

LEADERSHIP STYLES PRESENT DURING CHANGE  
IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

By

Jeanine Sherman

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IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

This thesis by Jeanine Marie Sherman is recommended for approval by the student's Thesis Committee and Department Head in the School of Education, Leadership, and Public Service and by the Dean of Graduate Education and Research.

*Bethney Bergh*

02/11/2021

---

Committee Chair: Bethney Bergh, PhD

Date

*Joe Lubig*

02/11/2021

---

First Reader: Joseph M. Lubig, EdD

Date

*Barbara J. Light*

02/16/2021

---

Second Reader: Barbara Light, PhD

Date

*Joe Lubig*

02/15/2021

---

Department Head: Joseph Lubig, EdD

Date

*Lisa Eckert*

04/23/2021

---

Dr. Lisa Schade Eckert  
Dean of Graduate Education and Research

Date

ABSTRACT

LEADERSHIP STYLES PRESENT DURING CHANGE IN SECONDARY  
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By

Jeanine Sherman

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the leadership styles present during change in secondary education. Four high school teachers, from various districts in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, were interviewed about their experiences with leadership through the change of school structure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the teachers' perspectives, the researcher determined which leadership styles were present and resulted in a feeling of support during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study sought to understand what leadership styles are present during times of drastic and/or unexpected change. The review of literature provides the reader with a brief overview of prominent leadership styles within the field of education. The leadership styles include invitational, transformational, transactional, situational, and servant. Also in the literature review are a few key leadership traits which include developing a shared vision, trust, lifelong learning, shared leadership, and responding ethically. Two main theories make up the framework for this project, crisis theory and change theory. The five themes discovered in the qualitative analysis include the following: transparent, thoughtful and complete communication, flexibility of instruction, leadership support, provided opportunity and structure for collaboration and demonstrating trust.

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This thesis follows the format prescribed by Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA), Seventh Edition and the Educational Leadership Department.

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## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

With twelve confirmed cases of COVID-19 on March 12, 2020, Michigan's Governor decided to close schools for three weeks. This decision sent public education and school leaders into problem-solving mode. Districts around the state were planning on how to best educate their students remotely. After the initial three-week closure, Governor Whitmer decided to close schools through the end of the school year (Whitmer, 2020). Michigan was one of many states to close school buildings and teach remotely through the end of the current school year. Studies reveal schools that close for a week or two have minimal effect on reducing the epidemic size. To have a significant effect on the size of the epidemic, schools must be shut down for longer durations (Halder et al, 2010). Although extended school closures have not proven to be the most cost-effective method of running a school, the state focused on flattening the curve and lessening the cases of COVID-19 (Nishiura et al, 2014).

Schools were not the only organizations afflicted by the Stay Safe, Stay Home executive order (Whitmer, 2020). The only businesses still functional were considered essential businesses. The Executive Order 2020-35 (COVID-19) provided the provision of K-12 education during the remainder of the school year.

In the face of this pandemic, the education of K-12 students must continue as fully and effectively as possible. While there is no substitute for a highly trained and experienced teacher interacting with students in a classroom, schools must continue to provide, and students must continue to receive, the highest level of

educational opportunities possible under the difficult circumstances now before us. To do so, schools and students alike must be enabled to innovate and adapt, and those efforts must not be unduly inhibited by requirements or restrictions that are misplaced in this time of unprecedented crisis. (Whitmer, 2020)

Public education was to continue but to do so educators needed to quickly become innovative in their teaching. Families were also adhered to a high standard of ensuring their students continue to learn, despite being at home. Schools and families worked together like never before. Teachers secured a badge of respect from families as they moved through the new form of education at home (*Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020*).

Not only did the Executive order cover a broad range of requirements for districts holistically, but it also addressed students in twelfth grade specifically. The concern for addressing the Class of 2020 in the order, was because Governor Whitmer mentioned students shall receive the grade they earned up until March 11th (Whitmer, 2020). This statement portrayed to some families that students did not have to continue their education as first planned. Districts, all over Michigan, struggled getting all of their students to continue with their schooling while being at home. Unfortunately, spring 2020 delivered many disappointments to the Senior Class of 2020. High school seniors experienced grief for the loss of their final momentous occasions of high school. Senior trips, proms, athletic seasons, award ceremonies, skip days, and final exams were either cancelled or altered, ultimately modifying the educational experience of the graduating class of 2020.

All K-12 students were evacuated from the school building, but were required to continue education at home, which provoked strain on many families. The move to

remote learning comprised many obstacles. These obstacles include the absence of wraparound services schools typically provide: home situations, parent capability, teaching models, student needs, technology, and internet access.

Many families, especially those with low socio-economic status, rely on schools for food, structure, and daycare services. More than ever, families realized the level of services school districts provide for students and families. Many districts provide supplemental services to students (e.g. speech and language, mental health, positive relationships, etc.), but without the building open for business, these services could no longer be utilized. Unfortunately, in some cases, students missed these additional services for an extended period of time.

Without face-to-face instruction, some students failed to complete any work because many students thrive on human connection. The teenage brain and Maslow's Hierarchy of needs also need to be considered when determining if the home is the best place for teenagers to receive an education (Uche, 2019). Unfortunately, many teenagers are not intrinsically motivated to complete their schoolwork. As stated by Damour (2020), "intrinsic motivation is all but impossible to muster for material that feels out of reach". Remote learning has created copious barriers for education, distance being the greatest. Relationships with peers and staff members foster accountability and produce reasons for students to complete work and earn their credits. The support staff in school buildings also encourage and advise students to the importance of education.

Not only were students lacking interactions with school staff and their peers, but many experienced distractions at home such as siblings, animals or not having a designated space to complete work etcetera. By changing to remote learning, parents

were expected to step into the roles of highly qualified teachers, or at least facilitate and organize their students' learning. There were many aspects of the COVID-19 shutdown and remote learning that added to in-home stress. As noted by a parent interviewed on

*Dateline:*

We are essentially, right now, expecting every parent in the U.S. to be homeschooling their children. Whether those parents work several jobs, work minimum wage, haven't graduated high school, the challenge is not just in the technology, but also in the social resources that each family can bring to help with schooling [sic]. (Shakya, et. al, 2020, p. 3)

Speaking as a parent, homeschooling three children under the age of 10, while working full time from home has proven very difficult. We have many families in our district relying on school for food and childcare. When students are staying home, regardless of parent working situation, this further puts a strain on parents. The home conditions and parent situation are not the only factors to consider when thinking about remote learning. The internet may be another obstacle for educating at home. Not all homes, especially in the rural Upper Peninsula of Michigan, have access to reliable internet. Due to the inconsistent internet access, school district plans for remote learning, mostly technology-driven, needed to address layers of student and family need. The move to remote teaching and learning created additional work for teachers. Teachers needed to learn how to deliver lessons with new technology from their homes. Hands-on classes like construction, welding, and auto mechanics--to name a few--had to adapt and find online simulations and articles to supplement their lack of kinesthetic activities and skills.

Despite the abrupt change in our education system, many communities have reached out and helped to provide resources the school typically performs. Food programs like the one the USDA and Michigan farmers partnered together to provide dairy boxes to families in need at no cost (Lindblom, 2020). The COVID-19 crisis evoked change and thus forced schools to deliver food, communities to set up hot spots, stores to offer pick-up services, etcetera. March 12th was the initial date for this COVID-19 crisis but change continues to occur. Seeger et al, (2016) describe a crisis as an unexpected event that creates uncertainty and may threaten the completion of the current goals, and therefore, change must occur. Through crisis, the opportunity for change occurs.

Throughout this crisis, change has been at the forefront. Flexibility, ingenuity, and compassion have been present by many stakeholders involved. For change to occur, there must be an effective change leader (Cornett, 2019). Leading through a crisis can result in a change with success or a change met with resistance. Some may see this situation as a crisis, and others may see an opportunity for needed change. This crisis forced online or remote education to help those who have not embraced technology to become more familiar with the tools that can streamline education. Teachers no longer need to be information sharers; the internet can share information and the teachers can focus on the capability to foster relationships and critical thinking. The leader qualities can motivate teachers to navigate through the unseen change and new system.

