Principals and the Phenomenon of Neoliberal Audit Culture

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Principals and the Phenomenon of Neoliberal Audit Culture

By

James A. Bishop

A DISSERTATION

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Finally, I am forever and happily in debt to my lovely wife Caroline who served as editor-in-chief of my final draft, as well as the author of my physical and mental well-being throughout this process. "Ti amo."
DEDICATION

To my devoted father and mother, Joseph and Judy Bishop, who gave me the way,

To my incomparable wife, Caroline, who gives me the why,

and

To my beautiful daughter, Abigail, who is my Creator's great gift - both to this world,

and to me.
ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the perceptions of six principals of the assessment culture within their schools. The principals were experienced in the assessment culture under study from a single school district consisting of two principals from each level – elementary, middle and high – with each level having one principal with a low SES (free and reduced lunch above 60%) population of students and one with a high SES population (free and reduce lunch below 20%). The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which principals perceive functional value in the neoliberal School Assessment Culture Phenomenon comprised of the Georgia Milestones Assessment System that is used to evaluate student, educator, and school success in these specific contexts: 1) student growth required in 2020 by the Teacher and Leader Keys Effectiveness Systems (TKES/LKES) and 2) student growth and achievement currently required by the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI). Through an interpretive phenomenological approach, this study reveals that the principal informants perceive little functional value in the current neoliberal assessment system's ability to address the needs of the whole child as delivered through the Georgia Milestone Assessment System. The researcher also identifies the essential essence of the school assessment phenomenon in these principals' schools as dissonance created by the narrow scope of the Milestone Assessments and the issues appertaining to that scope.

Keywords: audit culture, assessment, Georgia Milestones, College and Career Readiness Performance Index, phenomenology, whole child, functional validity.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background and Role of Researcher

My friend is a teacher, and I was talking to him the other day about his professional responsibilities towards his students. I told him that I simply could not understand how he could take the enormous pressure of the responsibility for his students' lives on a daily basis. Eventually, I asked him the critical question, "Don't you feel guilty or responsible when your students fail?"

He just shrugged and responded, "I just have to think of it this way – as long as I have not made my students worse off than when they came to me, I really have not harmed them in any way. If they get worse, and I can show that they would have gotten worse without my interventions, I am not responsible when they fail."

I was a bit taken aback by his rationale and his seemingly unemotional response to the seriousness of his students' plight, so I pressed him. "How can you be so calm and indifferent when a student fails? Isn't it your job to make sure they pass?"

"I am calm, but I am not indifferent," he said, "and no, it's not my job to make sure they pass. It's my responsibility to provide the best known interventions that my profession and experience allow in an effort to achieve a successful outcome. There are myriad factors beyond my control impacting each student's condition that can cause them to fail. As long as I conduct accepted due diligence regarding those factors I can control, I have nothing to feel guilty about. When they fail, I can rest assured that had they not been with me, even if they were with another teacher, they certainly would have failed anyway."

While I felt a sense of discouragement regarding my friend's attitude towards his profession, I would hope that anyone reading this would feel an even greater sense of dismay as
I make this admission: although the conversation is accurate, the description of the participants is not. My friend is not a teacher, he is a medical doctor. His "students" are actually his patients, to "fail" is to die, and to "pass" is to live. Substituting these words and rereading this story must certainly reveal the irony of the standard of responsibility held by doctors towards their patients juxtaposed with the current neoliberal audit culture that holds educators to a far higher standard, even though they also take people into their care who each have individual needs and individual potentials.

In an effort to clearly state my subjectivities (Preissle, 2008) at the outset of this study, the vignette above expresses the frustration I feel, and the irony I recognize in policymakers' view that educators should be held accountable for narrow definitions of "success" regardless of the many factors beyond educators' control that impact the child's ability to attain that success. I did not always feel this way, however, as I was excited to support the assessment ideals with the institution of "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) when I was a relatively young high school administrator. I knew that accountability was needed, and I didn't fully understand or recognize the forces behind the effort. It was in this time period that I first heard the term "bubble kid" used to indicate those students who appeared to be on the cusp of success but who needed a little more help. We didn't have a name for those students who were beneath the "bubble kids" with little hope of passing, but "abandoned" may have been appropriate. As the years passed under NCLB, I began to question the political, moral, and intellectual underpinnings of such administrative gamesmanship that satisfies an arbitrary cut score determined by the state with no relevance to the reality of students' needs. Eventually, the fallacy of NCLB goals and threats became apparent to most in society, and I waited with hope and anticipation for Congress to repeal the Act and provide something more tenable and equitable for all.
I started my doctoral program towards the end of that waiting period and learned much more about NCLB than I had known before, including the fact that the stipulations of NCLB were based on economic theories rather than an educational theory or philosophy. The failure of this economic philosophy when applied to education, however, became apparent to me as I realized the simple fact that academically successful children are not "widgets" that can be mass produced and collectively compared. I watched as the individual states moved towards a "growth" model of accountability under NCLB waivers rather than consequences for schools and teachers based on end-point data. The consequences for end-point failures did not disappear under these waivers, however, but remained in place for school administrators and teachers whose evaluations are slated for growth measure requirements by the year 2020. State-level politicians, such as Republican State Senator David Purdue (Appendix A, personal communication, November 12, 2015), may claim victory over the Federal Government as more decisions and power over assessments are returned to the states through the Every Student Succeeds Act, but I strongly believe that the same old system of accountability and audit has remained in place in a different form.

Maxwell (2009) defines three types of goals that are useful in describing the motivation to conduct a given study: personal, practical, and intellectual. My personal and practical goals are intertwined with the experiences described above. When I was a teacher, I always felt that students were cheated out of their education by those teachers around me that I saw as inadequate to the task of teaching. I believe this attitude arose from my own experiences as a student where I was often subjected to the irksome and unhelpful ministrations of such teachers. I entered education thinking that I could do a better job, but my evolving understanding of the direction of education since No Child Left Behind, and my participation in its implementation,
has led me to believe that I have become one of the irksome and unhelpful educators I so resented. My practical goal, therefore, is that this study will be a part of the process that will expose the nature of the accountability culture in education to the end that we may focus once more upon educating students rather than assessing them.

In reality, however, I am aware that this culture has been created over much time and cannot be uncreated in a day, if ever. Certainly, there are aspects of assessment and evaluation that are useful and productive to all parties involved. To be an effective advocate for an educational process that is both useful to society and healthy for society's members, I must find a balance between the well-being of individuals and the needs of the community and nation as a whole. This is difficult to do without interjecting my personal values and beliefs that shape my own perspective of "well-being" that may be in conflict with another's perspective. Yet, personal belief supplies more than mere "bias," and it can be a true source of insight as well (Maxwell, 2009). I intend that the main thrust of my study should remain in the realm of the practical with a pragmatic focus on the actual day-to-day experiences of the principals to reveal or deny the efficacy of the current assessment milieu in education.

Too often intellectualism rejects pragmatism as a blue-collar approach to reality, but my intellectual goal, that is to say my goal of "understanding something" (Maxwell, 2009) is to create a marriage of the two in this study. In my experience and study, the most useful and productive scientific inquiry is always accompanied by practical analysis and experimentation. Anyone who clings to an intellectual ideal while rejecting practical knowledge about what actually is happening in the real world will certainly doom that ideal to oblivion. By examining the effect of Milestone Assessments and the evaluation systems they feed, situated within the context principals' lived experience, I will be able to understand more completely the nature of
the assessment culture phenomenon within schools (Maxwell, 2009). Through this study, I believe it is possible to reveal the practical applications of assessment to education while also exposing its unintended consequences and impediments to learning.

Statement of the Problem

The recent federal reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known now as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has placed more decision-making power in the hands of the individual states (Klein, 2016), and with that burden comes the opportunity to explore and re-evaluate some of the basic assumptions and practices that take place within school systems in the United States. An examination of how the overarching philosophies and statewide policies influence the behavior and practices of educators in the local schools allows a much needed perspective to those in the position to influence any changes that may occur in this critical time of change. According to Broom (2012), educators are an important and credible source to inform such a new perspective and would represent a welcome change from the non-educational sources that have informed past policies based in neoliberal ideas fueled by speculative economic theories. Thus, this study is based on the concept that any new approach to improving education would be better served when authored by educators whose lives are dedicated to student learning rather than political or economic gain, and principals are best suited to provide that guidance as the instructional leaders in their buildings.

Research Question

The review of literature presented in chapter 2 of this study reveals a system of assessment that relies on the needs and goals of business for legitimacy, and the two main indicators of this system's definition of success are the differing measures of growth and achievement. Other values at play in this system, however, include the desire for equity and the
ability to address all the needs of children in the educational setting. The following research question was designed to explore the intersection of these goals, measures, and values in the educational setting:

To what extent do principals' lived experiences express functional value in the school assessment culture phenomenon comprised of the Georgia Milestones Assessment System that is used to evaluate student, educator, and school success in these specific contexts: 1) student growth required in 2020 by the Teacher and Leader Keys Effectiveness Systems (TKES/LKES) and 2) student growth and achievement currently required by the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI).

Purpose Statement

This qualitative study addresses the manifestation of neoliberal assessment policies in schools as revealed by principals' attitudes, concerns and actions with a specific focus on the state assessments known as the Georgia Milestones as they are used to serve the dual purposes of 1) demonstrating student growth for the purpose of evaluating teachers and administrators through the Teacher/Leader Keys Evaluation Systems (TKES/LKES) starting in 2020; and 2) demonstrating student growth and achievement as a part of the evaluation of schools via the current College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) instrument. While the Milestones are likely valid and reliable from a strictly statistical point of view, the concept of functional validity (Haertel, 2013) or Interpretive/Use Argument (IUA) (Kane, 2013) also includes the question of whether such assessments motivate the appropriate actions and outcomes in the educational context in which they are used. I am specifically interested in discovering what conflicts, such as allocation of resources, or unintended consequences that may arise in the tension between these two goals (growth vs achievement), how principals resolve
those issues, and what their attitudes may be towards this duality of purpose. Through an exploration and understanding of these factors, I will fulfill the aim of a phenomenology which is to "grasp the exclusively singular aspects (identity/essence/otherness) of a phenomenon" (Van Manen, 2014).

By understanding the lived experiences of principals regarding the end goal, or goals, of these state assessments, I also hope to not only describe the essence of how the phenomenon of the assessment system manifests in schools but also determine the extent to which principals consider these assessments to be beneficial. Specifically, I will focus on the functional validity of these assessments in determining the dual purposes of achievement and growth as well as the extent to which educational decisions can be properly and effectively made based on the data produced. This research effort will take the form of a phenomenological qualitative study conducted through interviews.

**Conceptual Framework**

In *Reason and Rigor*, Ravitch and Riggan (2017) provide a description of how an overarching conceptual framework is necessary to form a cohesive study that links together the critical elements of the research process. Such a framework will hold the "Reason," or importance of the study, which is to explore the phenomenon of neoliberal assessment policies as they manifest within schools through the lived experiences of the principals within those schools. As educational leaders, principals are the key interface between policy and practice and are an essential resource to inform assessment policy and practice. The framework will also contain the "Rigor" of the study through effective, organized, and thorough use of a qualitative research approach that will allow a full exploration of this topic and make meaning from the reality of
principals’ day-to-day lives. Their experiences, if appropriately and adequately expressed, should provide a subject worthy of study that will serve to provide insight to inform practice and policy.

An empirical phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994) serves to provide the above described reason and rigor that frames this study. Phenomenology represents a constructivist epistemological approach to knowledge that values reality as socially and psychologically constructed rather than a static, objective truth to be discovered (Yilmaz, 2013). Edmund Husserl is considered the father of the philosophical approach known as transcendental phenomenology whose main goal was to understand the "essences" of phenomenon through a description of the lived experiences of others. To do this, the researcher must first "bracket" or keep separate prior assumptions regarding the phenomenon, a method known as the "epoche," and secondly the researcher must engage in the "reduction," or the constitution of meaning related to the phenomenon. From this beginning, much theory and methodology has arisen including that of social psychologists of the Duquesne School such as Amadeo Giorgi (Van Mannen, 2014). Giorgi, (1997) describes his methodology that begins with the basic steps of any phenomenological study: 1) the reduction, 2) description, and 3) the uncovering of the essences as described above; however, he distinguishes the philosophical methods typically associated with the terms above from a scientific methodology. First, the description comes from subjects who express their natural, rather than bracketed, attitudes towards the phenomenon. Whereas philosophical researchers often personally encounter the phenomenon under study and therefore need to bracket prior knowledge of the phenomenon in order to achieve reduction, Giorgi notes that it is impossible to obtain such bracketing within the research participant regarding their interaction with a phenomenon. Instead, the researcher needs to bracket prior knowledge of the phenomenon when interviewing and relating the description of
the subject's responses. Second, philosophical researchers often search for essences more universal in nature rather than specific essences that are more related to the researcher's subject. Giorgi (1997) also states, "It would seem that all qualitative methods have to go through a minimum of five basic steps: (1) collection of verbal data, (2) reading of the data, (3) breaking of the data into some kind of parts, (4) organization and expression of the data from a disciplinary perspective, and (5) synthesis or summary of the data for purposes of communication to the scholarly community." While questioning the linkage between Giorgi's descriptive, analytic methodology to Husserl's philosophical one, and pointing out Giorgi's own concerns with even more structured methods such as Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), Van Manen (2014) acknowledges the applicability of such descriptive methodologies to specific applications.

The specific application concerning this study, the phenomenon of school assessment culture as experienced by principals, suits such a descriptive methodology well since principals primarily manage, contribute to, and experience the forces that come to bear which create the phenomenon. The specific conceptual framework (see figure 1 below) that I am proposing for this study, therefore, centers around principals as actors within the school upon whom direct and indirect forces come to bear that influence their decisions and actions regarding state-mandated assessments. One significant source of direct force arises from the federal neoliberal agenda of assessment accountability creating an audit culture that permeates the educational context and creates the structures that hold education in a tightly controlled environment. The stipulations and structures adopted by the states and districts are also translated to the building level where principals are faced with the task of fulfilling achievement goals of the state. Finally, the principals own educational philosophies and learned pedagogical constructs concerning the
ethical goals of serving the totality of issues facing their students interact and combine with these forces as well.

**Figure 1 Visual Representation of the Conceptual Framework**

Pushing into the neoliberal, and thereby the state and district, policy arenas are the shifting attitudes towards assessment and its usefulness in the educational setting that indirectly impact the school assessment culture as well. These shifting attitudes include the notion that assessment validity should extend beyond mere statistical measures and include the evaluation of
the use of such assessments and the results of that use. The objects of these shifting attitudes are
other assessments created by school districts, the TKES/LKES assessment systems, and the
Georgia Milestone Assessment System that is intricately woven into educator and school
assessment creating a high stakes, high pressure environment for principals tasked with
managing the educators caught in the middle.

The impact of these forces on the decisions principals make regarding allocation of both
monetary and human resources, and the ethical, professional, and political consequences that
may ensue are the focus of this study and serve to define the neoliberal audit culture established
within schools through the influence of federal and state policies. The attitudes and concerns
expressed by these principals through this exploratory, descriptive, qualitative study will reveal
key themes and issues that make up these principals' lived experiences. The analysis and
synthesis of these principals' lived experiences will reveal a comprehensive view of how current
assessment policies and practices manifest in schools.

**Limitations of Study**

Because the subject of this study directly reflects upon principal acceptance and
implementation of public policy, a potential limitation is the willingness of principals to
participate in an interview with full candor about their attitudes that may be in opposition to such
public policy. To address this issue, I provided the principals with assurances of anonymity and
shared my procedures that included them in reviewing the results of the interview to ensure
credibility and anonymity. Even so, one principal who initially agreed to participate withdrew
that consent immediately when realizing that the interview would be recorded. The principal
expressed concern that such an interview might hinder further promotion if the principal's
identity were ever discovered, and his concern overcame the assurances I provided that I would
maintain anonymity. This was not a conclusion the principal arrived at gradually as we spoke, but rather an immediate and visceral reaction to seeing the tape recorder. My impression was that the principal had much to say that was not positive regarding the current system and the inability to speak on the subject was annoying. Another principal, whom I designated [H-H], actually said at the conclusion of the interview, "Yeah. That should get me fired." It is this measure of expressed concern regarding the consequences for speaking the truth that drives my concern for genuine candor from my interview subjects. Still, the value of the measure of candor that would motivate the statement by [H-H] must surely be appreciated and considered with a level of seriousness as great as the proposed risk implies.

Another limitation of the study is the error on my part when developing the anticipatory data reduction (appendix B) and subsequently the formation of the initial interview questions from the TKES/LKES category of analysis. Less time should have been spent on questioning the utilization of those instruments and more time should have been spent on the assessment portion of those instruments that will come into effect in the year 2020. That issue was a part of the follow-up conversation with the principals as a matter of clarifying stated positions, but greater information could have been gathered related to the growth measure of the teacher assessment had the question orientation been correct. As it stands, there is interesting information provided, but not all of it is directly related to the focus of this study.

Finally, the participating school district's stipulation did not allow principal participants to choose for either the survey portion or the interview portion of the research but were required to agree to both in order to participate. Although the materials that were provided to the principals in order to obtain their signatures to participate as part of the IRB process included the distinction between the two types of participation, some principals were reluctant to commit to
the research process because of the lack of separation between commitments. According to anecdotal accounts, many principals did not want to commit to both types of participation, and therefore did not sign. The effect of this limited number of Likert-type survey participants is described in greater detail in a later section.

**Definition of Relevant Terms**

The research will use these relevant terms:

**School Assessment Culture** - The actual culture of assessment that is found in schools as a result of the many assessment forces acting upon the staff and students.

