are elements to the concern that they may not be aware of.
Qu. 2
-Demonstrated through actions that the entire staff is a “team”
-They assumed I was doing the best job I could.
-They actually showed us how to embrace the changes
-demonstrated leadership qualities in that it made it easy to follow them
Qu. 3
-shows confidence in staff’s abilities.
-Lead by example and it makes all else “usually” fall in order 😊. Conflicts are fewer and farther between and often more easy to resolve??
-Trust others- trust that everyone else is doing their best.
-to a large extent, administration sets the tone and how the staff feels towards the administration is largely dependent on what level of trust will be present/established at that worksite
-Administration needs to model a high level of trust
Qu. 4
-shows confidence in staff’s abilities.
-Assume people have positive intent

Shows Respect for Everyone (28)
Indicator words: mutual respect; never use authority as power; not condescending; respectful; demonstrates or shows all opinions are respected; belittling; what they do
Example: if you speak or act disrespectfully I will no longer trust you as a leader, and may be nervous to relay information or ask questions for fear of reprisal.
Qu. 1
-Respectful
-conduct themselves respectfully toward not only myself, but the entire school population including students and parents
-Demonstrates respect for colleague’s qualifications, skills, knowledge and abilities (including getting the most out of EA’s)
-Mutual respect
Qu. 2
-Respectful
-Respect is very important. Just because a person has a masters’ degree, doesn’t necessarily make them smarter, nor should it enable that person to talk down to another; never use their authority as power.

-Doesn’t talk in a condescending manner, or act in a condescending manner, towards you or other teachers
- Mutual respect for all school staff
- TREATED others with genuine respect.

Qu. 3
-Respect allows all to feel confident in stating opinions
- shows that there can be dialog and that all opinions are respected

-Respect because if you speak or act disrespectfully (sic) I will no longer trust you as a leader, and may be nervous to relay information or ask questions for fear of reprisal.

-Respecting individual contributions
- Respect

-Belittling you in front of parents or other colleagues because it is the ultimate betrayal.

- Mutual respect for each other
- Mutual respect
- is respectful

-What I see the person do in relating to others. How I see them conduct themselves in relation to others

Qu. 4
-Be respectful
- don’t ever raise your voice
- be respectful

-shows that there can be dialog and that all opinions are respected.

-Belittling you in front of parents or other colleagues, because it is the ultimate betrayal.

- Mutual respect for all

-If you choose to bully your way through – you will pay a price. Others will NOT respect your direction(s).

-YELLING is not a way to model how to get your way in this world – esp. to children

Professional Dress & Conduct (14)

Indicator words: conduct, prepared, organized

Example: navigate the rough with style and grace; be a person of respect

Qu. 1

-Professional conduct throughout the year
- They act professionally
- Professional
Has a Strong Work Ethic (10)

Description: a set of values centered on the importance of doing work; desire or determination to work hard

Hard Working (3)

Indicator words: hard work; pride

Example: works hard and shows pride in the job

Demonstrates Strong Leadership Skills (52)

Description: a person who has the experience and knowledge to make informed decisions in the best interest of others; takes charge and shows strength of character in appropriate situations;
Qu. 1
- Showed some pride in being a principal.
  Qu. 2
  - Hardwork (sic)
  - Work hard
  Qu. 3
  - Dedication (5)
    Indicator words: devoted, dedication, commitment; part of the community
    Example: Demonstrated a commitment to the job by getting to work early, leaving later
  Qu. 1
  - Dedicated to their job
  Qu. 2
  - Devoted to our school family
  - Demonstrated a commitment to the job by getting to work early, leaving later.
  Qu. 3
  - Improving work environment physically
  Qu. 4
  - Be a part of the community

Qu. 1
- Dedicated to their job
Qu. 2
- Devoted to our school family
- Demonstrated a commitment to the job by getting to work early, leaving later.
Qu. 3
- Improving work environment physically
Qu. 4
- Be a part of the community

Takes Charge, Shows Strength and Control and Confidence (17)
Indicator words: decisive; resolute; shows strength of purpose; takes charge; strong; control of emotion
Example: Speaking skills need to show professionalism, confidence, and authority; Calmness - even on his worst day, he would appear cool and collected
Qu. 1
- Strong and stable
- Shows initiative
Qu. 2
- They told me their job was to stand up for me and support me.
- Calmness- even on his worst day, he would appear cool and collected
- Drive the boat rather than ride along as a passenger
- They took a position of leadership
- Remained professional during high stress times.
- Always seem to be calm
Qu. 3
- I want to be around/work with people who “take charge” of their position. Otherwise their short-comings burden others
- Being decisive, resolute when necessary- shows strength of purpose
- Strength
- Somehow administration needs to all staff to feel safe: overall the staff, I believe, feel that they have an impossible job and are easily overwhelmed allowing them to feel vulnerable and afraid; therefore, if their name is announced over the intercom panic automatically sets in; throughout each day we work and live in an educational culture feeling vulnerable, afraid and anxious
Qu. 4
- Being decisive, resolute when necessary- shows strength of purpose
- Need confidence
- Speaking skills need to show professionalism, confidence, and authority

High Expectations (2)
Indicator words: high expectations
Example: High levels of expectations for themselves, staff, and children
Qu. 1
- High expectations of themselves and their students
Qu. 2
- High levels of expectations (sic) for themselves, staff, and children