### **Research Problem and Justification**

The unexpected extended closure of schools created a situation where school leaders needed to make quick and difficult decisions. Leading through an unexpected

change or crisis creates leadership opportunities, regardless of the current climate and culture of the building. Mumford, et al (2007) found leadership through crisis lends itself to increased commitment and confidence in the leader and their performance. One key component to leadership during a crisis is *sensemaking* on the part of school leadership.

The articulation of this sensemaking system reduces stress, clarifies the causes and goals operating in the situation, and provides a basis for integrating actions among multiple parties. Thus the leader's cognitive product is not a problem solution per se but rather a cognitive model for understanding and responding to the change event under the time frame and conditions at hand. (Mumford, 2007, p. 521)

The practice of active *sensemaking* on the part of leadership helps to potentially create a new vision of teaching and learning and assists leaders in developing and articulating their present focus.

Often school mission statements include some version of the phrase, 'doing what is best for student learning.' "Research now shows that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that influence student outcomes" (Leithwood et al, 2004, p. 83). Teachers, who are the primary contact for students, are impacted by school leadership. Teachers need to be supported by leadership to impact students positively. The teacher's perspective on leadership and guidance through the change process can either help or hinder student success. With exceptional leadership, we can encourage exceptional teaching, whether it is face-to-face or virtually.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand the practices of school leadership during the implementation of change within the COVID-19 transition to remote teaching and learning. From the closed question survey responses, the researcher was able to probe more into the teachers' experiences for clarity. With the open-ended questions, the researcher was able to determine what leadership characteristics are present in times of change. The themes present in their responses can help educational leaders navigate change in times of crisis and to best support their staff members. Mandated change can be stressful for all parties involved. Through this research project, the researcher hopes to share the perspectives and overall themes with educational leaders to guide their leadership choices, when faced with an opportunity of change due to a crisis.

## **Research Questions**

Through crisis, change occurs. To change an entire education delivery system and have students be successful, teachers must be supported through effective leadership. The study will answer the following research questions:

- 1) What styles or attributes of educational leadership theory were exhibited by principals during the changes of COVID-19?
- 2) How do teachers describe their experience working with leadership through the changes implemented during COVID-19?

## **Theoretical Framework**

As mentioned in the introduction, Seeger et al (2016), describes a crisis as an unexpected event that creates uncertainty and may threaten the completion of the current goals, and therefore change must occur. Through crisis, the opportunity for change

occurs. As stated by Patton (2008), “in the immediate aftermath of a crisis, short-term change often occurs” (p. 12). Regarding COVID-19, the short-term change may occur until a vaccine is created and publicly available.

### *Crisis*

One can lead or manage through a crisis. When you are managing a crisis, the focus is on getting through the present situation effectively. However, leading through crisis encompasses guiding through the next few obstacles effectively and efficiently. “The most effective leaders in crises ensure that someone else is managing the present well while focusing their attention on leading beyond the crisis toward a more promising future” (McNulty & Marcus, 2020, p. 5). A leader must continue moving forward, not only adapting to the current situation but also leading beyond. The more promising future may be considered as a change for the past environment, process, or business model. Leading through crisis turns to change. Learning occurs when one is being challenged; however, Kumashiro (2000) believes if you are learning you are in crisis. He describes learning not as repetition, but as a challenge. Regarding student learning, Kumashiro (2000) shares that students must meet and work through crises to learn.

The many aspects of the COVID-19 crisis have been reflected upon and used as a learning tool for change. “Unfortunately, when conversations about human crises are ignored or rushed through, the learning process is stunted” (Patton, 2008, p. 11). Many districts took the time to create their plan and learn from the spring semester obstacles and mistakes. The summer transition allowed the timely conversations to be held and for learning through crisis to occur.

According to McNulty and Marcus (2020), a few key characteristics to keep in mind while leading through a crisis include keeping your view wide and ensuring you are thinking critically about all potential perspectives throughout the crisis, do not forget about the future, and only revel in the adrenaline of decision making in a crisis, focus on order over control, and most importantly take care of your people.

### ***Change Theory***

Three common change theories are Kurt Lewin's change model, Lippitt's change theory, and Havelock's six phases of change. Kurt Lewin's change model includes three steps. Lewin's model exhibits unfreezing, changing or moving, and refreezing. The unfreezing, in this instance, was provoked by the government shut down. In many cases, the unfreezing, for finding the reason for change with momentum, is the hardest stage (Hussain, et al, 2018). To assist with the unfreezing stage, a leader can educate those involved on why we need to change, collaborate with people involved to attain perspective on the reason for resistors, and brainstorm plans to approach the unfreezing. When all these aspects covered by leadership occur, trust can be built.

During the change period, equilibrium is off while new learning occurs. During the change phase, understanding why we need to change is of utmost importance. Simon Sinek (2009) shares in one of his TedTalks about the importance of WHY and how that has helped Apple be so successful. The change period is also the stage for new knowledge to be gained by sharing.

Once the new initiative or program is in place, refreezing is the final and important step. "The purpose of the refreezing is to stabilize the new equilibrium resulting from the change by balancing both the driving and restraining forces"

(Kritsonis, 2005, p. 2). Without additional policies and procedures to support the change, it is easy for the staff to revert to their original status.

As an extension of the three-step linear approach of Lewin's model, Lippitt, et al., (1985) contrived a seven-step process focusing on the change agent.

1. *diagnosing the problem*
2. *assessing the motivation and capacity for change*
3. *assessing the resources and motivation of the change agent*
4. *establishing change objectives and strategies*
5. *determining the role of the change agent*
6. *maintaining the change*
7. *gradually terminating the helping relationship as the change becomes part of the organization.*

Lippitt adds more details and the humanistic approach to Lewin's three-step process. In the seven steps, relationships, problem-solving, and feedback are additional and important steps.

In addition to Lippitt's extension of Lewin's three-step model, Havelock also took Lewin's model and adapted it to form Havelock's six phases of change. The six phases are as follows:

1. *Building a relationship*
2. *Diagnosing the problem*
3. *Acquiring resources for change*
4. *Selecting a pathway for the solution*
5. *Establishing and accepting change*
6. *Maintenance and separation* (Wagner, 2018)

From experience in an educational setting, Havelock's first step is noticeably important.

If a relationship is absent or there is a lack of trust, the change will not occur.

## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

This research project utilized the teacher's perspective of leaders' practices to recognize which leadership styles are exercised during change to best support and lead teachers through change. As previously mentioned, leadership is the second most important factor to improve student outcomes (Leithwood, et al, 2004). The leadership style of the school leader can determine the climate, motivation to improve, and many other factors.

### **Theories of Educational Leadership**

Educational leadership predicts how staff is motivated to improve and ultimately, how student learning is fostered. Gardner declares that leadership is persuasion to reach goals (1990). Leadership is not one size fits all. Throughout leadership literature, one can identify several leadership styles woven consistently through. By reading through brief descriptions of invitational, transformational, transactional, situational, and servant leadership style, one may be able to depict what leadership style best suits a specific situation.

### ***Invitational Leadership***

Invitational leaders “develop a sense of respect for each other in developing a personal learning community” (Novak, 2009, p. 56). Not only do invitational leaders open themselves up for an invitation, but they also promote others to connect. Novak (2009) explains that invitational leaders bring people into the building and bring students out into the community to model the school's connectedness (Novak, 2009). Novak asserts that a shared vision is a pertinent part of invitational leadership. With a shared

vision, all people involved have a say in the direction they are headed, which emanates the feeling of ‘we are all in this together,’ a familiar phrase heard during COVID-19 (2009).

Invitational leadership does not just focus on positive relations but also includes inviting confrontation. Effective administrators must not avoid tough conversations, but they must interact and manage conflict to make improvements to the system. Avoidance of festering issues generates more issues. One cannot simply ignore things needing to be addressed. As stated by Deal and Peterson, “such avoidance often leads to the development of toxic cultures or subcultures” (1999, p. 284) or new problems will be created (Murphy, 2013). Regardless of if it is a parent issue, teacher issue, or board member issue, the issues need to be addressed and collectively problem solved. If leaders are avoiding tough issues, one may attribute that to their lack of leadership experience. Deal and Peterson shared “how leaders spend their time and where they focus attention sends strong signals about what they value” (1999, p. 279). School staff are observant and often make judgments about what they see. Collecting perspective information minimizes any misconceptions about intent and priorities.