**School Audit Culture** - The neoliberal-driven culture of assessment that relies on numbers to quantify people's performance and provides concrete, quantitative value to the practices involved in teaching and learning (Shore 2015).

**College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI)** - An instrument intended to determine how well schools enable students to achieve academically containing five major components: 1) Content Mastery, 2) Progress, 3) Closing Gaps, 4) Readiness, and 5) Graduation Rate. "Content Mastery" is the student achievement component related to EOC and EOG assessment results, and "Progress" is the growth measure in English Language Arts, math, and progress towards English language proficiency (Georgia, Overview, 2018).

**Georgia Milestone Assessment System** - Summative assessments given to students in Georgia from Grades 3 through 12 for the purpose of determining acquisition of state-adopted standards in the content areas of English Language Arts, math, social studies, and science. The assessments
in grades three through eight are termed "End-of Grade" (EOG), and the assessments in grades nine through twelve are known as "End of Course" (EOC) (Georgia, 2017c).

Student Growth Measure – Using the yearly Georgia Milestone EOC and EOG assessments, students are evaluated statistically relative to their peers who achieved at academically similar levels on the prior year's test. This score is termed the "Student Growth Percentile" (SGP) and describes the percentage of growth for each student compared to those academically similar students (Georgia, 2017a).

Student Achievement Measure - The "Content Mastery" portion of a school's CCRPI score related to achievement on the EOG and EOC in the areas of English, math, science, and social studies (Georgia, Overview, 2018).

Teacher Keys Evaluation System (TKES) - The teacher evaluation system for Georgia that generates a "Teacher Effectiveness Measure" (TEM) consisting of three components: 1) Teacher assessment on performance standards, 50%; 2) Professional growth, 20%; and 3) student growth, 30% (Georgia, 2017d).

Leader Keys Evaluation System (LKES) - The leader (principals and assistant principals) evaluation system for the state of Georgia that generates a "Leader Effectiveness Measure" (LEM) consisting of four components: 1) leader assessment on performance standards, 30%; 2) student growth, 40%; 3) school climate rating, 10%; and 4) additional data combined from other sources, 20% (Georgia, 2017b).

Etic themes – Themes that are developed by the researcher. "Etic" is described by Creswell (2015) as referring "to second-order concepts, such as the language used by the social scientist or educator to refer to the same phenomena mentioned by the participants."
Emic themes – Themes that emerge from the data produced by the informants. "Emic" is described by Creswell (2015) as referring "to first-order concepts, such as local language and ways of expression used by members in a culture-sharing group."

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study that includes the background and role of the researcher, the problem addressed by the research question and purpose of the study, as well as the conceptual framework, limitations, and definition of terms. Chapter 2 provides a description of the neoliberal theoretical framework and a review of the literature regarding controversy of standardized testing, the effects of neoliberal policy in the practice of education, conflict between the goals of achievement and growth, and the shifting attitudes related to assessment that can be seen today. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology for the proposed study including the research question and design, the data gathering method and analysis, and the credibility and ethical considerations related to the proposed study. Chapter 4 provides the results of the study including summaries of the principal interviews, the resulting emergent themes, and the relationships among those themes. Chapter 5 relates the findings to the literature while providing the implications and limitations of those findings for educational practice as well as recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review links the ideas of business and economic theory applied in an educational context with the accompanying issues related to political influences on assessment practice. A history and understanding of the progression of neoliberal thought and theory, particularly as they are applied to education and assessment, provides a theoretical framework
for this study. A review of the literature outlining the impact, influence, and conflicts established by the application of neoliberal ideas in the educational assessment context provides the proper background for this study which involves principal perceptions of the influences those ideas have on their day-to-day decisions and actions.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is supported in neoliberal theory, with its accompanying business-inspired accountability component, as applied to education and the influence it has on principals in the local schools. Essentially, neoliberal philosophy espouses injecting competition into government services and creating change through market forces rather than government intervention (Connell, 2013). In other words the government should no longer "row" the boat as happens in a welfare state, but should rather "steer" the boat as private enterprise pulls the load (Shore, 2015). The role of the State should be to protect and promote the entrepreneurial spirit that arises from individual property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey, 2007). A major criticism of neoliberal thought in relation to school performance is that such theories are an inappropriate application of political and business theories to education rather than pedagogical solutions to educational problems. In other words, education should not be treated like a business. The two main failures of neoliberal's approach to education reside specifically in the notions that children are the “investments” of business, that they are simply to be prepared for the global workforce, and that these students should have to compete for a credential to prove their worth to such a system (Watkins, 2004).

Neoliberalism is a political and economic philosophy that has deep roots in American culture, but its impact has only been felt from the latter part of the 20th century until today. The term "neoliberalism" can be traced back to as early as 1938 when it was used by the French
economist Louis Marlio at the "Lippman Colloquium" held in Paris. The purpose of this colloquium, organized by the philosopher Louis Rogier, was to discuss the potential for a rebirth of liberalism, and the ideas that arose from this meeting fueled future books and essays regarding the dangers of both governmental and private-interest control of economies. The private interest dangers were illustrated by the "trusts" that had arisen in the 19th century, and the governmental controls were evidenced in the rising dictatorships of fascism and communism of the 1930's. In the minds of these early neoliberals, the world would only find peace through the institution of a global economy policed by a multilateral organization (Brennetot, 2015). These ideas were subsumed by post-World War II Keynesian welfare policies that emphasized greater state control over the allocation of resources and direct intervention by the state if needed (Anderson, Mungal, Pini, Scott, and Thomson, 2013). During the 1950's, however, the next generation of neoliberal economists coalesced around Milton Friedman and was known as the "Chicago School." These economists did not share the early neoliberals' aversion to private monopolies in the form of big business, and Friedman also did not advocate a global association for control beyond a mere competitive model. It was at this point that the modern notions associated with the term "neoliberal" became evident to the world through the policies of leaders such as Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, and Augusto Pinochet in Chile with help from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These modern policies center around the concepts that market forces should be allowed to operate on a global basis and that government's role was to simply manage those forces rather than seek to intervene. As part of that management, however, modern neoliberalism allows for public interventions such as funding which makes it compatible not only to those individuals representing the conservative right, but also those to the left of center on the political spectrum (Brennetot, 2015).
Currently, public education is one of the last governmental entities devoted to the prior welfare state that stands in opposition to the policies of neoliberalism. As such, public education is the target of neoliberal reforms and policies that manifest in the form of accountability measures and corporate, market-driven solutions to address perceived deficits (Anderson, et al, 2013). This form of governance has been described as the creation of an "Audit Culture" that is described by Shore (2015) as an everyday reliance on numbers that quantifies people's performance and provides concrete, quantitative meaning to abstract and largely qualitative data that is rarely questioned. It also provides an opportunity for those with little understanding of the educational process to assign value to the practices involved in teaching and learning (Shore, 2015).

The American public's reliance upon assessment in education as a tool for accountability has been key to the success of neoliberal theories. This trust did not happen overnight, however, but was part of a trend that started in the early 1900's with an Americanized version of Binet's I.Q. testing which purported to measure the intellect of a given individual and was used initially as a means to measure aptitude of World War I conscripts (Conley, 2015)(Shepard, 2016). Early studies also revealed a lack of uniformity in instruction among school districts, so there was also an effort to gain some understanding and control over what was revealed (Shepard, 2016) by the application of scientific principles to school management as it had been applied to business and other areas of endeavor at this time in history (Conley, 2015). The idea that a person's intelligence could be reduced to a simple number that appeared to be objective was very appealing to policy makers who could use such simple data to legitimize decisions. This type of scientific objectivism, or "mechanical objectivity" as it has been described, allows numbers to make decisions so the evaluator is free from that task. Once a cut-score is set, the evaluator and
policy makers can point to the numbers allowing the statistics and data to drive decisions (Brookhart 2013).

The limitations of this perspective became apparent over the years as researchers began to understand that I.Q. alone could not be used as a predictor of success (Shepherd, 2016). It was equally apparent, however, that I.Q. tests and scoring could be used to further racist attitudes and policies of the time period of the early 1900's (Conley, 2015)(Shepherd 2016). The link between the eugenics movement using I.Q. tests to bolster their claims of racial superiority early in the century is well documented and the public's consumption of the idea of the scientific objectivity of standardized tests led to black students being deprived of equal educational opportunities as they were often shunted towards lower skilled tracks of training for future employment (Shepherd, 2016). After Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka in 1954, battles over desegregation illustrated that seemingly objective data was truly subjective and depended on how the data was used. Proponents of segregation used poor test scores to show how integration diminished the overall results of schools while those who opposed segregation pointed to the same scores to show how students disadvantaged by cultural differences had been poorly educated previously (Brookhart 2013).

The true rise to prominence of assessment in the public eye occurred in the 1970's with the minimum competency movement that was a reaction to perceived declines in achievement based on declining norm-referenced standardized test scores such as the ACT and SAT. A byproduct of this movement was the observation that the "minimum" for competency ended up becoming the "maximum" for achievement, and many scholars expressed concern that the emphasis on outputs diminished the emphasis on creating equity through a focus on inputs to disadvantaged students. Public opinion polls of the time, however, showed a public reliance on
the objectivity of standardized tests as well as a turn towards blaming both students and teachers for a lack of effort in their respective roles throughout the time span of the late 1960's through the early 1970's (Brookhart 2013). The obvious disadvantages of norm-referenced tests that only assessed discrete elements of literacy numeracy became apparent, however, and the push towards criterion-referenced assessments that allowed students to demonstrate mastery became the next wave at the time of the 1983 "Nation at Risk" report. This new wave borrowed from prior efforts at "mastery learning" that included portfolios and other performance assessments, but many states soon discovered that the time and expense associated with such assessments came at a political and economic cost. By the time the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB) legislation was passed in 2001, the states realized that the stipulations and requirements of this Act could be far more easily satisfied with multiple-choice standardized tests rather than open-ended questions that would better demonstrate mastery, even though that intent was never stated in the law (Conley, 2015).

Implicit in the decision by policymakers above that holds educators as the main hindrance to education is the Theory of Constraints. This managerial theory was developed and refined throughout the 1970's and 80's by Eliyahu Goldrat who described the necessity for identifying the primary constraint to the effectiveness of a company and then dealing with it exclusively until that issue was no longer the primary problem (Mabin & Balderstone 2003). While the reasons policy makers identified educators as the main constraint to good education may be in question, other business gurus were clearly the basis of many policy-making decisions with regards to how education should be fixed. Both Peter Senge's proposal regarding five ways organizations could become "learning organizations," (Pietrzak, 2015 ) and W. Edward Deming's "Total Quality Management," or TQM, were adopted by educational policy-makers
and leaders (Kohn, 1993). Many of the applied tenants of both Deming and Senge appear to be beneficial including the reliance on collaboration among educators to develop and maintain common knowledge for the purpose of improving practice and also the use of diagnostic activities that allow educators to respond effectively to student needs (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Specifically, Deming was a proponent of the "Shewhart Cycle" (Deming, Chapter 2, 2000) that serves as a strategy for continual improvement of practice which consisted of four steps that were shortened to "Plan, Do, Check, Act" (Pietrzak, 2015). Echoes of this cycle can still be seen today in school improvement materials advocating professional learning communities (PLC’s) in schools where gathering evidence, developing and implementing strategies, analyzing the effect of those strategies, and apply that knowledge to the next cycle of learning are described in detail (DuFour, R., Dufour, R. B., Eaker, Many, & Mattos, 2016). Critical to this process in both business and education, however, is the idea that the "variations" in the outcomes that cause the need for this cycle must be identified as arising from either "common causes" or "special causes" to ensure the cycle is applied to the appropriate issue at hand (Stensaasen, 1995; Deming, Chapter 11, 2000). The focus on the principal as the main constraint to school success is clearly articulated by James H. Stronge (2013), the consultant for the TKES and LKES assessment system in Georgia, who states that modern principal evaluation systems hold "the explicit expectation that principals are responsible for student achievement. In fact, principal evaluation is now virtually synonymous with school evaluation."

Detractors of the application of such business theories into the educational process point out that the language and approach of business which serves the goal of global competitiveness rather than the student is basically flawed. Such an orientation that focuses on "product" in the form of assessment scores demotivates students and is actually antithetical to the essence of what
business theorists such as Deming espouse (Kohn, 1993). Peck and Reitzug (2012) note that business leaders push models such as TQM, Management by Objectives, and Turnaround into the educational field only after they have been discarded from the business world, and that these waves of leadership "fashion" instill feelings of futility and distrust among educators while they persist beyond their term of efficacy, albeit under different names. Most of the complaints regarding the insertion of business models into education can be covered generally by the idea that such efforts represent a kind of "functionalism" that is the basic tenet of Neoliberal thought: the idea that scientific analysis through formal assessment creates value in and of itself without critical inquiry into the nature or causes of that assessment (Holland, 2004).

**Controversy Over Use of Standardized Testing**

The introduction and acceptance of the big ideas that such functionalism represented was appealing since education could be judged in a scientifically rather than philosophically. Critics, however, are more effective by questioning the values of functionalism itself rather than staying in the box that proponents of standardized assessment has created (Holland, 2004). According to Wang, Beckett, & Brown (2006), four main areas of controversy surround standardized assessment in schools as a result of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legacy. First, the idea that assessment driven reform was ever actually needed in schools is strongly debated, and critics claim that the entire crisis was merely manufactured. While American students lag behind students in other countries on certain measures, many now believe that such a circumstance is no evidence of an actual crisis. Second, the value of standards-based assessments has been called into question as a narrowing of the curriculum and a diminishing of freedom of thought. Even though many urge the value of consistency in tracking student progress and providing interventions, others see these efforts as a form of political control rather than true education
This can also lead to principals acting as "managers" rather than "professionals" as trust in their capacity to utilize judgement and interpretation is diminished through standardization and procedural dictates (Holland, 2004). Third, assessment accountability measures undermine educators without truly measuring the multitude of extra-educational factors that influence student success or failure. While accountability is a desirable outcome in any profession, the lack of any true measures of ability make this strategy ineffective and unfair at best. Finally, placing high stakes on the success of students and teachers based on assessments is argued to be simplistic behaviorism that kills intrinsic motivation through extrinsic rewards or punishments. Further, such fear inspired behavior can lead to unscrupulous practices by those who see no other way out (Wang, Beckett, & Brown, 2006).

Effects of Neoliberalism

The force behind the NCLB legacy has been the application of neoliberal economic and political policies to educational practice resulting in less critical thinking skills and greater reliance on lower-level skills on Bloom's taxonomy and a subsequent reduction in the quality of state assessments (Broom 2012). Broom (2012) uses an actual assessment used in British Columbia to illustrate the shortcomings of state assessments based on a market-driven educational philosophy. The analysis supports the idea that assessments designed under neoliberal, market-driven systems do not assess critical skills required today. Principals' performance is evaluated on the basis of end-point achievement on state-mandated tests that often value lower-level objective-based tasks. Principals can be caught in the middle when confronted by teachers who reject this notion of education and prefer more engaging strategies, and allocation of resources to satisfy these two opposing philosophies can cause conflict (Broom, 2012).
Gross (2014) points out that several previous healthy traditions of educational reform existed in this country that have been overwhelmed by essentialism and market forces; therefore the hegemony of these two forces must be broken in order to return to a democratic society based on the free play of ideas to foster continual improvement. Principals who are advocates of educational traditions other than those of essentialism and market forces are brow-beaten into submission by threats of penalties for failure to achieve on state tests. Gross points out that education and educators have been labelled as "the problem," so any resistance may be seen as recalcitrance to reform what has gone bad (Gross, 2014). Principals' philosophical beliefs and how they may contrast with the current audit culture driven by market forces and essentialism become a clear issue of study in this context. While some authors take the position that the government is simply incompetent and naïve when it advocates standardized testing, Graham and Neu (2004) propose that advocates of standardized testing have a more sinister purpose of creating drones for government use. Systems of standardized testing are seen as consciously designed to create a population of "governable persons" through assessment and categorization followed by intervention to fix what is deemed wrong. It is then this statistical reduction of people to numbers and simple forms upon which the government can exert control. Principals face a moral dilemma concerning whether or not to invest fully in a system of assessment that requires conformity rather than independence of thought and action. The narrowing of the curriculum that is required for a true focus on accountability will require them to discredit or dismiss traditional forms of education not valued by the assessment system. Principals must buy in to the reductionist worldview of the current assessment system represented by the Georgia Milestones to properly supervise classroom assessments that allegedly prepare students to take such state tests (Graham & Neu, 2004).
Conflict Between Achievement and Growth

Carless (2009) also notes that distrust among educators in the competitive culture of high stakes assessment makes innovative assessment design difficult since risk-taking is discouraged by current accountability measures. Distrust can arise as principals seeking achievement scores may come into conflict with teachers who seek to improve growth and allocate resources accordingly. The idea of teaching as an art also comes into conflict with the managerial model fostered by the accountability culture as accountability proponents espouse data-driven decision making by principals who manage people and data to achieve statistical goals that prove achievement (Carless, 2009).