Knowledgeable / Visionary (6)
Indicator words: is knowledgeable; wisdom; experience teaching; vision; common goals; guide school
Example: understands the difficulties (and great things) about being a classroom teacher; enveloping a cohesive staff so everyone has the same goals
Qu. 1
Qu. 2
-I worked with him as a teaching colleague (sic) first
-They were realistic because they had spent plenty of time in the classroom teaching themselves.
Qu. 3
-enveloping a cohesive staff so everyone has the same goals
-An administrator who understands the difficulties (and great things) about being a classroom teacher.
-administrator who has wisdom and a vision of the direction the school should go in once they understand the culture of that particular school
Qu. 4
-Guide staff towards goals that unite the school- eg. common spelling program or math etc

Is a Confidence Builder (11)

Indicator words: complement, praise, confidence builder; encouraged me
Example: was encouraging with an honest demeanor and regularly gave praise and recognition when due

Qu. 1
-Recognizes and applauds good performance.
-Is a confidence builder
Qu. 2
-Respected individual efforts in pursuit of team goals
-They praised the staff when things were done well
-Encouraged me to do what I feel is right
-have noticed, and give voice – sometimes written to admiration for, duties well executed, positive attributes exhibited in the job
-were encouraging with an honest demeanor and regularly gave praise and recognition
Qu. 3
-complimenting and building staff up
-Let you know “a job well done”.
-Genuine praise and recognition is tantamount
Qu. 4
-Give voice to the positive things you notice
Proactive Problem Solving and Thoughtful Decision Making (12)

**Indicator words:** facilitates problem solving; takes initiative; implement solutions; decisions affect others; hasty decisions

**Example:** did not come across as authoritarian, but rather as a facilitator; acting upon important matter to solve problems; ability to think through the consequences of an action and not make hasty, knee-jerking decisions

Qu. 1
-act upon it (problem) immediatley (sic).
-Thinks all her decisions through as to how it will affect EVERY staff member, students and parents before acting on those decisions
-Pro-active rather than reactive
-proactive at finding/implementing solutions

Qu. 2
-Ability to think through the consequences of an action and not make hasty, knee-jerking decisions.
-Assist in solving problems that arise among staff.
-did not come across as authoritarian, but rather as a facilitator

Qu. 3
-with the principal’s direction and the agreement of staff members a plan is established that can assist the student in their needs
-Not acting upon important matter to solve problems
-Ability to think through the consequences of an action and not make hasty, knee-jerking decisions.
-Good problem solving skills. Proactive

Qu. 4
-Not acting upon important matter to solve problems

Disciplinarian (6)

**Indicator words:** fair but firm; holds staff accountable; consistent consequences; administrative presence

**Example:** enforcing the supervisory role to reassure the staff that the principal “will deal with the problem

Qu. 1
Qu. 2

-holds staff accountable for doing their jobs

Qu. 3

-enforcing the supervisory role to reassure the staff that the principal “will deal with the problem”.
-Definite administrative presence needs to be felt throughout hallways, classrooms, playground

Qu. 4

-Definite administrative presence felt throughout hallways, classrooms, playground
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Needs to be visible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disciplinary action needs to be dealt with in a firm manner with consistent consequences</td>
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**Takes Time to Build and Maintain Personal Connections (37)**

*Description:* Makes a point to interact with others outside of work; shows an interest/caring for how others are doing

**Builds Personal Relationships (21)**

*Indicator words:* greet; show interest; share personal info; get to know everyone

**Example:** Spend some quality time with staff outside of school

- **Qu. 1**
  - shares some personal information

- **Qu. 2**
  - he/she is considerate in inquiring about the personal concerns we often are experiencing.
  - shares some personal information

- **Qu. 3**
  - good relations with students, parents and adults
  - Always came around in the mornings to say “good morning”
  - took the time to know me on a personal level
  - demonstrated an interest in what I was doing
  - greeted me each morning and took the time to chat

- **Qu. 4**
  - Shared experiences outside of regular classes
  - Building up of a personal relationship
  - Relationship building with staff (lunches, staff socials, retreats…)
  - Showed some interest in your life outside school.
  - Time spent together outside of work to get to know each other personally

- **Qu. 5**
  - Work at meeting and getting to know everyone at the school from the students to parents to staff
  - Great (sic) everyone every day
  - build personal relationships
  - important inform (sic) about yourself
  - Build personal relationships with staff but don’t push it or try too hard
  - Spend some quality time with staff outside of school
  - Get to know everyone so they can feel like a valued member of your staff
  - Get to know staff, families, students
**Takes Time to Check In (9)**

**Indicator words:** checks in to see how you are doing; show you care; personal concerns; takes time

**Example:** Sometimes a person just checking to make sure that you are okay makes it easier to get through your day and go home feeling good about your job and yourself.

Qu. 1
- checks to see if I need any help or if I am having a positive day
- Takes the time to get to know their many clients - CARES and they KNOW how to show it
Qu. 2
- ask about our day
- Caring nature- made each teacher feel important (eg. visits each teacher before school)
- They “checked in” to see how things were going, if there was anything they could do to help.
- I had a principal who would come around each morning before school to check in and see if there was anything I needed to talk about etc.
- Checked in on me to make sure I had what I needed
Qu. 3
Qu. 4
- Show caring attitude

**Makes Children a Priority (7)**

**Indicator words:** best interest of children; encouraging attitude; raise enthusiasm; incorporate family

**Example:** Positive interactions with children; able to relate on their level

Qu. 1
- able to make decisions that benefit students
Qu. 2
- Positive interactions with children (able to relate on their level)
Qu. 3
- incorporating the family element
- raising the enthusiasm level of students
- encouraging the “you can do it” attitude
- Children are their priority
Qu. 4
- Fight for the best interests of your students