By utilizing invitational leadership and inviting conflict, change resistance can be minimized. Predisposition to resisting change is “an individual’s tendency to resist or avoid making changes, to devalue change generally, and to find change aversive across diverse contexts and types of changes” (Oreg, 2003, p. 680). When change is resisted, effective leadership skills can be used to improve the possibility of change.

If utilizing trust, respect, optimism, and care, an invitational leader can navigate through Novak’s 6 Cs of conflict to be efficient as possible. The 6 Cs of conflict

progression include concern, confer, consult, confront, combat, and lastly conciliate. The underlying key to lessening change resistance while working through the 6 Cs and improving the situation is respect and dignity (Novak, 2009). As leaders move through the 6 Cs, the seriousness increases. Leaders only embrace the next step if necessary.

When conflict or change resistance is avoided, it only increases the negative tension, and the perceived organizational effectiveness and commitment are at stake. Jones and Van De Ven (2016) observed that change-resistance increases in times when leadership support is lacking. The lack of support will compound when not addressed because “unresolved conflict festers into vicious cycles” (p. 502). Avoidance only makes matters worse. When resistance is met with respect and dignity, it may be resolved. When invitational leadership is utilized, the affected parties can be invited to a conversation to create a shared vision for improvement and a plan to achieve. Invitational leadership is about inviting conversations, easy or difficult, with the invitation being the catalyst for improvement (Novak, 2009).

### ***Transformational Leadership***

Learning by reading, planning, implementing, soliciting feedback, and making improvements are necessary steps to change. Putting theory into practice is never an easy task. Just as Buntin (2015) asserts, we must make breaking old habits a top priority if we want change to occur. A transformational leader is one who learns and organizes a list of items to be accomplished toward a shared goal. Burns (1978) defines transformational leadership as what happens when "persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize resources so as to arouse, engage and satisfy the motives of followers" (p. 18). Bass

(1985) considers transformational leaders charismatic, intellectual, and inspirational. If a leader wants to invoke change, followers need a reason to go along with the change.

When a leader is expecting change, the followers need to be willing to adapt and grow with new information. As stated by Buntin, "I would rather have someone who was coachable than someone who was great" (2015, p. 3). This is the mantra of a growth mindset. For change to occur, a culture of development can be created by

- Presenting skills as learnable
- Conveying that the organization values learning and perseverance, not just ready-made genius or talent
- Giving feedback in a way that promotes learning and future success
- Presenting managers as resources for learning. (Dweck, 2016, p. 141)

If these fundamental pieces are present, the opportunity for growth and change is available.

When leaders focus on a growth mindset or a culture of development, they also exhibit transformation instead of transactional leadership. Hallinger (2003) talks about the transformational capacity of other leaders in the building to change and improve success for all. Whereas transactional leadership is more of management and taking care of daily routines and issues, it tends to be a "power-based, rewards and punishment relationship" in which both the leader and follower meet their objective (Green, 2010, pp. 12-13). STU online (2018) simply compared the two styles of transformational leadership as selling and transactional as telling.

### *Transactional Leadership*

Transactional leadership may also be considered as the management style and as the preferred method of leaders needing order and structure. Paschall and Large (2016) explain transactional leadership in three-steps: organizing, controlling, and short-term planning. Transactional leadership was widely used after World War II when finding structure and stability was necessary. Max Weber, who is recognized as a founder of transactional leadership, mostly used a bureaucratic style of leadership, focusing on the hierarchy and policies and procedures of an organization (Paschall & Large, 2016). In organizations using transactional leadership, the goals and procedures are clear cut, which can lead to decreasing workplace anxiety, increased quality, and production (McCleskey, 2014). Just as in a school day routine, routine in a work environment is comforting.

Creativity and innovation are typically not present during transactional leadership. The work or tasks themselves are a transaction, e.g. you work, you get paid. Two ways transactional leaders motivate is with rewards and punishments (Bass, 1985; Paschall & Large, 2016). McCleskey (2014) refers to transactional as a “one-size-fits-all universal approach” and does consider situational challenges for organizations. Transactional might best work in a business like a fast-food restaurant. These businesses are chain restaurants and have consistency across the board. They do not need to problem solve the menu, ingredients, or advertising. These tasks are completed by the corporation, therefore making the daily management simple and consistent.

Transactional leadership is very autocratic and is efficient and, therefore, may best be suited in times of crisis. On the other hand, because of the autocracy, the team or

community does not have a say in decisions and the team may become resentful toward the business because of it (Amanchukwu et al, 2015; McCleskey, 2014). Because this leadership style is very transactional, it creates shallow interactions, and therefore meaningful relationships are not present in a transactional environment. Relationships are regarded as a necessary factor in a successful leader-follower relationship in educational settings.

### ***Situational Leadership***

Not all situations or staff members require or thrive with one leadership style hence the need for situational leadership (Amanchukwu et al, 2015). With situational leadership style, understanding of the situation and the followers will determine which approach is appropriate. Rowe and Guerrero (2013) describe situational leadership as the “prescriptive method” (p. 82). The leader assesses the situation and prescribes the best leadership to either direct or support the followers to success. Situational leadership is found to belong on a continuum from the task-oriented leaders to the relation-oriented leaders. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) agree, leadership is not a “one-size-fits-all” situation and therefore a continuum or matrix is a necessity, opposed to the previously mentioned transactional leadership can be considered a “one-size-fits-all” (p. 24) approach.

Effective leaders are cognitively aware of their building, their staff's needs, and the current climate. Hattock, et al. (2016) states situational leadership “encourages leaders to choose the style that fits their goals and circumstances” (p.4). However, the Situational Leadership model, created by Hersey and Blanchard (1982) focuses on the follower, not the situation. Their model, Situational Leadership II (see Figure 1), is based

on the follower's maturity, knowledge, and motivation to determine where the leader is in the matrix (Kruse, 2019 & Bass, 2008). Although named situational, the process of this leadership model is more about adaptability: changing one's leadership approach depending on the people you are working with, not the situation at hand. The matrix includes leadership involvement levels from task-oriented to relationship-oriented. Tannenbaum and Schmidt (2008) further developed Hersey and Blanchard's (1982) idea and created a continuum of leadership focusing on the level of authority used with the staff members and the degree of freedom given to them. Tannenbaum and Schmidt's (2008) continuum has four main leadership styles: tell, sell, consult, and join (see Figure 2). As the diagram shows, the further right you move through the continuum, the more freedom given to staff and the opportunity to gain input.

Figure 1

Situational Leadership by Hershey and Blanchard (1982)

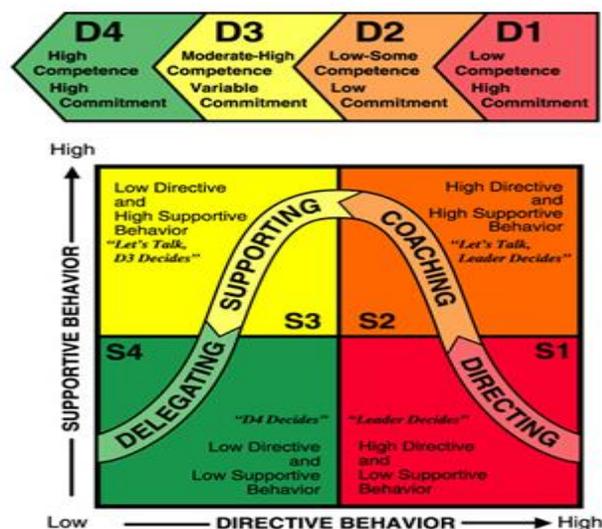
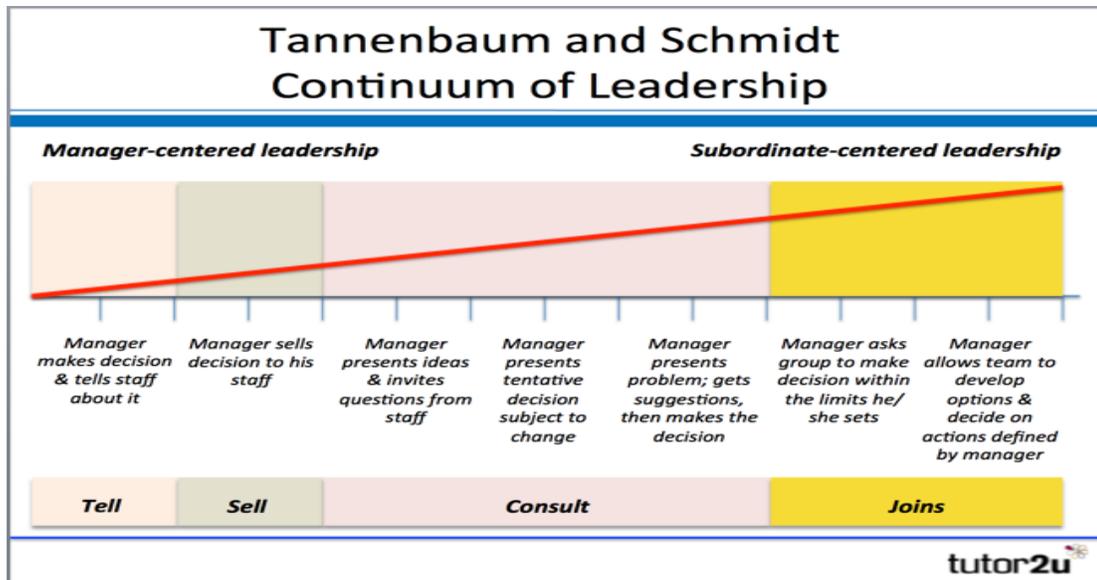