Recent changes in the College and Career Readiness Index (CCRPI) school evaluation system in Georgia were brought about by Senate Bill 364 (Georgia General, 2016), and those changes indicate a willingness on the part of the state to include a greater emphasis on student growth when evaluating school performance. A progress score that measures student growth based on Student Growth Percentiles (SGP's) in English Language Arts and math remains, and the achievement score will also be influenced by points awarded for content mastery. These points are given at three levels: those scoring at the highest level of "Distinguished Learners" earn 1.5 points; those at the next level down of "Proficient Learners" earn 1 point; and those at the level of "Developing Learners" earn .5 points. Those scoring below the "Developing Learner" level are termed "Beginning Learners" with no points awarded. This stratification in achievement score is intended to further acknowledge the efforts of schools to move a student from level to level (Georgia, Overview, 2018). The question remains, however, as to whether this strategy of stratification of achievement scores ameliorates the dichotomous "all or nothing"
approach whether NCLB cut scores, or whether the effect on principals' attitudes is very similar to past experiences.

Georgia Senate Bill 362 (Georgia General, 2018), which passed unanimously in both the Senate (February 15, 2018) and House (March 29, 2018), represents a significant incursion into the State's hegemony of current assessment culture. This legislation allows for the creation of a pilot program with ten participating school systems that would explore the possibility of local school districts creating and implementing their own assessment systems that are aligned with state standards. These assessment systems "may include, but shall not be limited to, cumulative year-end assessments, competency based assessments, instructionally embedded assessments, interim assessments, performance based assessments, or other innovative assessment designs approved by the State Board of Education." The law also encourages the participating school systems to collaborate with each other during the course of the pilot program's three to five year duration.

**Shifting Assessment Culture Attitudes**

Such political shifts in the current assessment culture provide an opportunity to look more closely at the ideas surrounding the actual assessments and how they function in the educational context as well. The term "test bias" has a specific meaning related to statistical theories and phenomenon of which people should be aware so that the term is not misused. Warne, Yoon, and Price (2014) give a thorough background on standardized tests and the issues such as test bias, as well as other issues that are confused with test bias, that cause such assessments to be misunderstood. The level to which principals are aware of these definitions could influence how they interpret assessment results and act upon that data. The authors point out that statisticians have particular issues and concerns that have little to do with
philosophical issues surrounding assessments. In the milieu of our current audit culture, politicians often place a great deal of weight on statistical measures concerning what is mathematically correct with little regard to the related philosophical questions such as what is ethically, morally, or democratically correct. Principals are in the position, however, of making finer distinctions for the good of the students and the school. The authors provide solid definitions related to assessment evaluation particularly for administrators who compare assessment results among groups of students (Warne, Yoon, & Price, 2014).

Validation issues surrounding educational assessments should extend beyond simple statistical analysis, such as "does this assessment measure what it is supposed to measure," and should also include questions regarding effects of testing in schools and the intended vs. unintended outcomes that result from that testing. The neoliberal view that data gleaned from assessments can be easily interpreted in a vacuum that excludes social and consequential factors should be challenged, and there are factors to explore regarding assessments and their impact on the decisions principals make on a day-to day basis (Haertel, 2013). Looking only at the statistical measures of assessments leaves out the validity arguments based on consequences and shuts off exploration of effects of assessments on various student populations such as low SES status and ethnic minorities. A substantial history exists regarding the development of the idea that consequences of assessments should be included in the evaluation of their validity beyond a mere statistical framework. A legitimate question for principals can relate to how much effort they devote to going back and reviewing how their decisions that were based on assessment data affected certain populations of students (Lane 2012).

Unfortunately, notions regarding assessment validity are still grounded in the theories of the 1950's and 1960's when considered by the court system. The issues related to consequences
of assessment uses rather than mere empirical data analysis need to be considered by the courts and espoused by assessment professionals. In the 1950's, scholars categorized three main types of validity theory: content, criterion-related, and construct. Starting in the 1970's, however, many came to challenge these restrictive notions to include ideas of consequential and functional-worth arguments as worthy of determining validation of assessments. Unfortunately, the court system has continued to apply validity theory from the 1950's and 60's in many cases concerning validity which has created a gap between practice and current theory (Langenfeld & Crocker, 1994). As one of the more modern theorists of validity studies, Kane (2013) advocates for argument-based validity that relies on the justification of the claims for the interpretation or use of those assessments. If an assessment's use has negative results, for instance, the validity of that assessment should be called into question. This is a serious departure from traditional notions of validity residing within the assessment itself (Kane, 2013). The clear application of such assertions to unfair and discriminatory results of assessment uses today might lend credibility to educators who challenge assessment uses within their schools. Again, however, the gap between legal findings in case law mentioned above could have a chilling effect on principals' decision-making processes on how to approach the management of schools based on assessment data.

**Whole Child**

As another example of a shift in attitudes regarding assessment, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) launched the "Whole Child" movement in 2006 as a reaction to assessment-based definitions of what a learner should be in the form of a commission of scholars who investigated the critical needs of children in today's global society. The commission advocated multiple ways to assess learning rather than just academic
competency tests, and proposed five tenants of a Whole Child approach to learning: that students should be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Community involvement is described as central to each of these tenants, and an example of such support for the tenant of health might include medical care for students in the community or clinics in the schools (Trybus & Gibson, 2015). The Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) model developed by ASCD describes an integrated alliance between schools and community health institutions that can benefit both such as reducing the need for emergency room use by providing primary care services within the schools themselves, and shared use agreements that allow access to facilities for physical activities. The idea is that better health makes for better education, and better education will improve health (Chiang, Meagher, & Slade, 2015). Meeting students' needs according to Maslowe's hierarchy, in which basic healthcare needs are a critical initial part, is the basis for the ASCD Commission's Whole Child framework and essential to what is needed in today's assessment-absorbed approach to education (Slade & Griffith, 2013).

**Equity and Assessment**

As mentioned previously, the American adaptation of Binet's I.Q. test to sort individuals by race and class in World War I has been used as an object lesson in present discussions to describe the function of current assessment systems and to question their validity. After years of failure on the part of punitive assessment practices to close the achievement gap, the fact that socioeconomic factors have a greater impact on student achievement than do schools has become more and more apparent. So too, the idea that competition through standardized assessment alone as a means to provide a meritocracy in this country has become relegated to the status of myth (Au, 2013).
Politicians supporting neoliberal economic ideology, however, pursue this course even in the face of significant evidence against its use as a discriminatory tool against minorities and the economically disadvantaged. As early as 2002, scholars were pointing out the unscrupulous practices of educational leaders in Texas who were pushing underachieving black and hispanic students out of their schools to increase test scores while coding them as "transfers" to maintain a lower dropout rate. Retaining students in a grade level prior to the level where required assessments were given was another strategy that disproportionally impacted disadvantaged students as was the practice of abandoning students who had little chance of passing the test to dedicate more resources to those who did in a kind of educational triage (Hursh, 2005). Such circumstances naturally beg the question as to why politicians have such an interest in continuing such assessment practices, and for some espousing Critical Race Theory, the answer lies in the potential for economic profit. By perpetuating racial inequality through assessments designed to keep the poor and minorities in a constant state of inadequacy, educational service corporations are provided a ready market for their wares. According to this theory, it is only through this "interest convergence" that politicians promoting the ascendency of white, Western European values have allowed educational resources to be released to black and minority students in the first place (Rector-Arranda, 2016). Even without this vision of racist machinations in the background of the political landscape, it doesn't take much imagination to observe that States can set their own cut scores to manipulate outcomes for certain ends, and that those ends might include the satisfaction of corporate interests, or even to simply maintain the status quo of America's current social order, rather than to serve the interests of equity (Au, 2013).
Summary

Neoliberal ideas and policies have a long history that manifested globally in a significant way at the latter part of the 20th century. These ideas and policies focus on dismantling government regulations and institutions that hinder free market forces, and public education is a major social welfare institution that represents such a hindrance. Using scientific and statistical tools to project results of I.Q. tests and other assessments as reason to fear for America's ability to compete globally in business, neoliberal politicians instituted a culture of assessment in education as a means to facilitate the perceived need for improvement. Using leadership and assessment models borrowed from business, both educators and politicians participate in the creation of a system based in functionalism although there is and always has been some push-back from those who see education as more expansive than the current milieu allows.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to discover what conflicts, such as allocation of resources, or unintended consequences may arise in the tension between these two goals (growth vs achievement), how principals resolve those issues, and what their attitudes may be towards this duality of purpose. Using the tenets of neoliberal educational policy as the current social structure that drives many educational decisions at the federal and state level, this phenomenological study consists of a semi-structured interview format that allows for exploration of a small group of principals' experiences in relation to that social milieu. Using the information from these interviews, a survey was developed and given to a number of principals among a larger general population of principals in the same school district as the interviewed principals, and this survey acts as a tool to triangulate the data gleaned from the interviews. Information from these methods allows the development of a theory of the assessment culture as
It manifests within schools through the lived experiences of the principals who work within this most recent iteration of the student and educator assessment system in Georgia. A rich and detailed account of actual research methods and processes provides for the dependability of this study (Shenton, 2004).

**Research Question**

The main research question for this study is this: to what extent do principals' lived experiences express functional value in the School Assessment Culture Phenomenon comprised of the Georgia Milestones Assessment System that is used to evaluate student, educator, and school success in these specific contexts: 1) student growth required in 2020 by the Teacher and Leader Keys Effectiveness Systems (TKES/LKES) and 2) student growth and achievement currently required by the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI).

Figure 2 below reiterates the relationship of the conceptual framework with this question. As part of the anticipatory data reduction (Miles and Huberman, 1984), questions derived from my conceptual framework were developed (Stake, 2010), and the anticipatory data reduction graphic (Appendix B) illustrates that effort.
Stake (2010) describes quantitative researchers as those whose "thinking relies heavily on linear attributes, measurements, and statistical analysis." In contrast, qualitative researchers thinking "relies primarily on human perception and understanding" (Stake, 2010). This study explores the ways in which principals contend with the phenomenon of neoliberal assessment
policies; therefore, a qualitative approach is best suited to understand their perceptions and understandings as they attempt to do so. The hermeneutic, or theory of interpretation, used in this study may be considered in a double sense in that I will interpret how the principals are themselves interpreting the phenomenon of assessment in their schools and in their lives (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009). Since the paradigmatic approach brought by the researcher to the study relies on constructivism, a qualitative approach is also a natural fit for discovering how meaning is made when the realities of politics and education collide at the nexus-point represented by the principals (Creswell, 2014)(Yilmaz, 2013). Other principal perception studies, such as the ones by Young, Range, Hvidston, and Mette (2015) and Thomas (2015) provide mostly static data regarding principal perceptions that fall within the range of a Likert scale. As the Thomas (2015) study regarding the effectiveness of the Georgia LKES shows, however, the opportunity for subjects to express themselves in prose provides a depth of feeling was not found in those scales but rather in the open-ended questions provided in that study. This point is illustrated by the following responses to such open-ended questions: "Personal goal-setting and conversations with my boss helps me understand what I need to work on. Nothing else about LKES is useful;" and "Measuring a student's SGP when you have some students who have access to tutors, nannies, and 2 parent homes against someone who doesn't is absurd" (Thomas, 2015). Such social and psychological information transcends a simple Likert scale, and it is this information that is revealed through the interview process. A case study that did utilize in-depth interviews and a small sample size of principals focused on the implementation of the TKES instrument alone (Warnock, 2015), and it is this type of information gathering through in-depth, detailed interviews with a small sample size that is critical to provide accounts of experiences that are rich in detail and reveal the true lived experience under study (Smith, Flowers, and
This process facilitates the broad goal of taking a microcosmic view of these principals and their internal and external interactions with the phenomenon of assessment to obtain experiential data rather than a macrocosmic view derived from aggregate data from large groups (Stake, 2010) as seen in the Young, et al (2015) and Thomas (2015) studies. This study is therefore developed as a qualitative, phenomenological study through a semi-structured interview format that will allow for detailed exploration of the essence of principals' lived experiences in dealing with the phenomenon of neoliberal assessment policies. Since this study involves a revelation of the influence of a phenomenon of political influence represented by neoliberal philosophy, a qualitative perspective that focuses on revealing meaning is more useful than a quantitative effort to categorize a meaning already revealed or assumed. In this way, significance that is not currently revealed or understood may become manifest to the consciousness of both the researcher and others (Van Manen, 2014) through the accurate articulation of principals' lived experiences. The graphic in figure 3, developed using the Hopscotch Model (Jorrín-Abellán, 2016) illustrates the overall design described.
Context & Participants

Six principals, whose participation was strictly voluntary, were selected as informants from six different schools in a large, metro Atlanta school district from a pool of 46 total principals who voluntarily signed a consent form to participate in the study that was provided by the district. The remaining forty principals received a survey whose purpose was to provide a triangulation of data regarding the information provided by the six principals who were interviewed. The six principals to be interviewed were selected through purposeful rather than random sampling (Creswell, 2013) that is based on the criterion (Palys, 2008) of students’ socioeconomic status (SES). This criterion is relevant since the proponents of the application of
neoliberal principles to educational policy advocate on the basis of "social efficiency" in that lower performing schools, and thus schools with populations of lower SES can succeed through more targeted funding and the threat of punitive measures such as were used in the NCLB era (Groen, 2012). This raises concerns that strategies will be employed to narrow the curriculum in order to drive up test scores in lower SES schools while higher SES schools will not need to make such adjustments allowing those students a broader and richer education (Groen, 2012) since they need less "control" in order to perform at a higher level (Broom, 2012).

SES criteria was therefore used to select and interview two principals from each educational level (elementary, middle, and high) with one principal in each level from a school with a student population above 60% free and reduced lunch and the other principal at that same level from a school with a student population below 20% free and reduced lunch. These informants are necessary because the various levels provide a representative range within the phenomenon of the neoliberal assessment culture found in education today while providing variation of socioeconomic status. As principals, they are at the nexus of experience between the policies implemented by political forces in the government and the practical application of those policies in the schools.

**Data Gathering Methods**

The research project was approved by both the Kennesaw State University IRB (Study #17-580) and the participating district's approval process prior to the start of any research activities. As part of the local district approval stipulations, principals were notified of the research project in its entirety which included information regarding both the main interview phase and the survey phase. Although I requested a separate agreement form for each, the school district in which the study took place required principals to agree to participation in both
components of the research rather than one or the other. Once I established the pool of participating principals through acquisition of their signatures, I then reached out by telephone to solicit principal participation in the more time-consuming interview phase and to verify that the principal's school fell within the described ranges of greater than 60% or less than 20% free and reduced lunch participation in their respective schools.

The open-ended interview questions (Appendix C) arose from the categories of analysis in the anticipatory data reduction (Appendix B), and were designed with the purpose of eliciting lived experiences (Van Manen, 2014) while staying bracketed but curious with follow-up questions that attend to what is being said by the principal rather than being guided by my own interpretation ((Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009). All interviews with the six principals took place separately in each principal's office at a time selected by the principal, and all interviews were recorded and then transcribed using a professional transcription service. Once the interviews were transcribed, I created a separate redacted transcript copy with specific names or other identifying markers replaced by generic terms that allowed contextual meaning to remain intact. I also created a paraphrase of each principal's responses to the questions as a separate document. I sent each principal a hard copy of their own redacted interview transcript and interview paraphrase to allow for collaboration regarding the accuracy of the paraphrase and the confirmation of the anonymity of the redacted transcript. I subsequently had a telephone conversation with each principal to discuss both documents and to provide an opportunity for clarification and confirmation of the accuracy and anonymity of these documents. Throughout the process I have maintained an attitude that a clear expression of each principals' world is paramount, and I have thereby bracketed my own experience by accurately expressing the world they have described (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009).
To further the purpose of supporting the credibility of my qualitative data through triangulation of data (Shenton, 2004), I also prepared a Likert-type survey (Muijs, 2011) which I provided to the remaining forty principals who signed the agreement to participate in the study. The first twenty survey questions were initially developed from the etic themes of the anticipatory data reduction, and then modified based on the information provided by the six principals from the interview phase of the study. The twenty-first and final question elicited the socio-economic status of the student population the respondent's school described as a percentage of students receiving free and reduce lunch in the following ranges: 1) 0-19%, 2) 20-60%, and 3) 61-100%. This survey was provided online utilizing Qualtrics (2018) that allowed for easy access to and organization of the elicited data. I did not use the original six participants interviewed in the qualitative phase as this might introduce confusing variables (Creswell, 2014).

**Data Description**

The data produced in this study is characterized in four ways: 1) analytical data produced from ATLAS.ti (2017) functions applied to interview transcripts, 2) thematic analysis based on analytical data related to interview transcripts and paraphrases of those transcripts, 3) descriptive data produced from Likert-type survey results obtained through Qualtrics (2018), and 4) metaphoric essence created by researcher reflecting on the nuances of informant portrayals.

**Data Analysis**

To analyze my qualitative interview data, I included my six purposefully sampled (Creswell, 2013) principal interview transcripts to the ATLAS.ti (2017) qualitative software analysis program to identify items for analysis, group those items via thematic codes, and associate quotes to those codes. I initially relied upon the anticipatory data reduction for my "etic" themes related to those codes, but "emic" themes that were not originally apparent became
discoverable as a result of this process (Stake, 2010). The ATLAS.ti (2017) program also allowed for a co-occurrence analysis as can be seen in the code co-occurrancy table (Appendix D). The numbers in the bottom "co-occurrence" portion of the table show the frequency with which the corresponding codes were associated with the same quotes. The top portion contains the c-coefficient that is a statistical measure which would represent a more meaningful result with a sample size much larger than the six principals used in this study. The co-occurrence numbers listed, however, do show significant "groundedness," or number of links from my etic themes to quotations (Friese, 2014). I also utilized the network view feature (Appendix E) in ATLAS.ti (2017) that allows the researcher to create a visual illustration of this "groundedness" as well as the "density," or number of links to other codes (Friese, 2014). I then created an informant portrayal which was a paraphrase of each interview to distill meaning from the interview transcripts utilizing the "selective reading" approach so that the essential meaning transmitted by each principal would be emphasized (Van Mannen, 2016) while remaining bracketed to avoid inserting my own opinions. Throughout the process, I remained focused on analyzing the qualitative data to the end of synthesizing an accurate representation of principals’ perspectives of their role as a mediator of the forces acting upon the educational environment of their schools.