Figure 2

Tannenbaum and Schmidt Continuum of Leadership (2008)



Unfortunately, due to the inconsistent response from the leader, situational leadership can cause frustration from the staff when they might not know how their leader will respond. Situational leadership can be considered transitional based on the situation itself or the people involved in the situation, depending on whose model you are consulting.

### ***Instructional Leadership***

As academic accountability increases by the state departments of education, there is an increased need for instructional leadership. Many administrators do not make instructional coaching/leadership a priority, therefore not spending time learning about

instructional strategies. Unfortunately, “you cannot lead what you do not know” (Fink & Markholt, 2013, p. 328). Administrators cannot be a role model for instructional strategies if they are unfamiliar with them. Administrators must continue to be life-long learners. They do not have to be THE expert at everything, but competency is necessary (Fink & Markholt, 2013).

School districts struggle with a shared understanding of what quality instruction looks like. Districts need to focus on building the capacity of instructional leadership at the teacher and administration level. According to Fink and Markholt (2013), instructional leaders with expertise can identify and discuss key elements of instruction, withhold judgment, and guide with questions, and think deeply about the next steps. Many teachers appreciate their autonomy and utilize their personality characteristics to guide their instructional style, which makes this very difficult for administrators to motivate change in instruction, individually and collectively (Fink & Markholt, 2013). If instructional leadership is used as a dominant strategy, rather than as a supporting practice, it can create dependent teachers. When instructional leadership is used supportively, it can create a sense of shared power and create leaders of leaders among the teachers (Sergiovanni, 2013). In conclusion, instructional leaders must be supportive, knowledgeable, and able to create action.

### ***Servant Leadership***

Instructional leaders support and guide, “the servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 1). Servant leadership takes on the role of advocacy. Servant leaders advocate and support their people toward the shared values and beliefs, for the better of

the school community. Sergiovanni (2013) shares that servant leadership is based on moral authority. Leaders relying on moral purpose concentrate on wanting to make a difference, in the lives of their students. When questions guiding the leadership are centered around doing what is best for the community and decided by the community, servant leadership is enacted.

Shared leadership is an aspect necessary for servant leadership. When leadership is shared, all members take great responsibility in acting toward the shared values. If members are not acting in a manner geared toward their shared vision and values, servant leaders can respond with outrage, to ensure the agreed-upon values are salvaged and maintained. Shared leadership must be present for servant leadership to be fully engrossed in the culture. This shared leadership will also take on shared outrage. When the community works and is passionate about the shared meaning, the leader can ignite outrage in others, when standards fall below the values. When a school focuses on caring for students, the students care more about schooling (Sergiovanni, 2013). Servant leadership takes support to the next level, by ensuring all are taken care of and live up to the standards set by the group. Servant leadership is comparable to democracy, in the sense of getting feedback from team members on a decision, and also comparable to transformational, in the sense of setting goals and aiding all involved to make the necessary enhancements.

### **Leadership through Change**

Leading through change is a challenging task that can be made easier when leaders use Warren Bennis' list of what effective leaders do (1998). These skills are universal and can be found in conjunction with any of the leadership styles. Bennis

discloses a leader creates a shared vision and meaning, climate of trust, success and a healthy and empowering environment, and flat adaptive organizations with shared leadership (1998). The researcher focused the leadership attributes on a shared vision, trust, shared leadership, lifelong learning, and responding ethically.

### ***Developing a Shared Vision***

One effective leadership trait is working collaboratively to create and utilize a shared vision. A shared vision is present in many leadership styles. Creating a shared vision, by collaborating with analyzing data to create a plan addressing deficiency, will help gain trust and support (Tschannen-Moran, 2013). When trust is present, motivation can also be increased, therefore ensuring change is implemented and effective (Deal & Peterson, 2013). Perspective is necessary to develop a shared vision. One way to gain perspective is to obtain information by completing stakeholder surveys.

If a leader were to utilize a shared vision, the leader could easily understand, respond, and influence as they procure various perspectives of the vision. Standard 6.0 from the *Michigan Standards for the Preparation of Central Administrators states*, it is the administrator's job to "understand, respond, and influence the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context" (Michigan State Board of Education, 2013, p. 16). If the shared vision is used to set the direction, not every mundane detail of that direction, the focus of the path allows teachers to keep their autonomy when creating lessons. Johnson (2012) and Murphy (2013) agree on the role of a leader in setting goals is to share where to go, not how to achieve. The key to having a shared vision is opportunities for collaboration, from their leaders. Transparency and collaboration assist leaders to succeed by creating a shared vision and meaning for their staff members.

## *Trust*

Two keywords are associated with building trust in a leadership role – open and honest. Mistrust can be created when decisions are made behind closed doors and are not explained. Although leaders may have good intentions, the impact may be negative if an understanding of the motivation for decision is not found (Rivera-McCutcher & Watson, 2014). Just as in building trust and communication with staff is important, building these traits with students increases student participation in school activities and functions (Wilson, 2002).

Why do we need trust in leadership? Trust must be present amongst staff before administrators can hold them accountable for improvement and building-wide goals, as mentioned by Tschannen-Moran (2013). “Teachers need trust to cope with the stress of changing expectations and the demands of accountability” (Tschannen-Moran, 2013, p. 41). Teachers also need trust, to take risks. When leaders are in a trusting position, the staff feel comfortable taking risks as they know they will be supported whether they fail or succeed.

The trustworthy principal understands that teachers function within the culture of a school that influences their behavior. If they have worked within a culture that tolerated or even encouraged a slackening of effort, the principal’s responses need to take into consideration these environmental factors that have contributed to poor performance. (Tschannen-Moran, 2013, p. 46)

Trust needs to be strengthened and be the focal point of a relationship. Without trust-- collaboration, risks, and commitment lack immensely. Unfortunately, the lack of trust has

a trickle-down, when trust is compromised at the central administration level, the struggle is present in buildings, as well. Leaders must focus on what they can control at their building level but must also be aware when trust is not present within the administration hierarchy, their building will be affected.

Trust is a resource; it can enhance or deflate energy. Without trust, improvement will not occur. Competence and values are characteristics used when deciding the trust factor (Sergiovanni, 2013). If trust is lacking, the focus must be placed on repairing relationships and building trust. Sergiovanni (2013) writes about building trust by being competent and working for the better part of the population and not self-interest. Improving trust in all relationships in a building is foundational for achieving success when implementing a shared vision. “For trust to be forthcoming, the leader must have confidence in the leader’s competence and values” (Sergiovanni, 2013, p. 377). If values are not similar, trust is difficult to hold. Also, if the leader lacks competence, but expects followers to be highly functional, resentment may be present.

When trust is present, momentum for improvement, in many realms, is possible. Building trust is one way to improve teacher collaboration. Tschannen-Moran (2013) and Fullan (2005) both support confronting conflict as a way of building trust, as mentioned in the invitational leadership, teacher collaboration, and ultimately sustainability. For a building to obtain sustainability, it must implement adaptive work. Learning and risk-taking are also necessary for adaptive work to happen (Fullan, 2005). The culture of the building needs to, not only foster learning but also hold learning to a high expectation (Barth, 2013). Trust is a foundational aspect of leadership; without it, a stagnant climate can occur.

## *Lifelong Learning*

The COVID-19 school closures created a need for teachers to be flexible and open to online teaching and learning for an unknown period. Leaders need to model the importance of learning and implementing new strategies when flexibility is necessary. If a school's culture is of learning, it must have members "that learn, continue to learn, and support the learning of others" (Barth, 2013, p. 201) indicating the importance of support in the process of learning. To support learners a few characteristics must be present. Three visible characteristics of an inviting leader are courage, resilience, and resourcefulness. When a leader has these qualities, the support of an individual's learning is achievable.

The urgency of learning is clearly stated by Novak (2009), "an educator who is not moving forward runs the risk of being run over by events in addition to becoming professionally obsolete" (p. 62). Leaders must be one step ahead and be in tune with new research-based practices to lead effectively. "Being aware of differences in perceptions enables administrators to identify and address potential problems" (Young et al. 2012, p. 33). Modeling learning for individuals and the building is important. "A learning organization is a place where people continually discover how they create their reality" (Senge, 2013, p. 12). When we know better, we do better. In the case of managing a crisis, one must keep his or her lens wide to see a variety of perspectives.

Life-long learning is visible within invitational and transformational leadership, the leader models the importance of learning and improving one's practices. When a school community is a group of life-long learners, more leaders are created.

### ***Shared Leadership***

Shared leadership is present when more staff members have the ability and motivation to learn. Shared leadership is a necessity in a secondary setting, as the principal relies on departments to take charge of improving their instructional practices. Not only does invitational leadership focus on inviting others to create a shared vision but it also focuses on learning as a team and creating new leaders. Kousez and Posner (2006), Senge (2013), and Barth (2013) all agree with the importance of lifelong learning and sharing leadership. The life of leaders is never complete, they will continually find something within themselves or others to improve upon.

### ***Responding Ethically***

Starratt (2009) shares the responsibility of the administrator “to orchestrate the resources, the structures, and the processes of the school within the ethical obligations” (p. 81). Within a time of crisis and chaos, administrators are to balance the needs and collaborate, while problem-solving, to ensure they are responding ethically.

Starratt (2009) writes regarding being ethically sound and ensuring teachers continue high expectations, communicate with, and know their students well. Leadership during a school closure will need to also be adaptive and transparent to ensure teachers are reaching leadership’s new expectations. “Educational administrators who refuse to risk changing the organizational structures and processes in schools might be accused of ethical laziness in the face of the evidence of how these arrangements discriminate against some, or indeed, most of the students” (Starratt, 2009, p. 78). Through crisis, leaders must not only manage but also create new opportunities with ideas, collaboration, and insight.

In conclusion, leadership styles and attributes can vary from situation and environment. Secondary high schools have unique environments, leading the teachers to have more independence and expertise in their content area.

## CHAPTER III: METHODS

The purpose of this research was to gain knowledge from teacher experience with administration leadership through the COVID-19 shutdown. This research project investigated the experiences of four high school teachers from Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Through email, google forms, and virtual interviews experiences and data was collected. Five themes emerged from the analysis of the data: transparent, thoughtful, and complete communication, flexibility of instruction, leadership support, provided opportunity and structure for collaboration, and demonstrating trust. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the steps taken during this research project.

The first section discusses the research design. The second section outlines the structure used to collect the data. The third section includes the process taken to analyze the data. The final section explains the participants used for the research study.

### **Research Methodological Frame**

This study focused on leadership attributes present during the time of change in education during the nation-wide shutdown due to COVID-19. The researcher utilized qualitative research methods with a web-based questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to explore leadership practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Semi-structured questions allowed consistency through the interviews and the flexibility to fit each participant's experience. The structured list of questions, found in Appendix C, was used in the initial survey. In addition to the structured questions, the researcher added potential probing questions to allow interviewees to elaborate or clarify their responses.

## **Data Collection**

Data collection began with participants completing a web-based survey, sent as a Google form via email. This web-based survey allowed the researcher to gain insight into the participants' experience prior to the interview to help guide probing questions. The survey consisted of one open-ended question asking about the participant's experience through the transition to remote learning due to COVID-19 state-wide school building closure. The remaining questions of the survey consisted of multiple-choice questions around witnessed leadership actions during the transition, specifically with communication, grading, instruction, and assistance with overcoming barriers.

The qualitative interview data was then collected by recording the interviews using Zoom. The perspective of others is meaningful, and the purpose of interviewing is to collect their stories (Patton, 2002). Interviews were set for 45 minutes, to respect the interviewees' time. During each interview, the researcher used *voice typing* in Google Docs to scribe the interviews from the recorded video. The scripts were saved electronically. The initial questions followed the interview question guide. Probing questions were used to clarify the responses gained from the initial survey the interviewees completed for clarification or elaboration (Creswell, 2012). To respect confidentiality, the researcher removed all descriptive information that might point a teacher response to a specific school or leader.

## **Data Analysis**

For the qualitative analysis, the researcher used Creswell's six-cycle coding. Creswell (2007) and Tesch (1990) outline a six-step process to code. Before coding began, the researcher read through the transcripts several times to become familiar and

take notes in the margins as it is read, as suggested by Agar (1980). Next, the researcher started with the shortest interview and wrote the overall theme from the interview in a few words and wrote it on top of the page. Text segments of common information were grouped and highlighted and added a comment and given a code or label to describe the information. These codes addressed different topics, leadership style, emotion, communication, activities, etc. The script was read once again, and any additional codes that became visible were added. Once the codes seem exhausted, the researcher listed all of the codes and grouped them into like codes to a manageable number. Once the number of codes was between 25-30, the researcher used these codes to go back through the scripts and found supporting quotes or details for each one. The researcher continued to narrow down the codes and condensed the codes to five major themes. In essence, the key to Creswell's (2012) cycle coding is to code everything. Each time you read it is narrowed down to find more general labels, narrowing the list of themes to a manageable number. The findings are reported as a narrative discussion.

Due to the non-probability snowball participant sampling (Creswell, 2012), there may be bias because of how the participants were selected and it may not be a true representation of the population.

## **Participants**

For this project, the researcher chose the target population of high school teachers located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula (U.P.). The researcher chose high school teachers because of the independent nature of secondary schools in regards to the content taught. Secondary teachers rely on their departments for curriculum and instruction support, rather than the building leader. The researcher chose the U.P. because of the unique

characteristics. Although the U.P. is a part of Michigan, the characteristics of the two peninsulas are quite different. The U.P. is quite isolated and the population is rural. The interviewees were solely based in the U.P. to ensure the outcome directly applies to other U.P. school leaders. The researcher utilized non-probability sampling because with this method, as Creswell (2012) stated, the participants were “available, convenient, and represent some characteristic the investigator seeks to study” (p. 145). Specifically, the researcher used snowball sampling (Creswell, 2012). The research initially invited teachers who, at one point, had worked in the same school as the researcher to participate in the study because of their placement in different districts. The researcher then asked the initial participants to share the names and contact information of teachers from other districts in their Upper Peninsula. The sample of interview participants was selected to be representative, covering various school sizes and content areas. This research included four teachers representing four different districts throughout the Upper Peninsula.

The researcher gained approval from the International Review Board to proceed with the project (see Appendix A). The participants were invited to participate in the study via email, and when the teachers agreed to be interviewed, they were each sent the consent form (see Appendix B). Once the interviewees returned the completed consent form, the Google Form (see Appendix C) was sent for their completion. The researcher shared the purpose of the research project with the interviewees and the intention of the results. The researcher offered a summary of the findings of the completed project.