The four etic categories of analysis in which both my initial interview questions and my survey questions were placed via the anticipatory data reduction (Appendix B) were as follows: 1) Perspective regarding TKES and LKES instruments, 2) Perspective regarding CCRPI and Milestones, 3) School-wide achievement goals with strategies developed to meet those goals, and 4) Evaluation of unintended consequences and Milestone paradigm effectiveness. Within each of these etic categories, I created codes in Atlas.ti (2017) under which headings I collected quotes
related to the questions in those categories (Appendix F). At the end of these series of questions in each of these etic categories, I asked a similar question: "If you only had five words to describe [this category of which we just spoke], what five words would you use." Taking the words from this last question provided by each principal and placing them in a single document, I was able to create a "word cloud" in ATLAS.ti (2017) that graphically suggested likely emerging themes based on their frequency of use (Appendix G). As a basis of comparison, I also combined the interview transcripts from all six participating principals and then redacted my own questions leaving only the response of all six into a single document. Using the ATLAS.ti (2017) "word count" function, I then created an Excel spreadsheet from which I redacted articles, pronouns, and other parts of speech that appeared to function in ways that did not contribute directly to meaningful analysis related to the "Five Words" list. This revealed a list of words from the interviews that were similar to those obtained via the "word cloud" function, but expanded the list and provided more specific information regarding frequency. Combining these words with those listed in the word cloud allowed for a data rich list of words (Appendix H) that I then used as a starting point to organize meaningful thematic units that would augment my selective reading paraphrases (Van Manen, 2014).

Having established a potential thematic basis, I returned to the original transcript document and the paraphrases based on those transcripts to establish support of those themes and to delve deeper into the processes and contexts that produced the words that led to identification of those thematic elements. As mentioned above, the initial etic themes and their associated quotes within the actual transcripts led to emic themes that were sometimes universal to all principals and sometimes unique to a given school. The study of the paraphrases helped identify larger themes that were sometimes not apparent as those paraphrases were constructed to group
thoughts into their initial etic categories no matter where they occurred within the interview. Thus, thoughts about the first category, "Perspective regarding TKES and LKES instruments" were grouped together in the paraphrase even if those thoughts may have been originally scattered throughout the original interview transcript. This was necessary because principals would often be speaking about one topic when the idea related to a previous topic would come to the forefront of their minds. This also occurred when the principal would anticipate a future interview question and deal with it before the question was asked. Reviewing these categories, I then organized the ideas presented into themes that were supported by both direct quotes and the ideas presented in the paraphrases.

I then used the Likert-type survey (Appendix I) to gather data (Appendices J and K) for the purposes of triangulation, and downloaded the results from the larger population of principals to Excel for analytical purposes as I determined correlations among the various responses. Although those questions were originally based upon the etic themes from the beginning of the study, the perceptions and themes I discovered during the interview process helped shape the content of the survey questions. While this survey data represents a quantitative approach to meaning, I used that data as proposed by Ravitch and Riggan (2017) as they describe a survey that does not attempt to confirm discrete elements of qualitative data but rather seeks to create a "jazz" effect of complimentary meaning rather than confirmatory declarations. The points of intersection and integration of the limited quantitative survey "notes" should therefore serve to punctuate (while at the same time being driven by) the "rhythms" and "melodies" of the qualitative portion of this study.

Having organized and focused ideas within the categories of analysis of the paraphrases, I engaged in conceptual analysis to compare the lived experiences of the principals' described
worldview to that of the designed model of the assessment culture promoted by the state and the district. To establish the essence of the phenomenon via phenomenological eidetic reduction, which "seeks to describe what shows itself in experience or consciousness and how something shows itself" (Van Manen, 2014), I reflected on the relationships among the themes, the business models of the neoliberal agenda, and the metaphor relating the practice of education to the practice of medicine which allowed me to discover the central essence of the phenomenon.

**Trustworthiness**

Creswell (2014) provides eight examples of validation procedures for qualitative studies that help ensure that a study remains accurate and consistent which are also echoed by Shenton (2004) under the term "trustworthiness." One of those procedures is triangulation of data which I employed as mentioned above through a Likert-type survey to provide a basis of comparison and potential corroboration of my qualitative data. This triangulation of data not only lends credibility to the study, but it also serves to reduce the potential for bias on the part of the investigator (Shenton, 2004). Another technique was member checking where I provided my interview participants the opportunity to comment on the accuracy of descriptions through a follow-up interview once I completed the paraphrase of the interview responses. I also provided a copy of my research to a veteran principal and former assistant superintendent who reviewed my study with a critical eye as a form of "peer debriefing" (Creswell, 2014), and who provided perspective on how aspects of my research may resonate with practitioners and policy-makers. Both member checking and peer debriefing lend credibility to the study as did the use of an external auditor, different from my peer reviewer, who analyzed accuracy, data analysis, and data relevance issues (Shenton, 2004). I have also provided my personal bias within the text of
the study (Creswell, 2014) through my vignette and background sections of the study that lends credibility through reflective commentary (Shenton, 2004).

Providing such information regarding personal bias is just one form of "bracketing," or setting apart, the factors that may influence or distort the researcher's perception of the true essence of the phenomenon. Once this is done, phenomenological "reduction" allows me to be led back to the true essence of the phenomenon without distraction. This is not to be confused with reductionism that is employed to shorten, codify, or narrow the scope of thought about a given circumstance or phenomenon (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009)(VanManen, 2014). One of the first phenomenological philosophers to describe this method was Husserl who sought to uncover the true underlying properties of a phenomenon without interference from the subjective filters of the observer. Later, his student Heidegger parted ways to an extent in that he saw very little possibility of the level of separation from internal context suggested by Husserl. He argued that meaning is interpreted in the context in which the researcher is embedded, and interpretation is the key to understanding (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009). Using their insights as a guide, I made every effort to find a balance between isolating my own experience from intruding on the research process, while allowing that experience to guide me where needed in planning and interpretation.

Bias during the interview process, however, is a major concern for potentially limiting the credibility of such a study as this. Credibility in phenomenological research can be considered a corollary concept to the term "internal validity" used by a quantitative researcher who seeks to show that a particular study measures what it is intended to measure. Similarly, I will show that my study is "credible" in that my results are in line with reality through the methods above (Shenton, 2004). While I understand that qualitative research is by its nature a
subjective exercise that is often reliant on context for meaning (Creswell, 2014), I made every effort to ensure that I did not lead my interviewees but rather allowed them to reveal their own thoughts and ideas in order to ensure that my results are in line with the reality of my subjects' lived experiences. To do this effectively, I paid close attention to my interview subjects’ words such that my questioning can be a natural progression of the ideas generated outside my own context and perceptions, and this effort was a form of bracketing within the interview process itself (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009). As a teacher, I enjoyed attempting the Socratic method of questioning with my students to lead them to a particular truth, but I consciously resisted this impulse during the interview phase so that the interviewee would lead me down the path of their own perception and experience. This subjectivity and localization of the truth in a lived experience is the great strength of a qualitative study, but it is also a limitation in that those truths may not be readily generalizable to a wider population of individuals or even places (Creswell, 2014). Still, the value lies in seeking the central essence of an experience that may be more generalizable rather than discrete values that can be weighed and measured. This idea of "transferability" is the corollary to external validity in a quantitative study, and it involves the application of phenomenological findings from one situation to another. While this concept is debated among researchers, many believe that given enough context information, such transferability is possible (Shenton, 2004). For my study, the kind of transferability described by Shenton (2004) is supported through my detailed description of the phenomenon under question along with the appropriate data needed for others to form a basis of comparison.

Finally, a practical concern with my plan to use triangulation of data with the Likert-type questionnaire lies in the potential for a small number of responses. The total pool of potential responders for the Likert-type survey was only 40 principals, and that limited number may have
been a result of the district stipulation regarding the need for principals to agree to participate in both the interview phase and the survey phase if they were to agree to participate at all. Twenty-four principals completed the survey which represents sixty percent of the participating principals and less than twenty-five percent of the total number of principals in the school district.

**Ethical Considerations**

While I have completed the Social/Behavioral Research course in the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) program, I understand that ethics is not just a list of stipulations to follow but rather a continuing practice throughout my research (Creswell, 2015). Still, Creswell (2014) does provide important considerations regarding ethical principles in five main areas of the research process. While there are many considerations, the following represent areas of particular emphasis. Before starting my study, I made sure that I had approval from the Institutional Review Boards (IRB) of both the district in which I conducted my study as well as Kennesaw State University. As I began my study, I made sure that the information produced by my research brought forth the potential for positive benefits to my peers and colleagues in education as well as the participants. I also accurately presented to my participants the nature of the information I wished to gather and obtained their consent in writing to participate without pressuring them to do so. As I collected data, I adhered to my own protocols provided from the outset to my participants regarding subject matter and use of information while also avoiding the interjection of my personal opinions in a leading manner. I also took steps to treat each participant equally as collaborative partners while avoiding the disclosure of sensitive information. As I analyzed data, I was alert to the possibility of contrary findings that could be reported and sought multiple perspectives as I also avoided disclosure of personal information of
participants by developing pseudonyms for each. Finally, I avoided falsehood in all contexts, protected the anonymity of my participants and the school district involved, and avoided plagiarism as I reported my data (Creswell, 2014).

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Informant Portrayal

In order to fully appreciate the emerging themes related to the principals' views, an understanding of the ideas that motivated the questions asked as well as the ideas generated by the principals is important. A description of each category of analysis is provided below, and the initial questions I asked can be found in Appendix C, although each principal's answers often led to various other areas of interest during the course of each interview. The paraphrases of each interview following the descriptions of the category questions portray the ideas expressed by the principals in a concise way that can be directly related to the subsequent discussion of relevant themes and their supporting quotes. Paraphrasing also allows for the best disclosure of the principal's ideas accurately (since each had the opportunity to review and confirm the paraphrase) without compromising their identities with specific information relevant to their own schools.

Bracketing: Interviewer perspective regarding etic themes

As mentioned above, the anticipatory data reduction contributed categories of analysis and etic themes from which the ultimate emic themes arose. Scrutiny of the space between the production of those etic and emic themes is critical to my effort to bracket my prior knowledge as those themes were developed. In an effort to disclose and evaluate my prior assumptions related to those emic themes, I have provided the information below related to my derivation of the interview questions in those categories.
**TKES and LKES:** The relevance of the TKES and LKES instruments to this study resides in the portion of that educator evaluation instrument that is impacted by the Georgia Milestone Assessments. By the 2020-2021 school year, 30% of a teacher's evaluation (Georgia, 2017d) and 40% of principal/assistant principal's evaluation (Georgia, 2017b) will consist of a measure of student growth based on the Georgia Milestone assessments. Specifically, a student growth percentile, or SGP, will be derived from Georgia Milestone Assessments in 14 particular courses found in the English Language Arts/Reading and mathematics for grades four through eight (the EOG assessment), and English and math courses in grades 9-12 (the EOC assessment) (Georgia 2017b, 2017d). To obtain a sense of the entire evaluation process within each school in an effort to discover how this future stipulation might impact that process, I developed a bank of broad initial questions which I used as a starting point for this section of the interview. These questions covered training, utilization, and attitudes related to the TKES/LKES instruments themselves. The paraphrases also contain clarifications directly related to the 2020 school year SGP stipulations that were part of the clarifying questions asked of principals in the follow-up phone calls.

**CCRPI and Milestones:** My focus in this portion of the interview was to determine the principals' understanding of the relationship of the Georgia Milestones and the CCRPI, and to get a sense of the attitude towards these evaluation systems. In order to activate the principals' inner attitudes, I began this section by asking about their own philosophies of education in order for them to have a backdrop for their perspective on what was happening in their schools. I also wanted to know what efforts the district had made to help them manage this evaluation system and whether they felt it was working to their satisfaction or if was instead flawed in any way.
School-wide achievement goals and strategies: The motivation for the questions in this section was to determine the nature of the principals' interactions with both their teachers and their administrative team. I was trying to elicit how principals dealt with the nuts and bolts of implementing the various, linked evaluation systems and the kind of environment that implementation produced. I also asked questions that were intended to explore principals' inner world of decision making regarding how to best allocate resources to the greatest effect.

Unintended consequences and Milestone paradigm effectiveness: Having explored these various subject categories, the questions in this category were intended to bring the various components of principal perspective together for the purpose of evaluation of those components. I began by asking principals to review their prior experiences with evaluation systems and to compare those experiences with the current model. I asked them to compare and contrast their own experiences and beliefs to the current model to help elicit information regarding any internal struggles or feelings of parity related to the current systems of assessment. Finally, I wanted to give the principals one last chance to sum up their understandings and feelings regarding any detrimental effects or unintended consequences related to these assessment systems and their daily work.

Each paraphrase below has the designator of the principal interviewed in brackets which indicates the principals' school level and the socio-economic status of the student population of that school. The first letter of the designation refers to the level of school: E = elementary school, M = middle school, and H = high school. The second letter refers to the socio-economic level of the student population where L = low socio-economic status with a student population above 60% free and reduced lunch participation, and H = high socio-economic status with a student population below 20% free and reduced lunch participation. Thus, [E-L] is an elementary
principal with a population of low socio economic status, and [E-H] represents an elementary principal with a population of high socioeconomic status.

[E-H] Portrayal

**TKES/LKES:** One formal training for the TKES/LKES instrument conducted by the State Department took place over three or four days with quality, organized materials that were presented in a comprehensive and coherent manner that was very helpful. There were about 30 other principals in the room, and discussion opportunities occurred within school levels. While the atmosphere in the room started out with apprehension about something new, most of the elementary people had a positive attitude although there was some concern about the extensive time involved in the observation portions of the instrument.

A positive experience related to utilizing the instrument includes being able to get into all the teachers classrooms. The negative aspect to using the instrument is the time taken to do the observations kept the principal from other important duties related to establishing school culture and working one-on-one with teacher concerns. As the process has streamlined over time, however, the overall experience has been positive.

A specific positive experience includes being able to help a teacher instructionally after multiple visits to the classroom. Follow up discussions gained both improved instruction and a better, more personal relationship with the teacher that allowed interactions to seem helpful rather than punitive. The instrument itself is also useful in the level of detail it provides allowing one to focus in on points of need with one particular teacher. The platform also provides supports such as videos that allowed opportunities for that teacher to engage in professional development. A negative issue can arise, however, related to the specificity of the instrument in that comments can be construed as "nit-picking" because they are so detailed.
There are no specific issues with any of the portions of the instrument although the principal gives some areas greater emphasis than others. Inter-rater reliability is the only real concern with the instrument as a whole since specific experiences have shown that different people have different ways of viewing the same situation in a classroom.

**CCRPI and Milestones:** Teaching experience in a variety of schools representing the full range of socio-economic status students has instilled a philosophy of high expectations in the principal. The district has been supportive in helping to understand details and create a plan, but a frustrating element is that the formulas for the different areas of the CCRPI keep changing. The district accountability supervisor is the only person that can help impact that understanding, and he has come out and walked the principal and key staff through the data in an effort to locate where key gaps and deficits may be.

There is a sense of urgency to making sure the principal maximizes academic potential since the school's score on the CCRPI has recently dropped due to recent variations in the student population and the introduction of the new EOG assessment. Stakeholders such as parents in school council/PTA/foundation executive board meetings ask specific questions related to published results that compare achievement scores. They all want to know why scores were in one place but are now in another. The situation is frustrating since the principal and staff are working diligently on improving instruction, but the stakeholders do not seem to take into account that the school has a different population of students with different challenges than what was dealt with in years past. When the principal speaks to board members, it is easier to be up front about the issues concerning the influx of various challenging students, but the principal puts a more positive spin on it with regular parents regarding the benefits of inclusivity that the CCRPI score does not encompass. The principal's experience this year is that the parents do not
buy into the benefits of inclusivity, but curtailing the influx of new students is not an option with the district since the school's capacity allows for more students.

This situation makes the principal feel defeated because the score alone seems to be the basis of the principal's success, but there is little that can be done to control the outcome and improve the score. Even though achievement scores may go up, other factors that contribute to the score made it go down. The EOG instrument itself seems flawed in that the school's highest achieving students do not have the opportunity to present their true range of knowledge since the range of the assessment's questions is too narrow to assess those students far enough above their grade level. This means that a student could miss just one question and be categorized as showing low or average growth. Alternately, the principal finds it difficult to use data to improve instruction when that data reveals the students are scoring at the highest $99^{th}$ percentile.

**Achievement Strategies:** There is pressure to develop achievement strategies that comes from various stakeholders. The principal's supervisor makes it clear that meeting with the accountability supervisor regarding scores is important, and parents involved with school council question the principal about those scores and then disseminate information to the community. The parents in the community then provide feedback to the principal via e-mail and conversations, and realtors begin to question scores as well in a kind of snowball effect.

When the principal shares the year-to-year data with the teachers in a staff meeting showing gaps and challenges, the principal can see their demeanors take on a frustrated and defeated look. It helps when the principal chunks the information into the things they will work on because they can impact them, and the things they cannot impact; however, the situation is hard for them to accept when they are good teachers, and they have had so much success in the past. When dealing with smaller groups of teachers, however, one grade level was open to
improvement and hearing what strategies might be effective. Two other grade levels, however, acknowledged the data and simply kept doing what they had always done in the classroom. In other specific conversations with teachers one-on-one, the principal has gotten the feeling that the teacher believes it is the principal's fault that scores are lower. Since some of these teachers are close to the parents, often even friends, those perceptions are shared with parents who then feed that perception back to the principal in conversations as well. Some teachers' motivation to change is thereby diminished since many teachers feel that they have been doing their job well for many years, and the lower scores are not their fault. Progress has been made, however, and some teachers have retired allowing teachers with fresh perspectives to come in.

Once the data has been shared, the principal works with the district accountability supervisor to identify cut scores and group the students for the administrative team to review. The strategies to help those students are then discussed, created, and implemented with all the academic and leadership teams in the building working in a collaborative and coordinated way. These strategies are then directly related to how the principal allocates resources to bring those plans to fruition. There are sometimes dilemmas as to where the limited resources should go, but the data allows the principal to make that determination even though others in the building may feel frustrated as they do not see the big picture. A specific example is where and how to allocate reading tutors to their greatest effect. Another is the need for support materials for which the principal does not have the funds, so the teachers must ask the parents to provide the materials.

Assessment Paradigm: The principal has experienced the evolution of both teacher and student assessments from measures of rote memory to more performance-based instruments where knowledge must be extrapolated and then used. There is a need for accountability and the rigor and relevance these assessments can provide is a positive thing. While summative
assessments are needed, formative assessments are more useful to get a true picture of the child. The CCRPI does not reflect a true picture of the child because the score is based on one assessment. Even though there is a growth measure, that measure is only based on limited data that is not comprehensive throughout the grade levels. While the district does a good job at trying to assess students in a comprehensive manner, the Milestones and CCRPI do not provide that kind of assessment and actually work to defeat the purpose of assessing the whole child. One example of the failure of this assessment to take other factors into account is a specific child the principal knows who was not allowed to be placed in the proper class because of an illness that occurred during the EOG. That child had to wait to take the EOG in order to be properly placed. Another example is the district level math and reading assessments. While the value of those assessments is evident, parents do not always understand the results that are published to them. They don't understand it is just a snapshot and they have become upset and call in to question what has gone wrong. The principal then must explain that there are factors that may have influenced that one result, and the assessment will be given more times to get a truer picture.

[E-L] Portrayal

**TKES/LKES:** TKES/LKES training consisted of several principal meetings followed by online re-credentialing every year. The principals were interested in the content having heard both good and bad reports from principals in other districts. The portal is online and the principal likes it as do the teachers. If a teacher has a bad observation, the issue is usually with the teacher's instruction rather than the TKES instrument itself, and the principal has usually already had a conversation with a struggling teacher before the instrument even comes into play. The instrument is useful, however, in that it spells out exactly what the teacher needs to do and it
is also available to the teacher at all times. The LKES instrument is also of positive benefit in that it facilitates goal-setting with administrators. The only potential limitation of the LKES instrument might be that some of the standards may not apply to a specific teacher. An example of that in the principal's experience is in classes like music or art where differentiation or assessment may not drive instruction, but those teachers respond well to re-direction without any rancor towards the instrument or the process. Some negative issues in the principal's experience have been related to technical issues early in the implementation such as when the portal shuts down unexpectedly, and the time consuming nature of the TKES/LKES process. The student growth measure (TEMS) being used on the teachers' evaluations that is projected to come is also unfair to the teachers, but the principal is not convinced it will happen. If it does, such a stipulation would be incentive for the principal to retire.

**CCRPI and Milestones:** The principal believes that children learn by doing, and the principal believes in creativity and individualized instruction. The principal has some frustration with the CCRPI instrument since the population of the school is so transient. Each year is like starting over with a new set of students so attempting to use longitudinal data is daunting. The school's overall achievement score was higher than last year's, but the score went down because the school did not continue to make the same progress. The formulas used by the instrument do not account for the transience that occurs in the student population, and that is frustrating to the principal since there is little to be done to control that outcome. The principal has been both angry and has cried over the issue, but has realized that these things are only a waste of time and has learned to let the issue go. There are other more useful assessments to use.

The principal believes that such frustration is not transmitted to the staff, nor does the principal feel that the staff is pressured to achieve a certain score. The attendance stipulation
doesn't help much since the transient rate is so high that the assessment becomes an even more pronounced waste of time for those students who will not be around for the results. For those students who the principal has determined are not transient, resources are allocated in an effort to increase their performance on the assessment. The principal does look at "bubble kids" who are on the cusp of moving from one level to another in order to score an extra half point on the EOG. This sort of resource allocation based on satisfying the CCRPI makes the principal feel "cruddy." The principal has had to deal with parents asking for resources for their own children based on what they have seen other students have been given, but those situations are handled according to the needs of the student.

A major flaw in the EOG assessment is the time it takes to prepare students for the assessment. A specific example is the need for an AP to do all the scheduling for 32 small groups to satisfy those students' IEP’s, the need to train students to type since their assessment will be online as well as pulling teachers. Another flaw is the lack of timeliness in reporting results which is compounded by the 50% transience rate. There is really little point to the assessment when the results return so late and half the students assessed won't be at the school to receive them. The results are therefore not used extensively making the total process a waste of time. There is also an issue of test bias such as when a question references "twin beds" when some of our children don't know what that means since the apartment they live in has no furniture in order to facilitate an easy move to the next apartment. Finally, the test takes a long time to take and it is difficult for the children to sit that long to take a test even though it has gotten better by spacing it out over several days.

Achievement Strategies: Because achievement stays about the same for the school year-to-year, the principal feels little pressure in relation to it. The growth measure is where some
pressure has occurred as the school was put on the focus list due to a lack in that measure. That pressure came off immediately once the principal met with the state officials, however, as they said it was confusing as to why the school was on the focus list other than the formula for the CCRPI dictated it. The school did a lot of work for three years and then came off the list. When the principal met with the parents and informed them that they were a focus school and would receive a significant sum of money to do things with, one parent even congratulated the principal after school. The parents do not really understand how the EOG is related to the school score, and they are more worried about "did my kid pass" than anything else.

The principal must set limited goals every year due to the growth factor. Although the staff worked hard to get the score up to 86, the score popped back down to 60 once the support was gone. The principal finds that reality frustrating, but the principal doesn't share that frustration with the staff due to the craziness of the formula and the lack of control the school has over the numbers. This issue is going to be particularly challenging if the growth measure is eventually applied to teachers' performance evaluations as well. The principal thinks that such a stipulation is "terrible," particularly when the teachers are worried about so many other "whole child" needs such as food and clothing for their students.

In the past, the principal analyzed data extensively in an effort to improve instruction, but the changing nature of the formula has shown that effort to be futile, so the principal no longer engages in it. The principal shares the overall data with the staff, but deals with grade levels separately regarding the details. Still, that effort is somewhat futile since half the kids are gone by the time the teachers get the scores back. The scores the teachers do look at are the reading and math assessments provided by the district that provide immediate feedback as they are given four times a year. The EOG data is essentially useless and ends up simply taking up valuable
time. Still, the principal uses resources to tutor students prior to the EOG, and the students also practice taking the test in the format they will encounter (online or paper/pencil). The principal has learned not to expend extra tutoring resources on students who will not be around to take the test, so the main resources that are wasted are time and teacher energy. The principal senses that such allocation is not inclusive of all students, and does not feel good about it, but it is a hard choice that must be made for everyone and the school.

**Assessment Paradigm:** One issue with the overall assessment paradigm has to do with teacher evaluations. The district is concerned that there is an even distribution of TAPS evaluation numbers without regard to what is actually seen by the principal. The principal understands there is a rubric and the district concerns about score distribution, but avoids letting those factors drive the evaluation score the principal gives to teachers. Again, the main problem with the entire assessment paradigm is the TEMS and holding teachers accountable for scores that are influenced by factors affecting the students that are outside teachers' control. Things that the district and state do to support them are more effective than a "student growth" teacher accountability measure will be. The bottom line is that the assessment paradigm as it exists is a major waste of time.

[M-H] Portrayal

**TKES/LKES:** TKES/LKES training took place three or four years ago, and both principals and assistant principals were in attendance along with state and district officials. The principal was somewhat overwhelmed by all the information and how it was to be disseminated to the teachers without frightening them. The principal conducted that training with the staff as well as inter-rater reliability training with administration, and the district provides re-training in short video segments during school level principal meetings.
The efficacy of the TKES/LKES instrument is dependent upon the philosophy and attitudes the rater brings to the evaluation regarding the purpose of the instrument. In the past, administrators in the principal's school have used the instrument to keep overwhelmed teachers happy, but they are now using it to affect change and make instruction better. This change took place through one-on-one and group conversations with the assistants, and feedback from the staff that resulted in more inter-rater reliability training. Consistency of evaluations is still an issue although it is improving, but the conversations surrounding it have helped focus attention on what is good, quality instruction. In the principal's experience, the teachers usually respond well to a positive presentation of the instrument, and they flourish when they allow the evaluation to inform improvements to their instruction but are not successful when they do not. The LKES instrument is useful in that the principal has seen positive results from administrators through guidance provided in the evaluation, but one particular administrator was devastated by a comment on the LKES even though the score was not a two.

While teachers are aware that the growth measure may someday affect their evaluations, the prospect is not real to them as the implementation date is constantly being pushed back. They take it seriously, and the scores that are just coming out may alarm them since they are lower than last year, but the pressure is not currently there. The principal does not believe the growth measure can be fair and consistent when it compares students across the state who have varying degrees of access to resources. The principal doesn't really believe in the concept of peer grouping but explains it to the teachers as not being an "end-all-be-all" situation which also applies to the value the principal applies to the Milestones. These conversations usually take place with teachers one-on-one rather in staff meetings, and usually because a teacher is upset
and perhaps crying about having low growth measure. This happened to one specific teacher who had very high achieving students who was devastated that her growth score was low.

Again, the major flaw in the system is the lack of consistency in rating teachers using the TKES rubric both within schools themselves and among schools within the district. While the district has not told the principal specifically that too many fours were given within the school, they do provide a printout that shows what has been given, and one of the administrators in the school had clearly given more ratings of four to teachers than the others. The principal does not see a true solution to the consistency problem with any evaluation system, however, since the element of subjectivity will always be present with human evaluators.

**CCRPI and Milestones:** The principal's philosophy on education was shaped by experiences as an assistant principal when working at a school with few economically disadvantaged (ED) students whose population shifted to a higher ED population with the accompanying issues of discipline and gang activity. The demographics shifted from predominantly white students from a stable family background to predominantly African American families who were coming to the school to find a better environment for their children. The principal, who was just transitioning into administration, spent the workday almost exclusively in supervision and discipline activities with little time for academic concerns. When grades started to go down, the principal started researching strategies for academic success since prior students simply did what they were asked to do and parents supported the teachers. This led to the principal's current use and implementation of the PLC process.

Even though the principal is now actually the principal of a high SES/high achieving school, the PLC process has served to maintain a trajectory of improvement over the past several years. The most recent CCRPI scores, however, show a small decline, and that is troubling for
the principal. Even though the district is supportive and does not put overt pressure on the principal, the principal internalizes pressure anyway and questions choices and practices made that led to the drop in score. Those choices and practices included reducing instructional time to include a literacy initiative which is a focus of the superintendent. The drop in scores in another grade level were unaffected by that program and likely the result of personal issues occurring with the teachers, so there were multiple issues that originated outside the principal’s direct control.

Other challenges related to the CCRPI include a lack of clear information as to what type of questions may be on the EOC. A specific example is when teachers are informed by the district and or state that the ELA assessment will focus on a certain type of writing such as narrative, so the teachers focus on that format, but the actual assessment is another type such as argumentative. Although the principal tells them that both should have been covered, and they have a sense that the test should not drive instruction, there is still a feeling of frustration when they were just trying to achieve some success by preparing the students for what they would face. While the principal believes the assessment should be considered when developing instruction, it is actually a very narrow measure of what the school does for the students. The pressure and stress the assessment provides is not proportional to what it should be considering the broader scope of the school mission.

Achievement Strategies: The principal finds the pressure to improve is derived internally through a competitive nature rather than from the parents or community. Since the school has always been high achieving, and parents move to the community with that expectation, the principal feels intense pressure to maintain that status quo. This internal drive is even more intense now that scores have dropped and has led to difficulty sleeping, increased stress, and a
heightened awareness of the need for good decision-making when tackling the issue. The principal's concern is noticed by the teachers who commented to an AP that they felt like they were being punished with more work because of the potential for the drop in scores. In contrast, the principal sees it simply as a need to work for constant improvement. The school has always relied on high achievement and growth rather than bonus points and exceeding the bar, but this year those points were just not there.

The administrative team has a smart goal to improve scores by 2% in each class that has an EOG, and this strategy includes vertical alignment such that instruction in precursor, non-EOG classes supports the instructional goals in the EOG class as well. The administration also develops a list of "bubble kids" who are on the cusp of moving up from one level to another so that teachers can focus strategies on them to improve scores. One factor contributing to the current drop in scores in the regression of students in level four to level three and from level three to level two. Specific resources used to target such goals include "Membean," a vocabulary program of ELA, and "Gizmo," for math and science. The problem the principal faces is that teachers sometimes see such programs as only supplemental to instruction, and they do not feel they have the time to utilize them as they rely on direct instruction, bell-to-bell instead. Teachers also feel like they do not have time to involve themselves in professional learning when it requires them to be out of the classroom. A specific example is a math teacher who did not want to go to a STEM training because of the time lost in class with the students. The principal did not force the teacher to go even though it was a critical need for the STEM program at the school.

Another issue related to sharing data is the tendency of teachers in one specific grade level to resent the intrusion of data analysis into the PLC because it detracts from the time spent planning instruction. The focus is on continuing the same old strategies and to blame the
students for poor results rather than the instructional strategies. The administration has worked on this problem by being in the PLC's and focusing on specific students and what the data shows about their specific needs.

**Assessment Paradigm:** Although the EOG assessments are accurate in their measure of whether the students understand the standards, a major problem with the assessment system is the quantity of assessments that are required. The teachers now call the computer labs the "assessment" labs since they are always full due to testing and are unavailable for instruction. In the old days, assessments were not required to be common, data was not really compared in a formal way, and the only real public results were in the local newspaper, so the stress was much lower. Now, with the evolution of social media, very detailed information is blasted everywhere which has led to intense scrutiny and stress from which there is little relief. Even though the state has said they are going to reduce the number of assessments, the principal's school is assessing now more than ever particularly with the RI and MI assessments required by the district.

Another major issue is the factors, such as attendance, that go into the CCRPI that are beyond the principal's control. Attendance issues in a high SES school like the principal's include students who leave for Hawaii for two weeks because the father is an executive who has that opportunity right then, or students who have a competition cheerleading meet in Texas who just leave for four days. The principal feels it is unfair to judge educators' performance on such factors.

These negative factors emphasize the narrow focus of the CCRPI that does not take the context of the community nor the whole child into account. The issues that the principal deals with outside the narrow band of "achievement" are significant and compelling. One such issue
is the fact that the principal has to coax students with anxiety issues out of their cars in the morning which underscores the unreasonableness of the expectation that those students are ready to learn the rest of the day. Another issue related to narrowness is that the assessment itself does not have a range that allows for higher-achieving students to show growth. This is evident when looking at a specific teacher in the school who is excellent and whose students show high achievement but only have average growth.

Some unintended consequences of strategies related to improving scores on the CCRPI include the implementation of programs to improve scores in a certain area that end up hurting the overall score due to a change of focus and the time spent implementing the new program. Another problem is the math inventory assessment required by the district. The teachers do not believe it is a good indicator of students' knowledge, so it is a waste of time that ties up the computer labs.

The whole system is intrusive and inconsistent in that the stipulations seem to change every year. The constant judging that goes on has led the principal to feel fatalistic about results characterized by the phrase, "it is what it is." The principal finds solace in the fact that the school is doing what is best for students no matter what the CCRPI score says about them. The CCRPI does not necessarily drive everything the principal is doing, but the pressure associated with balancing that instrument with the good of the child is frustrating, especially in the areas like attendance that are largely beyond the school's control.

[M-L] Portrayal

**TKES/LKES:** The principal attended two formal trainings regarding the TKES/LKES instrument with other principals in the room, and the atmosphere was one of attentiveness to the information presented in order to learn. Everyone wanted a consistent instrument that wouldn't
constantly change. The principal shared the training information with school staff, and the administrators went to inter-rater reliability training as well. The TKES instrument is valuable because it provides unannounced visits to the classroom which gives a truer picture than the old "dog and pony" show provided by announced visits of the last instrument, and the ten standards show a totality of the evidence that allows some teachers to shine. There have been specific examples where positive expectations regarding teachers have been supported by the instrument, and cases where those expectations have been denied showing that it can be relied on to inform administration of what is actually going on in the classroom. The principal emphasizes with the teachers that the instrument is a tool for improvement rather than a "gotcha," and those teachers who respond to the feedback with change are successful.

The LKES instrument is more challenging because it is not as clear-cut as the TKES, and the administrators become distraught if they get a two on an evaluation. The issue results from the fact that there are fewer waypoints, so the impact over prior performance concerns may be diminished and the administrators may feel like they are not "forgiven" if they receive a two on the mid-year evaluation. The principal references a particular instance where an administrator failed to fulfill a certain duty, and the principal had a long conversation of redirection with a reference to ramifications, yet the assistant still felt the incident should have been forgotten.