## Chapter IV: Results

Through the analysis of the data, five main themes were discovered from the participants' responses. If the leadership themes were not demonstrated by their leaders, they were mentioned as a trait the teacher wished their leaders instilled, as it could have had a positive effect on the environment and situation for the teachers. The five main themes discovered in the qualitative analysis include

- transparent, thoughtful, and complete communication,
- a quick response from leadership on how to provide instruction, while allowing flexibility of what type of instruction,
- showing support by being available and offering themselves and resources,
- providing opportunity and structure for collaboration,
- showing trust for staff by responding with grace and providing flexibility as teachers figure out how to best transition to online learning with little to no time or warning.

### **Theme 1: Transparent, Thoughtful, and Complete Communication**

When the interviewees were asked about communication from their leader, one theme discovered was transparent, thoughtful, and complete communication. The teachers greatly appreciated being informed of what is expected of teachers and even what is to come, even if it is still in the creation stage. The administration also welcomed questions from teachers and the opportunity to request clarification. The following excerpt from Interviewee 002 provides a clear example, "At times we had emails, constant updates, or anytime my principal had something new, they would send it out to

the staff, and then also gave us information [on what was] about to come” (personal communication, July 13, 2020). The participant excerpt illuminates the clear and consistent communication provided by their administration. Murphy (2013) conveys, leaders need to communicate forcefully, ensuring all participants understand and clearly see the information. “Clear, high-quality, open, and frequent communication” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2013, p. 509), foster trust and prove where the importance lies in the leader’s eyes (Deal & Peterson, 2013).

## **Theme 2: Flexibility of Instruction**

The next theme discovered in the interview process was the appreciation of the leadership to create building-wide expectations for grading, timeline, etc., and then allow teachers the flexibility to determine their instruction. Murphy (2013) denotes leaders as take-charge individuals solving complex problems while working toward their building’s vision. Although the interviewees stated they appreciate being part of decisions, they also like to have clear building expectations providing a systemic consistency. As stated by Interviewee 004,

She decided everyone will. She didn’t decide what it would be. This is the expectation. These are the dates we will go-between. There was disagreements, a few weeks for trial and error (personal communication, July 13, 2020)

And Interviewee 001 echoed the statement “they allowed us to do it however we want it” [instruction] (personal communication, July 13, 2020). The interviewees appreciated slight structure with options for instruction and delivery. Another comment further commends leaders for providing flexibility as stated by Interviewee 001, “I think the supportive [*sic*] came from our administrators not using an iron fist [*sic*] they gave us

[sic] kind of the independence of doing things how we wanted” (personal communication, July 13, 2020). Murphy (2013) explains the leadership characteristic discovered by the following excerpt from *Unheroic Side of Leadership*,

The challenge is to be responsive while simultaneously developing a sense of responsibility in others. This involves encouraging subordinates to take risks - and back them up when they fail. It means working hard to make other people successful -- and giving them credit. In short, taking charge involves letting go. (p. 37)

Although teachers appreciate having a voice, sometimes they need direction and clear boundaries, all the while, treated like a professional to evaluate what that genuinely looks like for the confines of their own classroom (online learning environment). Teachers appreciate leaders providing flexibility in instructional areas, but they also appreciate support in various realms.

### **Theme 3: Leadership Support**

The third theme discovered as a leadership quality present during change is leadership showing support by being available, providing resources, and offering to help in any way possible. When a leader becomes an advocate for their teachers, they are leading as a servant leader. Interviewee 002 shared “they're always positive, they're always helpful, I can email them anytime and I'll get a response. So even when we transition from in-person to online you're [sic] constantly there for support” (personal communication, July 13, 2020). In addition, Interviewee 004 shared “she definitely did the ‘ask what I can do for you” (personal communication, July 13, 2020). The teachers appreciated the leader being straightforward about being available when they need

assistance. The teachers also appreciated when the leaders served them and their students in need as stated by Interviewee 001 “For example, when we had to address the kids without internet, we had to do a packet, and our principal delivered the package” (personal communication, July 13, 2020).

Sergiovanni (2013) echoes the comments of the interviewees by explaining how a leader becomes a servant leader by “becoming an advocate on their behalf” (p. 379). Sergiovanni (2013) also elaborates on power over compared to power to. With servant leadership, providing autonomy is giving power to the teachers.

#### **Theme 4: Provided Opportunity and Structure for Collaboration**

The next leadership theme discovered from the qualitative data was leadership providing the structure and opportunity for collaboration. The collaboration provided was to engage peers in conversations on what practices were working and not working. As commented by Interviewee 001 “They also set up zoom meetings for us... discuss that [*sic*] in our meetings” (personal communication, July 13, 2020). Teachers appreciated the structure of setting up meetings. But also, plenty of communication as shared by Interviewee 001 in the excerpt below

He called us about three times, about bi-weekly. and in person and the zoom, the first one was k12, we had 2 or three of those [*sic*]. The rest were all essentially, they were [*sic*] high school staff and weekly [*sic*]. There were tidbits for us, the guidance counselor and I, that did [*sic*] online. Other staff would meet at other times. We would have 2-3 meetings per week, depending on what you were a part of (personal communication, July 13, 2020)

When Interviewee 001 was asked about the purpose of communication, the response was,

Always to collaborate and decide, sometimes too good, because we always like him to just make a decision sometimes. The superintendent, he waits for guidance for his way to administer. Hey, I heard this, this is how we will... The principal gives us time to figure out our way. We call that the trickle-down (personal communication, July 13, 2020)

The leader provided many opportunities for collaboration, which was greatly appreciated. The sentiments about opportunities were also reiterated by Interviewee 004 “She also provided opportunities and provided support” (personal communication, July 13, 2020).

As Murphy (2013) confirms the previous discovery, he also supports the need for collaboration “top administrators tend to point out a general direction rather than a specific destination; they are more likely to provide a scaffolding for collaboration than a blueprint for action” (p. 31). Secondary teachers can easily teach without collaboration, but when put into a new situation, the opportunity for collaboration was appreciated and very beneficial to all involved.

### **Theme 5: Demonstrating Trust**

The final theme discovered is leadership demonstrating trust by responding with grace and providing flexibility as teachers figure out how to best transition to online learning with little to no time or warning. Trust must be present to be effective and make progress (Tschannen-Moran, 2013). Trust is a necessity when dealing with crisis or change. “Teachers need trust to cope with the stress of changing expectations and the demands of accountability being asked of them” (Tschannen-Moran, 2013, p. 41). As considered previously, leadership through crisis involves considering your staff members’ perspectives when deciding on tough decisions. According to Barth (2013),

this act alone can earn trust amongst your stakeholders. Trust must be present when administrators provide flexibility and allow autonomy. Interviewee 001 “not using an iron fist, they gave us [the] kind of the independence of doing things how we wanted” and continues talking about packets for students without internet, “they allowed us to do it however we want it” (personal communication, July 13, 2020). The following excerpt from “Resourcefulness” by Hargreaves and Fink (2013) further explains job competency and the impact it has on earning trust with your stakeholders;

Competence trust involves the willingness to trust oneself and other people to be competent and the willingness to provide sufficient support and learning opportunities for people to become competent. Delegating effectively and providing professional growth and development for others are strong indicators of competent trust. (Hargreaves & Fink, 2013, p. 508)

Not only does that statement indicate trust is acquired by competency, but it also reiterates providing the opportunity for support and resources increases trust as well. Trust also “improves organizations, increases achievement, and boosts energy and morale. Trust isn’t easy. It is not blind faith, nor is it indifference” (p. 511). When trust is visible in a work environment it can fuel positive creativity and success. When leaders trust, teachers are provided flexibility, transparency, support, the opportunity for collaboration, and flexibility.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, analysis of the interviews revealed five main themes. The following themes capture many leadership attributes present among various leadership theories;

- transparent, thoughtful, and complete communication,
- a quick response from leadership on how to provide instruction, but allowed flexibility in what type of instruction,
- showed support by being available and offering themselves and resources,
- provided opportunity and structure for collaboration,
- showed trust for staff by responding with grace and providing flexibility as teachers figured out how to best transition to online learning, with little to no time or warning.