The principal has spoken to teachers about how the EOG growth measure will eventually count on the TKES instrument, and the principal emphasizes growth as a worthy goal, but the principal mentions that the legislature could make a change to that stipulation in the future. The principal recognizes that high achievement may be unreachable for some students, considering their starting point when they arrive at school, but high growth for such a student will be considered a success. The principal has recognized teachers in faculty meetings for achieving
high growth on the past EOG, and the school as a whole advanced in growth on the CCRPI this year.

One issue the principal has had in using the instrument effectively was with a teacher who had engaged in a serious, negative behavior that the principal felt deserved non-renewal. Because of the breadth of the instrument, however, it was difficult to justify non-renewal in spite of the egregious behavior since that behavior fell within only one standard. The principal feels this is more an issue with the district's interpretation of the use of the instrument rather than the instrument itself. The only other issues the principal has relates to the great amount of time the evaluation takes up, and the ever changing nature of the evaluation from year-to-year.

**CCRPI and Milestones:** The basis of the Principal's educational philosophy is founded in the principal's own experiences in school as a child where teachers took an interest in the principal's learning and went above and beyond to provide assistance. The principal's family was neither wealthy nor well-educated, but those teachers motivated and inspired the principal to achieve at a higher level than any of the principal's family had achieved before.

The principal finds the district supportive with the principal's understanding of the CCRPI and Milestones, but the principal wishes the formula for calculating success on the instrument would remain constant rather than changing regularly. The principal develops strategies to meet a certain goal, and then the state or federal government moves the goalposts. This is frustrating, but the principal's teachers focus on growth since their children are usually so low, and the achievement issues are not as compelling.

The principal does, however, concentrate on certain categories of students such as SWD, EL, and ED, in order to pursue specific strategies according to their needs since they have an impact the CCRPI score and are generally "below basic." The principal has hired a collaborative
teacher who works with the below basic students particularly on reading since that is a critical area of need if they are to score well. In addition, the principal has Saturday sessions for EL students to practice computer skills needed to be successful on the ACCESS test. All of these strategies are based on prior assessment data and the goals developed to improve scores. The fact that there is lagging data is unhelpful sometimes, however, since it is important to know where students have scored prior to the beginning of the year if they are to be placed in the appropriate levels.

There has been a sense of urgency to bring the scores up since the school score has declined in past years. The principal believes this drop was due to teacher turnover and change in leadership, but the tide has turned and scores have increased this year due to a focus on these students and the hiring of experienced teachers. This pressure did not come from the district but from the principal who always emphasized the growth aspect in order to boost morale. These conversations take place both in faculty meetings and one-on-one with teachers. Most teachers respond well to this motivation, and some embrace the data and even come to the principal with their own ideas for improvement. The principal works hard to ensure that any sense of urgency related to student success is focused on the specific data regarding growth and the task of preparing students to succeed in high school.

The principal sees the achievement portion of the CCRPI as functionally flawed because it does not serve to show the parents and community what is actually happening in the schools and from what circumstance the overall school number is derived. The principal has feeder elementary schools that are both affluent and low SES, and the parents of students from the affluent schools are not used to a low school score on the CCRPI. The principal explains to those parents that the goal of the school is to bring the low achieving students up while
maintaining the scores of the high achieving students, but the inconsistent nature of the CCRPI calculations make it difficult to explain outcomes. The principal hopes that the CCRPI will be streamlined next year to help with this issue.

The principal believes that the EOG assessments adequately evaluate student understanding for a majority of the students. The parents sometimes stress over the score, however, because it determines whether their child can enter AC classes which determines their potential placement at a magnet school. The frustrating part for the principal is that the assessment must now be taken online, and the school simply does not have the computer capacity to facilitate that mandate in a timely or efficient way. A related issue is that the students cannot practice online now even if the district solves the technology problem, and this circumstance will likely create a disproportionate gap between the performance in the principal's school and those students with access to enough computers or the affluence to practice online at home. The principal believes that this lack of resources is a functional flaw in the Milestone system.

While the CCRPI system is nerve-wracking, inconsistent, stress inducing, and sometimes unfair, the principal does believe that the growth data produced by the Milestones does back up the results of the TKES instrument regarding which teachers are effective or less effective.

**Achievement Strategies:** The pressure to achieve scores on the Milestones comes from the fact that some parents focus narrowly on the one overall CCRPI score and send their children to private schools, and the principal's school has lost students in the past to private schools. By gaining ground on the Milestones, the student numbers are up again, now, and the principal attributes this rise to the successful strategies in place.
The principal has a guiding coalition made up of teachers, media specialists, and other in-house stakeholders that meets to discuss data, goals, and strategies to reach those goals based on that data. Although the coalition didn't have the CCRPI data at the start of the year, it is in line with their understandings and goals. Each administrator also sits on the smaller, subject area PLC collaborative meetings to observe and answer questions if needed, but the teachers focus on the goals they set and the actual instructional strategies to achieve those goals. Some goals were related to the EOG, and some were more professional goals related to teaching strategies. Those related to the EOG dealt with moving students from one level of achievement to the one above, and their percentages were typically in the 3-5% range. The principal has specific subjects and grade levels where the strategies were based on data, the principal was able to get needed support, and the results were a tremendous success. Other teachers do not embrace the concept of collaborative data analysis, goal setting, and strategic planning and the negative results are apparent, but the principal is working on those issues diligently. There have been other strategies that were not successful for one reason or another, but the principal makes sure to stay focused on what works in the best interest of the students and will correct a failing strategy mid-year when needed.

The school has enough money to avoid conflict regarding how to use resources for various strategies, and the teachers start the year with all the supplies they need. The school has tried a little bit of everything to improve scores, and that type of focus has gained results in the area of moving students up from one level to another.

**Assessment Paradigm:** While there were standards, there was no standardized testing in the parts of the country where the principal first began a career in education, and the assessments that mattered were the ACT and SAT as well as the ITBS. Now however, much of the school
year is involved in getting ready for testing or re-testing. There needs to be accountability, but there also needs to be a way to assess learning without disrupting the learning process to the extent it is happening now. The accuracy of the assessments can help determine if students are growing, but that accuracy comes into question when the principal's higher achieving students get to high school where it is determined they are not actually ready for high school level work. One assessment instrument like the EOG is not sufficient to determine student understanding, and students should be able to show mastery along the way and move on when ready. If the students knew there were immediate and likely consequences related to the assessments, they might take the assessments more seriously. The principal's experiences with motivating students to take the RI and MI assessments seriously by outlining how the results will directly affect the students supports this idea.

[H-H] Portrayal

**TKES/LKES:** The principal's TKES/LKES training took place in one large, informal group, and the main focus was on navigating the platform rather than what constitutes true, good instruction. The principal took a test to get credentialed, and then took subsequent tests to get re-credentialed. The principal learned more about the expectations surrounding the rubric itself more so during the first year of using where guidance from the district was provided regarding the appropriate levels associated with the rubric.

The culture in the school prior to the TKES/LKES instrument focused on improvement in AP and EOC scores as a basis of evaluation. The EOC was not a major emphasis, though, since the teachers are highly competitive with other high-achieving schools nearby. The problem with the way the district is implementing the TKES instrument lies in the fact that teachers are expected to be in the level 3 area regardless of how successful they are with their students on
assessments like the EOC. This can be demoralizing to teachers who have been evaluated in the high range on prior assessments, but are now below that highest score due to the stipulations of the rubric. One teacher in particular is still bitter about not achieving a 4 on her evaluation, but the reason she didn't is because there are only so many 4's allowed by the district. This teacher takes the score quite personally, and has cried, requested new evaluators, and pursued remedies to no avail. This teacher seems to need the score on her evaluation to validate her worth although there are other teachers who don't really care as long as they are paid. The administrators are aware of the stipulations and play the game by making sure they score each deserving teacher as high as they can without exceeding the limit required by the district. The instrument does not seem to be utilized the same across districts throughout Georgia, according to others to whom the principal has spoken, so the principal believes the issues reside with the district's own policies. In the principal's building, the instrument is used as a vehicle for conversations between administrators and teachers regarding good instruction. As far as the TEM/LEM counting towards a teachers evaluation, [H-H] noted in a follow-up conversation with the researcher that the [H-H] has found the student results posted in the state database (Statewide Longitudinal Data System) are not always associated correctly with the teacher who taught those students. This kind of inaccuracy presents a huge problem with using scores for teacher evaluations for [H-H].

**CCRPI and Milestones:** The school maintains such high expectations, and high scores, on both the EOC's and CCRPI that there is no real celebration or note made of the issue. Teachers know that high scores are the expectation and part of the job. Parents do not question the principal about the scores, and the principal has made no note of the fact that the school had a high CCRPI score in the district when it happened in the past. The issue has no impact on the principal's day to day activities.
Students at the principal's school who arrived with low scores in prior EOC/EOG courses did very well such that the growth score was maxed out. The growth measure counting towards the teacher's evaluation doesn't help teachers be reflective about their instruction which is what is really needed. At the end of the day, The EOC is a minimum competency test, and it would be interesting to see how that assessment grade aligns with course grades throughout the district. The principal and his stakeholders are more interested in preparing students for college since about 90% will go on to a two or four year institution. The STEM program and other curricular programs that do this are what the parents are interested in.

The principal speaks to those close to him and his colleagues at other schools who do not achieve at as high a level, and the principal understands that the CCRPI system is set up for higher achieving schools, like the principal's, to win. The principal tells his colleagues that they must simply play the game and pick an aspect that they can win on, focus on it, and then say they are winning the game in that way. The system is a set-up since the principal has a large number of highly motivated students who consistently score level 4 on the EOC exam, so they get maximum points, and those students are supported by highly motivated parents. While the district puts a large emphasis on the CCRPI, the district officials don't seem to know that the system is set up for schools like the principal's to win. Since the school is so high performing, the district also does not come out to provide support for improving scores. For the principal's students, though, the EOC is not enough to be competitive on a global basis for the kinds of schools they are trying to get into.

The CCRPI instrument itself is extremely flawed in that it has measures such as career tech pathways and other areas where it is nearly impossible for the principal to score points.
While the difference in the ultimate score may be minimal, one point at that level could mean the difference between being first in the state or fourth in the state.

*Achievement Strategies:* While the principal does put the strongest teachers in EOC classes, there is not much pressure to hit achievement goals. The pressure on the teachers is mostly self-induced since they know they are in a high achieving school and results are expected. The pressure manifests around test time, and the teachers have come to the principal to say that a certain number of students just aren't going to make it. The principal reassures them, however, that they should feel good about what they have done as long as they have done everything they can.

As for specific strategies the staff uses, they have been using smart goals and other PLC strategies for years although such strategies are geared more to the PSAT, SAT and ACT since close to 100% of their students pass the EOC. There is no real gamesmanship with "bubble" students since most of them pass anyway and every child in the building really has a good chance at time and resources. Sharing data with the staff is also not a problem since the school culture is set up to view data as a reflective measure rather than a "gotcha." This is what is wrong with the TKES evaluation that uses data as a "gotcha" and not as a reflective piece.

One definite strategy related to resource allocation is that the principal has always hired heavily in math making those classes smaller, particularly in algebra and geometry. This also happens in other subject areas, however, as teachers are also pulled to do AP or college prep classes. Specific conversations with teachers reveal that they understand the big picture of why it is being done, and they are not confrontational about their concerns as they express them. The only real dilemma that occurs with resource allocation is in the area of career tech classes. Those
students oriented to that path, the less academically oriented, get short-changed, and the schedule just doesn't allow them the elective opportunities that they might have elsewhere.

**Assessment Paradigm:** The entire assessment paradigm narrows curriculum and does not allow the principal to implement a broader program for students to compete globally. An inordinate amount of time is spent mass-testing students, but scores do not move significantly over the years. There are potential remedies, such as testing smaller samples of students, but politicians are making small-minded decisions without understanding the big picture. The scores are essentially useless for instructional purposes since they don't come back until the following semester, and scores in May are not valuable to anyone in August or September.

Assessment takes away from the time that could be better used on non-academic learning such as drug and alcohol awareness. Accountability is a good thing, but the current system has taken all of the joy out of education. Under the current system, the point of education now is to see who can manipulate the system the best to gather the most points. This causes good teachers to burn out when they feel the pressure of trying to get their students to perform at high levels, and some teachers have left because of it.

Assessments required by the district are also not helpful at the high school level because the principal already has plenty of data from elementary middle school assessments to determine students' needs. This kind of local system assessment is a top-down initiative, and feedback from below is not welcomed. This creates a negative climate, and the data is simply not used since there is such a significant lag-time between the assessment and the return of the assessment results. The district seems to have a lack of trust in local schools' ability to determine their own needs, and so they push an assessment strategy that doesn't suit every school's needs. Higher performing schools have already demonstrated their competence on EOC assessments, so it
makes no sense for teachers in those schools to substitute their own assessments for the district assessments. The entire process is just a waste of those teachers' valuable time and represents micromanagement on the part of the district.

**[H-L] Portrayal**

**TKES/LKES:** The principal felt the two-day training for the TKES instrument provided by the state was appropriate for new principals but a waste of time for veteran principals since it focused on what to look for to identify good instruction. While being a good refresher, two days was too long for the principal to be away from the school for this type of training. Training on how to navigate the portal would have been more helpful. The instrument itself is an average tool for identifying areas of teacher need regarding instruction. The only noted issue with the TKES instrument is the inflexibility with the amount of time that must be spent in each class as the principal feels that more discretion should be available to administrators to spend more or less time in a teacher's classroom according to need.

While the principal does not recall any specific experiences related to teachers when utilizing the TKES instrument, the LKES instrument has been a useful tool when guiding administration. The tool helps administrators transition from a teacher mindset to a leader mindset such that the administrators understand that they are teaching adults how to teach kids. Instead of being operations experts, the administrators become more curriculum and instruction experts who are in the classrooms regularly. The principal then sits down with each administrator to discuss what is going on with instruction throughout the school.

Both the TKES and LKES instruments also have limitations in that the focus can be too narrow to capture all that the teachers and administrators are doing in their jobs. Specific examples include administrators over athletics or fine arts who contribute much that cannot be
captured adequately using the instrument other than the comments section. The same goes for teachers who contribute outside the focus of instruction who only get credit in the comment section as well. The principal believes in performance based learning, and the instrument is not designed to give that focus much credit.

This narrow focus can also influence teachers to treat the instrument as a checklist such that their behavior is geared towards satisfying the instrument rather than focusing on the whole child. Specific examples include a teacher who was on a professional learning plan who only targeted what was measured on the TKES to the exclusion of other things outside the instrument that contribute to being an outstanding teacher. There are also a few teachers who aren't even on a plan that also treat it as a checklist to which they simply need to provide supporting documents.

In conversations with those teachers, the principal expresses that there needs to be a combination of efforts outside the instrument regarding the whole child. The standards in the tabs do not evaluate the needed understandings regarding whether a child is depressed or has a difficult home life. After these conversations, the principal sees some change in the overall education of the children, but it is difficult to get teachers to focus on the child when the state is defining the tool as an instrument upon which teachers' jobs depend. That focus comes from the state and not the principal, but teachers are hearing about it from other teachers or the media. Even though the principal is adamant to his teachers that they must do right by the kids and they will get through the rest of it, it is difficult for teachers to trust the principal when their teaching contract comes from the district's human resources rather than the principal, and test scores will be the gateway to keep one's teaching job. The principal has also seen where teachers' contracts have been held on the basis of a mid-year score on the TKES after one observation, which is
very stressful, even though they are excellent teachers and that one observation just didn't go their way.

**CCRPI and Milestones:** The assessment culture established by No Child Left Behind and continuing into today has influenced the principal's philosophy of education by helping educators to focus in on the needs of the child. Before that time the attitude in education was one where teachers were able to say, "I delivered the instruction. They didn't get it. Oh well." The principal has always had a passion for struggling kids, and it became easier to push the staff to have a passion for struggling kids too when there are accountability measures.

A negative aspect is that the principal has always worked at lower-achieving schools, and growth is evident but achievement is not. The contributing factors to this lower achievement, such as transience, severe gaps in reading ability, and absenteeism are often outside the direct control of the school, so being evaluated using such a score is frustrating to both principal and staff. Some students from other countries who have already graduated high school attend the principals' school for only a year for the sole purpose of learning the English language. While that is good for them, this reduces the effectiveness of the instrument to accurately portray what is occurring. The state has come into the school in the past to help implement strategies to improve scores, but the transience rate crushes both the graduation rate and achievement scores.

Another significant flaw in the system relates to the relationship between the transience rate and the graduation rate. The state develops inaccurate and unfair lists regarding what students should graduate from the principal's school. These inaccuracies and unfair numbers include students who were rolled up from 8th grade but never attended and students who only attended a few days in total. The principal is unable to amend or verify these lists in a timely way because the state does not provide an open and accessible database to which the principal
can refer to make corrections. Another flaw in the EOC/Milestone Assessment is that the stakes for the students may often be lower than those for the teachers. If these assessments are to be tied to teacher evaluations, the students should also have that level of accountability.

Labelling a school as "failing," and therefore the community as well since that label affects so much including property values, without looking more closely at the factors that go into the scores is reckless and criminal. The legislators should be fired.

Accountability is still important, though, so the principal uses resources in specific ways to increase growth since that will yield more gains than trying to increase achievement. Using resources to track down kids who no longer attend is one way as is using a team to make sure every effort is being made to encourage seniors to graduate. These resources include Gradpoint if needed to complete courses they have failed. The principal also brings seniors into the office to talk about strategies for successful completion of high school in their final year.

**Achievement Strategies:** When the principal first started at the school, there were several things that needed to be addressed including behavior, absenteeism, and achievement. The principal put a shared governance plan in place and the problems were addressed as a staff. Instead of a whole school goal, the goals were divided among the core subjects to determine needs and strategies. One specific strategy the principal developed in coordination with the district was to move biology from the ninth grade to the tenth grade, and move environmental science to the ninth grade. This gave the ninth graders some information to bring with them to the tenth grade biology, and biology EOC scores improved as a result. This also allowed staff to devote more time and energy on the ninth grade Algebra I and English courses.

Currently, the principal is feeling pressure to move his students from one level to the next on the EOC since Board members and the superintendent make comparisons between schools
regarding how many students are in each level on the EOC. Students need time to work on academics outside of school to improve achievement, but the principal knows that near 80% of his students must work after school to the exclusion of studying in order to help support their families. Students at other schools with higher achievement are going home and studying nights and weekends and do not have a job. This is a trade off because the principal's students are learning a valuable work ethic to work hard more so than those other students are learning, but they still need more time in order to push achievement scores higher.

Trying to devote resources to certain students based on cut scores was not helpful as many of the students receiving that benefit were no longer at school because of transience. The solution is to quickly adjust to specific needs in the here and now using pre assessments, and then quickly adjust again like a coach on Friday night, changing the delivery to suit the need on the fly. The challenge and trade-off is to make sure students understand before moving on while maintaining the pacing guide to cover the material.

The principal has never had a problem sharing data with the staff because the situation was ripe for change and leadership when the principal arrived. The principal established a shared governance model and did more listening than talking while utilizing a program that allowed staff to see that analyzing data and implementing the principal's solutions was working. The success worked quickly the first year and there was significant district and media celebration that encouraged and solidified the strategies that have remained to this day. The principal focused on the positive rather than the negative, and the teachers who were resistant to change had private meetings with the principal with expectations frankly stated, and then no longer worked at the school if they could not get on board. The principal lost some good teachers, and some bad
teachers, but the key to change was the resolve of the principal who made it clear that change was going to happen.

Another key was that the principal told the staff what was broken, but then worked with the staff to develop solutions rather than dictating them. The principal was also able to bring two administrators in to the school which was key. The principal has now hired almost 90% of the teachers and all of the administrators and everyone is on board. Finally, the rules had to be enforced regarding behavior, and the administrative team did that while getting student buy-in which made the way clear to follow up with academic strategies. Many of the students formed close, personal relationships with the principal as a result of those efforts. The principal has had some fears that the measures implemented might lead to some low scores regarding his leadership on the staff surveys, but that has not happened yet.

**Assessment Paradigm:** The main problem with the current assessment paradigm not only locally but in America is the emphasis on teaching standards rather than teaching the whole child. Student crises such as homelessness, drug addiction, or mental illness are being neglected by educators who focus on students mastering the standards, assessing the standards because those educators are worried about how they will be evaluated by their students' performance. Nowhere are educators given credit for helping students through a difficult crisis, like a suicide attempt, which fall outside the state standards of curriculum and instruction. The principal has personal experiences with helping students by finding them food or getting them counselling, but some students have passed away due to mental illness and there is little effective support available for that kind of need. There is no place on the accountability measures to give anyone credit for such efforts, yet those efforts are needed and important, yet the state would still label
such a school as failing when it provides those efforts for students. The system they have set up simply does not account for efforts directed whole child education.

An ancillary issue is the fact that special education inclusion came in during the 1980's, and brought an era of helping more students achieve at their maximum level. The problem lies in the fact that each student has a different maximum level and the system needs to recognize that fact. There should not be a one-track path to a diploma in Georgia.

Another issue with the current CCRPI is the lack of consistency and poor communication. There have been stipulations for schools to implement certain programs that would be worth points on the CCRPI that were not well communicated to the principal one year, so the principal lost points on the CCRPI. The following year, the principal implemented the same program in anticipation of the stipulation, but it was taken out leaving the principal with a program that would garner no points at the expense of resources that could have been used elsewhere.

The bottom line is that the principal believes in accountability, but the system should have significant elements that account for what is best for whole child as well as some way to balance the equation for schools with high transience rates.

**Emic Themes via Cross Analysis**

The emic themes below were developed from the paraphrase transcripts above and are organized roughly as they appear sequentially although some themes apply to more than one category of analysis. These themes are a distillation of the broader etic themes associated with the categories of analysis (Appendix F) developed in the anticipatory data reduction. While other themes may also be inferred from the transcripts, I chose the themes below as particularly
relevant to the research question. Quotes that were originally associated with etic themes in ATLAS.ti are also used when particularly pointed remarks support a particular theme.

1. Consistency:

The lack of consistency between administrators within a school when evaluating teachers is a common concern among 4 of the principals [M-H, M-L, E-H, H-H] related to the TKES instrument with two mentioning inter-reliability training for their assistant principals, [M-H, M-L] and two [M-H, E-H] mentioning the problem with the observer's personal attitudes having a large impact on the outcome of a teacher's performance rating. As expressed by [M-H],

In terms of the instrument's viability to determine the efficacy of the educational outcomes, I feel that it is very dependent upon the rater and their educational philosophies, their views towards teachers, whether it is that you believe that teachers are overwhelmed and this is an instrument that can make them feel good and help keep them happy. Or whether you feel this is an instrument that can affect change and make instruction better.

Two principals [M-H, H-H] also expressed concerns regarding the district's intervention in the assessment process to impose restraints on administrators' rating practices based on a certain number of targets established by the district. One principal [H-H] found it unfair that administrators in a school were not allowed to award scores based on their own evaluation of a teacher's performance because of constraints imposed by the district whose interest was in controlling the disparity of scores between schools. As [H-H] explains the effect on a specific teacher when she was given a rating of "3" instead of "4" due to the constraints,

It's demoralizing to her. She doesn't see a big picture. There's a lot of teachers who will see the big picture and say, yeah, whatever. Am I getting paid the same? Whatever. For
her, she doesn't have the ability to see the big picture and she feels like that evaluation
instrument has something that validates her worth.

that inconsistencies occurred within the EOC and CCRPI instruments themselves. Three
principals [E-H, M-L, M-H] mention generally that the formulas keep changing related to how
CCRPI scores are calculated making it difficult to develop strategies for success on the
instrument as summed up by [M-L], "...every two years we change the formula for CCRPI. It's
like moving the goalpost once we get an understanding of this is what we have to do to get to
there. Then the goalposts change." [E-L] describes the effect such inconsistency has on
motivation to analyze data:

Well, we used to know what the cut score was. It did make AYP much easier to calculate,
and we could say, "Okay, we need to make this. Let's make this." But right now, you
can't tell what the cut score is. At that point, I just quick caring. I used to spend a whole
lot of time on the data, and looking at where we can improve. But they change it every
year now. They change the formula every year. You can't find the cut. You don't know
what they are. So it's all a big secret. It is what it is. I don't spend a lot of time on it
anymore.

One principal [H-L] found that the State failed to inform principals in a timely manner as to what
categories of evaluation would exist with the next year's CCRPI which led to the principal
misallocating resources. Another principal [M-H] was told the EOC would have a certain type of
question to which the principal devoted resources only to find that type of question was not
significantly represented on the EOC assessment. As related by [H-L],

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To me, that goes to incompetence at the state level that ... To me, if I'm telling a principal, "Your school is going to be held accountable for this," give us some time for implementation. Give us some time for planning, for buy-in, for informing the community. There's a lot there that it just can't be a September 20th meeting.

2. TEM/LEM 2020 Implementation:

Principals mention the implementation of the TEM/LEM growth measure in 2020 in specific contexts such as when principal [E-H] uses growth data to back up observed teacher behaviors, or when principal [H-L] tries to reassure teachers that "doing right by kids" is the most important thing, yet they know their job may depend on a score. In the principal's words, But when you have the state looking at the tool [TKES/LKES] as a "keeping your job" type of tool, I'll be honest, that's real hard as principal to get teachers to focus on more than just the tool because they're trying to save their job. And whether they trust me or not, some of the things that are coming out about the TKES, LKES and keeping your job based on student performance is a scary place for teachers to be right now.

The potential impact of the growth measure implementation is not generally emphasized, however, due to several factors. First, principals [H-L, M-H, E-L] express the belief that it is unfair to hold teachers accountable for growth when resources, even such resources as food and clothing [E-L], are not equitable among all teachers and students. Further, [E-L] sees a problem with teacher retention as the principal states, "But for my teachers when they're held accountable for the problems that come with some of our students, they are not going to teach in a Title I school. Why would you? We're gonna lose teachers." Two principals [M-L, H-H] assert that teacher evaluation should be reflective and not a "gotcha" as is the case with the growth measure score, but [H-H] also denies the accuracy of growth data because the reported data on the State
Longitudinal Data System is not accurate in the sense that teachers who are given credit for some students' score never had those students on their rosters. Further, [H-H] says the growth measure is too opaque to be meaningful to teachers because the "formula that they use, it's a crazy formula that nobody can figure out."

Another reason for reluctance in emphasizing the 2020 implementation is the belief among some principals [E-L, M-H, M-L, H-L] that doing so stresses teachers unnecessarily since so much stress is already apparent and the likelihood of actual implementation is not considered certain. While discussing the reasons the growth measure applied to teacher evaluations is unfair, principal [E-L] asserted, "I just don't think it's going to happen. It probably will happen. But I think that's when it's time for me to retire." When asked about conversations with teachers regarding the impact growth may eventually have on their evaluations, [M-H] also expresses doubt as to whether the TEM/LEM will be implemented by saying,

We haven't done a whole lot with that. I mean, they've seen it. We've had them go into it. We tell them it's coming. But the timeline keeps getting pushed back and back, so no one really believes that it's going to happen. I will tell you right now, I truly don't think teachers think it's going to happen because every year it seems to get pushed back another year, another year.

[M-L] also shares a similar attitude by saying, "Even when I talk about growth and how to fix their evaluation and everything I always preface it with 'unless it changes in the next two to three years.' I always say, 'With a change of legislature it could change.'"

3. Time:

Five of the six principals [E-H, E-L, M-L, H-H, H-L] find that the amount of time it takes to complete the TKES cycles of observation is burdensome as expressed by [E-H] who says, "I
felt like all I was doing is evaluating. Walking, classrooms, spending time in there. I was always in this hurry." Although these opportunities to be in the classroom are of value [E-H, M-L, H-L] the time it takes removes the opportunity for principals to fulfill other necessary functions [E-H, H-L, H-H] and there should be some autonomy given to the principal regarding which classrooms have the greatest need for attention [H-L]. One principal [M-H] notes that teachers also feel pressure to pack in all the material that will be assessed into a limited amount of time which sometimes requires them to curtail some more time-intensive supplemental strategies involving the use of online resources. In addition, teachers also resent the extensive time spent in data analysis that takes away from planning the actual instruction required for student success. As [M-H] describes a particular grade-level team whose students failed to achieve at expected levels,

It kind of hit them in the face and they all felt, "Wow, what went wrong?" At the beginning of the year, they felt very down about themselves. And so, more resistance to some of the things that we're trying to do from some of those people in those teams because they feel like they just need to be in their classrooms teaching. They don't need to be doing anything else. And how dare I ask them to look at data in their team-planning day because then they can't plan the instruction.

The time it takes to simply give assessments required by both district and State sources is also a consistent feature of the negative time factor expressed by 4 principals [M-H, M-L, H-H, H-L]. One principal [E-L] points out the extensive time required to schedule and support SWD testing, saying, "A lot of time, a whole lot of time is given for that. We have a lot of small groups that takes my AP hours and hours and hours to determine those IEP goals." These assessments also monopolize time in the computer labs [M-L, M-H] to the extent that the teachers now call
them "assessment labs" [M-H], and they are unavailable for actual instruction. This disruption of
learning is also noted by [M-L], and [E-L] proposes that support mechanisms related to
instruction are for more effective at encouraging student growth than any accountability measure
might be. Still, [E-L] has also learned not to expend tutoring time and resources to students who
will not be around to take the EOG due to transience and when describing whether there is any
frustration or pressure related to this issue, [E-L] responded,

    To me it's another test. It's just one more test. We do not put a lot of pressure on teachers.
    We do not talk about it a whole lot because the kids we have right now, won't be here
    when we test. So, in the spring, we might wrap up some tutoring for kids that we have.
    And we know that there are bubble kids that we can bump up a little bit, but it's just
    another test that takes up a lot of time.

Three other principals [E-L, M-L, and H-H] report that the significant lag-time between students
taking State assessments and the return of that data makes it useless for helping students,
particularly transient students [E-L] & [M-L] who are already gone or for scheduling remaining
students, although the immediate results of the district reading and math assessments are used by
two principals to provide stakeholders feedback [E-H] and to motivate students by showing how
assessment results impact their lives [M-L]. Two principals [M-H, H-H], however, report that
the district math and reading assessments are not useful and are a significant waste of time.

4. Accountability:

    Three of the six principals (E-H, M-L, H-L) expressly stated that accountability has a
valuable role to play in education that includes a means by which teachers can focus on the needs
of the child and promote higher expectations. As stated by H-L, the institution of accountability
in education "forces us to not say, 'I delivered the instruction. They didn't get it. Oh well. Their
mom could put them in summer school and go through summer school.' It makes us focus on the children more . . ." This same principal, however, noted that the imposition of an achievement score diminishes the instrument's usefulness in reflecting an accurate picture of the school's effectiveness since the factors impacting the achievement scores such as transience, attendance, and students' limited English ability are beyond the school's control. While attendance might not be considered a problem for higher socio-economic schools, [M-H] notes,

… on the CCRPI, the attendance indicator drives me absolutely up the wall. I cannot make these kids come to school. I can't help it that your dad is an executive and you get the opportunity to go to Hawaii for two weeks in the middle of the school year and your parents take you. Great. That's what we run into here for the most part. "I'm a cheerleader. I have a competition in Texas. I'm flying out for four days for that." So, I feel like we're held accountable for many things that influence our results . . .

[M-H] also describes the PLC process as an effective way to improve student learning and has little to share about the assessment system that is positive.

[M-L] simply focuses on growth for both motivating and celebrating teachers since achievement is likely out of the reach for some students considering their starting positions when they arrive at school. [E-L] And [H-L] cite transience as a major frustration related to the accountability measure as well, and [M-L] notes that the calculation of the CCRPI score is too obscure for parents to understand the actual issues that influence the various components. [M-L] also relates that students who achieve high scores on the EOG are later determined by the high school as not ready for high school work calling into question the accuracy of the assessment as an indicator of competence. [M-L] believes a one-time assessment is not enough and demonstrating knowledge all along is better.
Finally, one principal [H-H] maintained that accountability instituted from the outside was not a meaningful component of the school culture. The fact that the school always scored very high on the CCRPI instrument due to consistently high EOC scores made outside accountability via assessment a non-issue. As the principal states when describing the accountability system in relation to this high SES school, "It is a 'set-up' to where schools that have highly motivated kids, parents who are highly engaged, are going to do well."

5. Scope:

All six principals describe the Assessment System's scope as too narrow to recognize or address the needs of their students. [H-L] and [E-L] both note that the TKES instrument does not adequately address some of the functions provided by teachers in the areas of band or athletics, and they also believe that the TKES [H-L] and the CCRPI [H-L, E-L] fail to recognize what schools do to address the needs of the "whole child." According to [H-L] and [E-L], the standards on the TKES do not account for students' needs with which teachers must cope on a daily basis such as homelessness, drug addiction, depression, or the need for food and clothing; yet, the need for teachers to address such issues is compelling. In the words of [H-L],

The TKES platform is not about the whole child. I don't see anything there that says, 'Guide students who are suffering from depression. Guide students who are having a hard home life.' ...and I'm seeing teachers in my head right now who are just looking at the tabs under the TKES platform, they're missing the whole child. If we start missing the whole child, we're not doing a good job educating children.

Even though [M-H] has students with higher socio-economic status, this principal agrees that a school's worth should not be based on the narrow band of "achievement" when students have so many other issues with which the school must deal. As related by [M-H],
And that we're battling many different things. The number of anxiety cases where I'm trying to get a kid out of the car to come into the building. I've literally have to go out and try to get them into the building, and then, they're supposed to learn? And that I'm held accountable for that? It's the mental/emotional health of students these days that has a tremendous impact on achievement and the attendance. People just don't believe that coming to school is important as it is.

[M-H] also expresses the difference in proportionality related to the benefit students derive from the overall school mission beyond academic achievement: "I don't feel like the whole child is being taken into account. I feel like it's a one day one test measure."

[M-H], [E-H] and [H-H] all agree that the EOC is a narrow, minimum competency assessment that does not allow their higher-achieving students to truly demonstrate their range of knowledge. In the words of [M-H],

I have these very, very high students, and then it's like I don't have a lot of middle students. I have these high students that they're showing that they're not making a year's growing, but they're already at the top. To me, there has to be some flaw if them growing and showing a year's growth, reverts back to what [district supervisor] said - like they missed one less test question.

[E-H] agrees and says, "We need to have an instrument that extends further than one to two years so those children have, to me, more of an opportunity because there are more test questions, to shine." [E-H] also believes that the district assessments do better job identifying students' true issues, but the EOG can actually work against that goal. As [E-H] relates, "some students in the past that have been ill and so they were unable [to take the EOG], and these children are
accelerated children and definitely should be placed in these classes. Because of not taking the test, they're not allowed."