## **Chapter V: Discussion and Recommendations**

### **Overview of Study**

The qualitative study sought to answer the following two questions

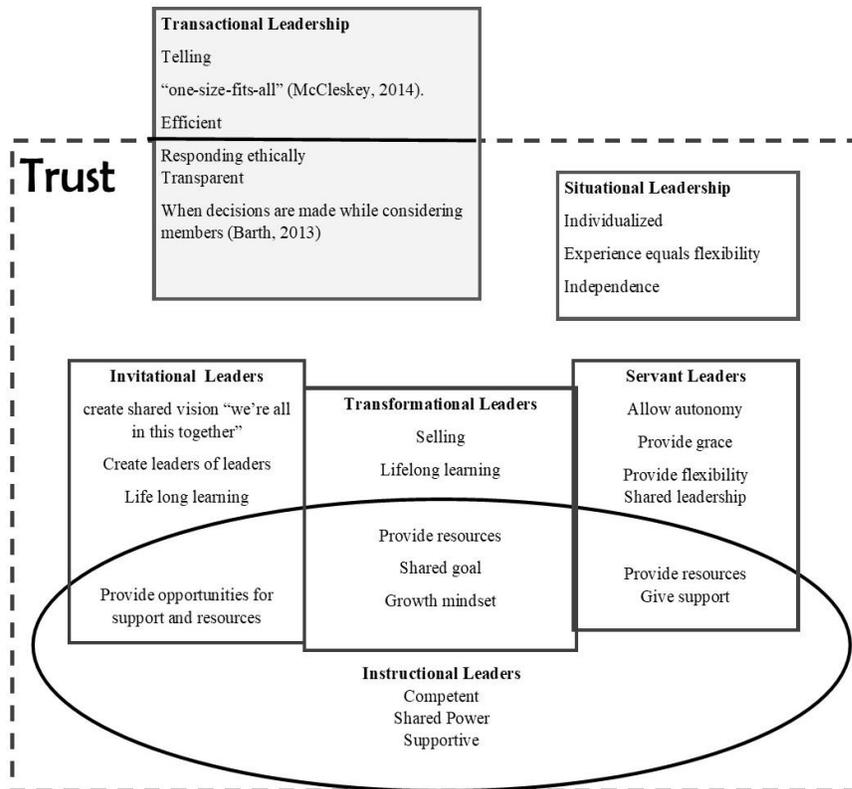
- 1) What styles or attributes of educational leadership theory were exhibited by principals during the changes of COVID-19?
- 2) How do teachers describe their experience working with leadership through the changes implemented during COVID-19?

Before answering the research questions, background information on various leadership theories and several specific leadership attributes was provided. Information on crisis, change theory, and secondary education dynamics was also shared to provide foundational context of where and how leadership was occurring. Perspectives from high school teachers from Michigan's Upper Peninsula shed some light on what leadership through change looked like in the spring of 2020 during COVID-19 shutdown. The teachers experience provided a vast view of leadership through this critical time. One exclusive leadership style was not evident, but instead, many styles were observed as effective leaders are adaptive to the situation and the task at hand. Figure 3 summarizes the various leadership styles outlines in the literature review and how they relate to each other and in addition, how they relate to trust. As stated in the literature review, trust is a pillar necessary for not only effective leadership, but also to maintain positive motion through change. Transactional leadership can be accomplished while gaining or losing trust from the members, depending on whether the members were considered while making decisions. You may also notice in Figure 3, there are several attributes visible in more than one leadership style. Leadership is not black and white, leadership is fluid.

When trust is present, leaders have a wider variety of skills and approaches to use with their followers. Furthermore, when these approaches are utilized, trust is built.

**Figure 3**

Leadership through Change



From the teacher perspectives, the resulting themes present during change from COVID-19 indicated teachers appreciate complete communication, the leader setting the direction on the structure of online learning, being available for support, providing structure for collaboration, and by trusting teachers by providing flexibility.

As outlined in Table 1, the leadership styles are delineated in the diagram to display the connection between the teachers' experiences and leadership styles and attributes.

**Table 1**

Leadership Style, Attributes, and Evidence

Leadership Style	Leadership Attributes	Evidence
<b>Transactional Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telling</li> <li>• “One-size-fits-all” (McCleskey, 2014)</li> <li>• Efficient</li> <li>• Responding ethically</li> <li>• Transparent</li> <li>• When decisions are made while considering members (Barth, 2013)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “She decided everyone will. She didn’t decide what it would be. This is the expectation. These are the dates we will go-between” (Interviewee 004, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> <li>• “because we always like him to just make a decision sometimes” (Interviewee 001, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> <li>• “Hey, I heard this, this is how we will...” (Interviewee 001, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Situational Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individualized</li> <li>• Experience equals flexibility</li> <li>• Independence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “There were tidbits for us, the guidance counselor and I, that did online. Other staff would meet at other times. We would have 2-3 meetings per week, depending on what you were a part of” (Interviewee 001, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> <li>• “not using an iron fist, they gave us kind of the independence of doing things how we wanted” (Interviewee 001, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Invitational Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create shared vision “we’re all in this together”</li> <li>• Create leaders of leaders</li> <li>• Lifelong learning</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for support and resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “They also set up zoom meetings for us... discuss that [<i>sic</i>] in our meetings” (Interviewee 001, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> <li>• “He called us about three times” (Interviewee 001, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> <li>• “There were tidbits for us, the guidance counselor and I, that did online. Other staff would meet at other times. We would have 2-3 meetings per week, depending on what you were a part of” (Interviewee 001, personal communication, July 13, 2020) [purpose of communication was to] Always to collaborate and decide” (Interviewee 001, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> <li>• “She also provided opportunities and provided support” (Interviewee 004, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Transformational Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selling</li> <li>• Lifelong learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “They also set up zoom meetings for us... discuss that in our meetings” (Interviewee</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide resources</li> <li>• Shared goal</li> <li>• Growth mindset</li> </ul>	<p>001, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “There were tidbits for us, the guidance counselor and I, that did online. Other staff would meet at other times. We would have 2-3 meetings per week, depending on what you were a part of” (Interviewee 001, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> <li>• “The principal gives us time to figure out our way” (Interviewee 001, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Servant Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow autonomy</li> <li>• Provide grace</li> <li>• Provide flexibility</li> <li>• Shared leadership</li> <li>• Provide resources</li> <li>• Give support</li> <li>• Constant Communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “constant updates...gave us information [on what was] about to come” (Interviewee 002, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> <li>• “There was disagreements, a few weeks for trial and error” (Interviewee 004, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> <li>• “The principal gives us time to figure out our way” (Interviewee 001, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> <li>• “They allowed us to do it however we wanted” [instruction] (Interviewee 001, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> <li>• “they're always positive, they're always helpful, I can email them anytime and I'll get a response. So even when we transition from in-person to online you're [sic] constantly there for support” (Interviewee 002, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> <li>• “she definitely did the ‘ask what I can do for you” (Interviewee 004, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> <li>• “For example, when we had to address the kids without internet, we had to do a packet, and our principal delivered the package” (Interviewee 001, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> <li>• “Not using an iron fist, they gave us kind of the independence of doing things how we wanted” (Interviewee 001, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> <li>• “They allowed us to do it however we want it [sic]” (Interviewee 002, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</li> </ul>
<b>Instructional Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Competent</li> <li>• Shared Power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I think the supportive [sic] came from our administrators not using an iron fist, they</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supportive</li> </ul>	<p>gave us kind of the independence of doing things how we wanted” (Interviewee 001, personal communication, July 13, 2020)</p>
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## Conclusions

My original contribution to knowledge is the view of effective leadership through change from the perspective of teachers. Not one single leadership style was present because leadership is adaptive, and leaders must remain flexible. The findings oppose the transactional, ‘one-size-fits-all’ view. Leaders are adaptive and fluid. Situational leadership continuum is utilized along with the other forementioned leadership styles. Change is multi-dimensional and takes an observant and conscientious leader to discover what may be needed by the members at any given time. The emerging themes from teacher perspectives could foster and support change in any environment. Leaders shall provide the direction and allow flexibility, communicate while being transparent and honest, share yourself and resources, provide structure for collaboration and finally, trust your staff members to do what is best for students.

The findings from this study substantiate the findings from a similar study conducted on the topic of leadership during change. The study highlighted the characteristics teachers wanted to see from a leader. According to Carylton and Branson (2018), the characteristics necessary for change, from the perspective of the teachers include relational, trusting, supportive, one who facilitates a culture conducive to change, is understanding of the challenges, and is a good communicator. The similar research study concluded the teachers preferred a transrelational leader during a time of change. The transrelational leader focuses on relationships first and then guiding and supporting staff to move towards the intended goals. This research project was different in the aspect

of the cause for change. With the momentum from COVID-19 and the statewide closures, the unfreezing was not an issue, change was not an option, and thus the momentum began.

### **Limitations**

The project provides a new insight into the relationship between change and leadership attributes that demonstrate support to teachers in a high school setting located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The generalizability of the results is limited by the number of participants and location. One of the participants did not experience a supportive leader and therefore did not contribute much content to the attributes of a support leader through change.

These results may not crossover to urban high schools due to differences in characteristics. However, the impact may be appropriate for rural schools alike as the researcher was careful to contact participants in various content areas in districts in all parts of the U.P. and of different sizes to ensure the data be more reliable.

### **Researcher Bias**

The researcher would like to acknowledge her position, experiences, and biases. While completing this study the researcher was an administrator in a high school in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. The researcher's position and experiences contribute to bias in this study. The researcher worked through the COVID-19 shutdown and provided leadership for the teachers and students. The researcher's role was to oversee a few departments by creating opportunities to collaborate, communicate all information from the district level, and to ensure the teachers obtained the resources required to be

successful. The researcher attempted to create a systematic approach to communicate with all students not completing work, as intended. The researcher also was involved in the extra supports the school generally provides to the students like mental health, food, grade checks, and organization. The researcher believes all students have a better chance of being successful when their basic needs are met. The researcher's role and experience during this time, may shape her perspective on this subject.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

With trust and relationships being an integral part of change theory, the next researcher can find the correlation between trust toward leadership and momentum to change. This project could not have researched that relationship because of the impetus of change in this specific situation. In addition to relationship status, the research could be extended to elementary and middle school teachers. The research might also be continued to include the perspective of administration from all areas of public education.

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## Appendix A: IRB Approval

### Memorandum

**TO:**

Jeanine Sherman  
School of Education, Leadership and Public Service

**CC:**

Bethney Bergh  
School of Education, Leadership and Public Service

**DATE:**

June 25th, 2020

**FROM:**

Lisa Schade Eckert  
Dean of Graduate Studies and Research

**SUBJECT:**

**IRB Proposal HS20-1133**

**IRB Approval Date: 6/25/2020**

Proposed Project Dates: 6/15/2020 – 6/25/2020

“Leadership present during COVID-19 shutdown and transition to distance learning”

Your proposal “Leadership present during COVID-19 shutdown and transition to distance learning” has been approved by the NMU Institutional Review Board. Include your proposal number (HS20-1133) on all research materials and on any correspondence regarding this project.

A. If a subject suffers an injury during research, or if there is an incident of non-compliance with IRB policies and procedures, you must take immediate action to assist the subject and notify the IRB chair ([dereande@nmu.edu](mailto:dereande@nmu.edu)) and NMU’s IRB administrator ([leckert@nmu.edu](mailto:leckert@nmu.edu)) within 48 hours. Additionally, you must complete an Unanticipated Problem or Adverse Event Form for Research Involving Human Subjects.

B. Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant.

C. If you find that modifications of investigators, methods, or procedures are necessary, you must submit a Project Modification Form for Research Involving

Human Subjects before collecting data. Any changes or revisions to your approved research plan must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

All forms can be found at the NMU Grants and Research website:

<http://www.nmu.edu/grantsandresearch/node/102>

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Adam D. Klingspon

Graduate Administrative Assistant  
Graduate Studies and Research  
Northern Michigan University  
906-227-1409  
1401 Presque Isle Ave, Marquette, MI  
49855  
<http://www.nmu.edu/graduatestudies/>

## Appendix B: Interview Consent Form



Northern Michigan University  
School of Education, Leadership and Public Service  
PROJECT TITLE: School Leadership through Change  
IRB Approval Number: HS20-1133

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study. Purpose of the research study:

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to learn from the experiences of high school teachers located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan about school leadership styles used during Covid – 19 school closures and transition to distance teaching and learning.

What you will be asked to do in the study:

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to complete a five question Google Form Survey in which you share your response to the communication used by leadership during the Covid – 19 school closures and transition to distance teaching and learning.

Following the survey, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview conducted with the researcher via Zoom. The interview will be recorded for transcribing purposes and should last approximately 45 minutes. During the interview, you will be asked to share information about your experience working with leadership as you transitioned from face-to-face classroom instruction to distance teaching and learning. Specifically, you will be asked about the practices used by school leadership to guide the faculty and staff through the implemented changes.

Time required:

Approximately 45 minutes.

Risks and Benefits:

Risks to this study are minimal. A potential risk includes feeling uncomfortable or vulnerable while answering questions about your administrator's in leadership practices during the change to distance teaching and learning during the Covid-19 shutdown.

Additionally, there may be professional risks for the participant, as they are asked to share opinions about school leadership practices.

The potential benefits of the study include the opportunity to inform school leaders about the experience of teachers during the Covid-19 school closure and transition to distance teaching and learning. This may impact decision making and the future practices of school leaders.

Incentive or Compensation:

There is no incentive for participating; therefore, you will not be adversely affected in any way if you choose not to participate.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. To protect the confidentiality of the participants and research data, each participant will be assigned participant number which will be used when referring to the participant. Names of schools and the locations of the schools (outside of being located in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan) will not be used in any written manuscripts resulting from the research.

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence or penalty.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:

If you have any further questions regarding your rights as a participant in a research project you may contact Dr. Lisa Schade Eckert of the Human Subjects Research Review Committee of Northern Michigan University (906-227-2300) [leckert@nmu.edu](mailto:leckert@nmu.edu). Any questions you have regarding the nature of this research project will be answered by the principal researcher who can be contacted as follows: Jeanine Sherman (906-748-1110) [jsherman@eupschools.org](mailto:jsherman@eupschools.org).

Agreement:

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign the form below. A signature will indicate agreement to participate.

Participant's Name: (Print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that I will be *video recorded digitally using Zoom* by the researcher(s). These files will be kept by the researcher(s) on a password protected computer. I understand that only the researcher(s) will have access to these files.

Video recording of study activities

Interviews may be video recorded to assist with the accuracy of your responses. You have the right to refuse the recording. Please select one of the following options:

I consent to video recording:      Yes\_\_\_\_      No\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Interview Questions

### Pre-Interview Questions Emailed Google Form

Please share your experience with your administration through the COVID-19 shutdown and transition to remote learning.

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Please select the response that best describes your administration's practice during the Covid-19 shutdown and transition to remote learning.

How did your administrator communicate? What methods did your administrator(s) use to communicate?

- Whole group, one way communication, telling you information
- Collaborated and inspired you to learn together through the process
- Checked in frequently to share information and to see if you needed anything
- Provided opportunities to talk, ask question or support
- Dictated with some groups and collaborated with others
- Other

How did the administration work with you to decide how grading would work?

- The administration decided everyone will ...
- The administration motivated and inspired all to do their best.
- The administration asked what can I do for you, what resources or training do you need?
- The administration invited conversation about grading to aid you in deciding.
- I approached the administration with the way I wanted to grade
- Different groups of people got different responses. New teachers may have been told how to grade and veteran teachers were able to decide their method.
- Other

How were instructional methods decided?

- The administration decided everyone will use ... for learning.
- The administration provided resources and professional development for new methods of teaching.
- The administration inquired what you would like more information and asked how they can support you.
- The administration welcomes conversation about instruction and brings examples/ideas.
- The administration allowed some groups flexibility in their instruction and was strict on others.
- Other

Please identify how your administrator was at removing barriers for you during this transition.

- Told you what to do
- Collaborated with your department/team and problem solved together
- Asked what resources/training was needed to address the situation
- Reached out offering you their services or help
- Depending on the person, your administrator would respond differently, telling
- Other

### **Interview Questions asked for ZOOM interview**

- Explain positive interactions with your administrator through the shutdown and transformation to remote learning.
- Why were they positive?
- Explain a few ways your administrator could have increased the support provided during the transformation to remote learning.
- Did you experience any barriers, if so, what were they and how did your administrator play an active role?
- Individual questions based on results of survey probing for further clarification

### **Elaborating Probes**

- “Tell me more.”
- “Could you explain your response more?”
- “I need more detail.”
- “What does “not much” mean?”