At the other end of the spectrum, [H-H] believes the CCRPI instrument is too broad in that it includes measures such as Career Tech pathways where it is nearly impossible for the school to score points since their students are not generally inclined to participate in such programs and Career Tech teachers/classes are reduced as a result. Because of the academic orientation of the school, [H-H] is unable to allocate resources and time to facilitate the few students who seek that path, and they are short-changed as a result. Conversely, [H-H] also expresses that the assessment system measures student performance in such a narrow band that the goal of creating well-rounded students who are able to compete globally by participation in a broad curriculum is diminished. When describing the effect of the current assessment system, [H-H] states,

I feel like it handicaps me to an extent where I can't look more globally and how I would love to have stuff in place that high performing school in the state of Washington, the state of Pennsylvania, wherever, to make sure that ... We're very competitive in Georgia, but that's not good enough. I want to be competitive globally. This system locks you into that.

[M-L] also expresses the belief that the narrowness of a measure like the EOG fails to allow some students to move on when ready by showing mastery along the way, and immediate benefits from other types of assessments might actually motivate students to perform at higher levels. Specifically, [M-L] states the following:

I think students should be able to, once they understand things, move quickly and not have to sit there and wait for an arbitrary year to pass before they go on. I think that
would help some of our students to motivate them to take the assessment more seriously, a different assessment, but it's related to the Milestones. Our RI and MI that we do - a lot of the kids don't take it seriously because it doesn't count as a grade. Yet, once we've stressed to them that it's used to put you in connection classes, or put you in AC classes then the next go around they take it a little more seriously. I just have a problem with a whole lot assessments on that aspect. I think the kids should be able to show mastery of content and go on.

6. Emotional Toll:

Of the six principals, only one [H-H] did not use some form of the word "frustration" when describing the CCRPI/Milestone Assessment System. [E-H] described the personal frustration associated with a lower score this year from previous years by saying,

It's a little frustrating in the sense that I'm very passionate about what I do and I'm always reflecting on how I can improve. I work diligently with my admin team and my leadership team to always look at what are our challenges and we create a plan and we work our plan. I feel like that it's a frustrating battle, because I don't feel like they [parents] realize the ... They really don't realize how inclusive our school and how diverse it has become and that there's a lot of changes, that it is not the same school it was 10 years ago, a different population and so they need to be mindful of that and I don't get that feeling that they understand what we're doing to try to improve.

When asked how this sense of frustration impacts the principal personally, [E-H] states, "It makes me feel defeated because I think I'm being judged on that score." Further, the principal relates how teachers react in staff meetings as the lower scores are being discussed, ". . . and then
this look of almost like ... A defeated look, but also some of frustration because they see themselves as these incredible teachers and how could this be happening?"

The negative feelings of the staff sometimes come across as if the principal is to blame for the lower scores. Staff frustration is also apparent when the principal has to make hard decisions regarding allocation of resources and some staff feel frustrated because they can't see the big picture.

Four principals [M-L], [M-H], [E-L],and [E-H] expressed frustration regarding the inconsistency of the CCRPI formula when calculating school scores. [E-L] describes this frustration with assessments and almost fatalistically by saying, "I've cried over it, and I have been mad over it. But that's a waste of my time. I don't have time for all that. So, I've learned just to let it go." [M-L] states, "I get frustrated at the state and federal for changing things. It's like, stick with something so that we can know what we're doing."

[M-H] internalizes the pressure to achieve high scores, even though the district is supportive, and this arises from the traditions of high scores at the principal's school. A recent dip in those scores has increased that pressure, and [M-H] describes social media's role as a factor:

I think it also, just the evolution of social media and of the internet because before you could have these scores, and who would see them? They got published in the [local newspaper] and the people who got the [local newspaper] might see it. Oh, okay, yeah, whatever. It's gone. It's in the trash. And now, it's blasted everywhere. They can look at anything they want to see. So, you have this intense scrutiny that for people who want to see it, is out there. So, it's 24/7. You never can get away from it. So, I feel like that too
has something to do with it, the stress and the pressure that teachers feel is because it is I feel like you're on blast all the time.

This only increases the principal's frustration with the inconsistency of the CCRPI and Milestone Assessment System to the point that [M-H] has become somewhat fatalistic about the situation and simply says "it is what it is."

Both [H-L] and [H-H] expressed an emotional impact, but the reaction was somewhat stronger than with the other principals. [H-L] describes the frustration of working in schools with so many factors that contribute to low achievement scores even though the students show growth. The accountability instruments do not really show what positive things are going on, and they instead label schools as "failing" which affects communities, property values, and threats to "take over" schools. [H-L] believes this is criminal behavior on the part of the legislature for perpetuating such a system as expressed by the following:

I further feel that the way the state then goes and labels schools failing without peeling it like an onion and really looking to see is labeling a community failing, affecting property value, affecting so much as you look at takeover schools, yet they're not looking close enough. I think that's criminal. Fire our legislators. That is powerful statement, but I believe if you're going to label a school failing, you've got to get to the root cause of why the school's failing. Is it that teachers are delivering poor instruction, or is it that kids are going missing and you can't find them and you live in a very transient area who kids might be going out of the country to school?

[H-H] has a similar view, but from the perspective of a high achieving school this principal sees the whole accountability system as a set-up so that higher-achieving schools stay that way.

While [H-H] does not use the word "frustration," the principal's cynicism regarding the
accountability system is evident in descriptions of interactions with other principals and with the
district. [H-H] counsels principals in lower-achieving schools by saying, "sell it that you're
winning the game, not the same way that somebody else is winning the game, but you're winning
it a different way." Regarding this kind of gamesmanship related to the accountability
stipulations placed on principals and teachers, [H-H] says,

- you put all of that on them and it just creates a culture and a system where it's not about
  kids learning. It's just about, "I'm holding everyone accountable for something." It takes
  the joy out of it. It takes the fun out of it. It becomes a game of who knows how to
  manipulate the system the best. That's what it's turned into.

[E-L] backs up that claim by describing the need to allocate resources to children who are on the
cusp of moving from one achievement level to another on the EOG just to get another half point
credit for the school. When [E-L] was asked how such an unequal distribution of resources made

The frustration of other stakeholders such as teachers is evident in the descriptions of
several principals as well. [H-H] reports that teachers in that school pressure themselves to gain
high scores on the Milestone exams, and the most compelling story concerned a teacher who was
devastated and crying in the principal's office because she had received a low score on the TKES
instrument. [M-H] also describes a teacher crying due to low growth scores even though her
students were high achieving, and also a particular grade level team whose EOG scores had
dipped. As opposed to looking at the scores as motivation to change instructional practice, [M-H]
describes that team the following way:

- At the beginning of the year, they felt very down about themselves. And so, more
  resistance to some of the things that we're trying to do from some of those people in those
teams because they feel like they just need to be in their classrooms teaching. They don't need to be doing anything else. And how dare I ask them to look at data in their team-planning day because then they can't plan the instruction.

Although principals' description of parent reactions was limited, [E-L] describes one parent's congratulations that they had achieved the status of "Focus School" since that meant the school received more money. [M-L] describes parents stress over scores that will determine whether their children have access to AC classes and subsequent placement at a magnet school. [M-L] also knows of parents who have taken their students out of the principal's school because of low CCRPI scores although [M-L] notes the numbers of students have come back up since the school has earned higher scores.

**Thematic Relationships**

Engaging in eidetic reduction (Van Manen, 2014) through reflection upon the six major emic themes, I identified the overarching theme of accountability as encompassing the three themes of time, consistency, and scope (see figure 4 below). Each of these three themes contains the following secondary themes that may also be considered as structures of the assessment culture: the TKES/LKES instruments, the EOC/EOG assessments, and the CCRPI school evaluation instrument. These three assessment structures serve as a lens through which one may see how the essence of the principals' lived experiences relates to the school assessment culture. The emotional toll and TEM/LEM implementation emic themes are described within and related directly to the three themes and three assessment structures described above.

While the above thematic hierarchy shows the essence of "how" school assessment culture shows itself, the "what" of the essence of the phenomenon can be seen through the "achievement" and "growth" perceptions that are tertiary themes within the theme of the "scope"
of the assessment paradigm. It is from this final distillation of themes that the essence of the phenomenon is revealed in the narrowness of the Milestone Assessment System itself. All of the principals interviewed related their belief that the assessment system does not properly address the needs of the whole child, and the expressions of the principals regarding the growth and achievement measures reveal the nature of that failure as a narrowness of the EOG and EOC assessments themselves. For low SES schools, obtaining high scores on the achievement measure is not perceived as an attainable goal although gains can be made on the growth measure. High SES schools, on the other hand, have issue with both growth and achievement since the knowledge their students are allowed to demonstrate is limited by the minimum competency standard of the assessment; further, the growth measure is also not fair since the range of failure to show growth can be as little as missing one question on the assessment due to the majority of the peer group for a given student may be at the upper maximum of the assessment.
Figure 4 Theme Chart

Accountability Issues
1. Accountability is a good thing in general: E-H, M-L, H-L.
2. District diagnostic reading and math assessments are useful: E-H, E-L.
3. Attendance is a difficult factor for the school to control: M-H, H-L.
4. Transience is a major factor diminishing assessments’ viability: E-L, H-L.
5. Accountability from outside the school not needed: M-H, H-H.
6. Student SLDN data is not always associated with the correct teacher: H-H.

Time
TKES/LKES
2. Time taken for data analysis distracts from instructional planning: M-H.

EOC/EOG/District
3. District assessments not useful so waste of time: M-H, H-H.

Consistency
TKES/LKES
1. TKES Inter-rater reliability is not consistent: E-H, M-H, M-L, H-H.
2. District intrusion into evaluation process for TKES is unclear and demoralizing: M-H, H-H.

EOC/EOG
1. EOC format changes are not always communicated: E-L, M-L.
2. EOC as a predictor for high school success questionable: M-L.

CCRPI

Scope
Assessment system does not address the needs of the whole child: All Principals.

TKES/LKES
1. TKES standard is too narrow to capture what educators do for whole child: E-L, M-H, H-L.
2. Instrument is too narrow to properly document significant, poor behavior: M-L.

EOC/EOG
One assessment on one day is not adequate to truly assess child: M-L, E-H.

CCRPI
1. CCRPI measures are too broad and do not reflect student interests: H-H.
2. Principal focuses on categories of students to ensure points on CCRPI: M-L.

Growth
1. Achievement scores are not as attainable as growth measures: M-L.
2. Growth measure is not fair since students have different access to resources: M-H.
3. Higher achieving students do not show growth on EOC as easily since missing only one question can mean no growth for a student: M-H, E-H.

Achievement
1. EOC is a minimum competency test that does not allow higher achieving students to shine or show versatility: E-H, M-H, H-H.
2. Principals still engage in strategic resource allocation to move students from level to level on the EOC/EOC: E-L, M-H, H-L.
Triangulation of Data

A digital Qualtrics (2018) survey was used with the aim of collecting additional data for confirmation and triangulation purposes even though the responses do not have a strong power for yielding any statistically significant results due to the small sample size. The total number of participating principals was 46 which is less than half of the principal population of the school district, and a possible explanation for this low rate was the participating school district's stipulation that principal participants could not opt for either the survey portion or the interview portion of the research but were required to agree to both in order to participate. Six of the total 46 participating principals were part of the interview process leaving 40 eligible respondents for the survey portion. Of those 40 principals, 24 (60%) completed the survey with one respondent inexplicably answering "neither" to all questions other than the SES status, and one respondent not completing all survey questions (Appendix J).

Descriptive statistics revealed that there was not much variation among participant responses based on socioeconomic status. There were, however, several questions that elicited responses that were over 50% in the "agree" or "disagree" range (Appendix K) that have relevance to the principal interview responses. The questions are provided below with a description of relevance following each.

Q4: Even though the student assessment component of the TKES/LKES (a student growth component as a % of the TEM/LEM) will not be in effect until 2020, the awareness of that component currently has a significant impact on the ways I guide my teachers and administrators.

The answers to question 4 reveal that a majority of the principals surveyed claim that the impending growth measure that will be attached to teacher and leader evaluations in the year
2020 has a significant impact on the ways those principals guide teachers and administrators. The six principals interviewed, however, tended to downplay the level of engagement they had with the upcoming growth measure stipulation for various reasons including the idea that such a measure may never come to fruition.

Q7. The Georgia Milestones Assessment System (EOG/EOG assessments, grades 3-12) is a valuable educational tool.

Q8. My district leadership highly values my ability as a principal to raise the achievement component of my school's CCRPI.

Q9. I fully understand the scoring process that translates Milestone scores to my school's CCRPI score.

The survey results for questions 7, 8 and 9 appear to be in line with the general consensus of the principals interviewed, and it is worthwhile noting that the principals interviewed were very positive about the school districts' support related to the Milestone assessments and CCRPI data analysis.

10. The achievement component of my school's CCRPI score significantly impacts my daily work, my staff, and my community.

11. The achievement component of my school's CCRPI score is a valuable indicator of the quality of instruction provided by my staff.

While the difference between low and high SES schools for the answers provided for questions 10 and 11 may lack statistical significance, it is interesting to note that the higher SES schools tend to value the achievement component to a greater extent.
18. I have encountered philosophical dilemmas related to resource allocation or other strategies when attempting to satisfy or succeed at achievement goals related to the Georgia Milestone Assessment System.

19. I have encountered negative unintended consequences as a result of the implementation of the Georgia Milestone System and the TKES/LKES Assessment System.

Conversely, the lower SES schools also appear to encounter unanticipated consequences and philosophical dilemmas to a greater extent than higher SES schools in questions 18 and 19. These results are consistent with those found in the theme of "Scope" above particularly in the context of the "whole child."

16. I base instructional resource allocation decisions primarily on assessment score results.

17. School culture at my school is significantly impacted by the Georgia Milestone Assessment System.

Finally, the percentages related to questions 16 and 17 are interesting in that a majority of principals report that they do not base instructional resource allocation decisions on assessment results, nor does a majority report that the Milestone assessments have a significant impact on their school culture. The direct relationship between resource allocation and assessment results was a common feature of the results reported in the "Time," "Accountability," and "Scope" emic themes via cross analysis derived from the interviewed principals, although the discussions related to whole child instruction could explain the reluctance of surveyed principals to ascribe importance to those elements in the limited context of the questions.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore principals' lived experiences to reveal the extent to which those principals express functional value in the School Assessment Culture Phenomenon comprised of the Georgia Milestones Assessment System that is used to evaluate student, educator, and school success in these specific contexts: 1) student growth required in 2020 by the Teacher and Leader Keys Effectiveness Systems (TKES/LKES) and 2) student growth and achievement currently required by the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI). Principal perceptions expressed through an open-ended interview format revealed that principals question the functional validity of the current assessment system in the specific contexts listed above in the following ways:

1. Principals express concerns regarding the functional validity related to the concept of "student growth" when measured by the Georgia Milestones that do not accurately capture the full range of student knowledge nor the full range of teacher performance related to educating the whole child. Thus, Principals believe that to hold teachers accountable for that measure is problematic at best and unfair at worst.

   This concern is consistent with Kane's (2103) argument-based validity that would require justification of neoliberal's audit culture claims that the use of these assessments results in a positive outcome. While these assessments may be statistically accurate, their use in evaluating teachers is not valid since neither the full range of student achievement is captured nor is the full range of teacher performance included in the measure. This failure makes the use of the instrument invalid under this theory whatever the potential statistical accuracy of the measure may be since the instrument is being used in a vacuum without considering societal
influences and without determining what the consequences of the use if the instrument might be as suggested by Haertel (2013).

2. Principals expressed concerns with the functional validity of both the growth and achievement measures related to the Georgia Milestones as reported on the CCRPI for the primary reason that the scope of the Milestone Assessments System does not measure the needs of the whole child. In particular, principals expressed the following related concerns regarding these measures:

   a. One assessment on one day is not an adequate measure to truly assess a child.
   b. The growth measure is not fair since not all students have access to the same resources.
   c. Higher achieving students do not show growth as easily on the Milestone assessments since missing the range of error is so small that missing only one question can indicate low growth.
   d. Achievement scores are not as attainable for low SES schools as is growth.
   e. The EOC is a minimum competency assessment that does not allow higher-achieving students to fully express their range and level of knowledge.
   f. The stipulations related to the growth and achievement measures still encourage strategic resource allocation, or "gamesmanship," in order to maximize the potential for scoring well on the CCRPI instrument. This leads to feelings of frustration at not being able to utilize resources freely and equitably.

   Again, these findings are consistent with Kane's (2013) argument-based validity theory related to the use of these assessments in a manner that implies inclusivity where limited inclusivity is present. These findings are also consistent with the literature related to Wang, Beckett, & Brown's (2006) description of the narrowing effects that standards-based assessment
has on curriculum and what many consider to be a more expansive purpose for education beyond tracking progress for academic interventions. The frustration associated with the allocation of resources and the still-present efforts of gamesmanship are also in line with the reduction of the principal's role to a manager of procedures rather than a professional allowed to use judgement that is described by Holland (2004). The effects of assessments on various student populations such as low SES status and ethnic minorities as described by Lane (2012) is also a need expressed by principals in this study as a necessary function of schools particularly as it relates to issues surround student growth.

**Limitations of Findings**

The researcher recognizes the findings of this study are limited by the following ways:

1. While the small sample size of the six principal informants is well within the reasonable bounds of an interpretive phenomenological study (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009), those with a positivist view may perceive limited transferability of the findings to populations outside the participating district or even outside the state of Georgia where other accountability systems are utilized. Certainly, the extent to which certain states have fully implemented or withdrawn from the tenants of the neoliberal audit culture in comparison to Georgia could be a relevant factor to consider.

2. Researcher bias is a factor even in the presence of conscientious attempts by the researcher to bracket prior knowledge and constructs during the research of the topic.

3. The triangulation of data in the form of the Likert-type survey was too limited in scope to provide statistically significant results that might otherwise have bolstered the qualitative findings. It should be noted, however, that statistical results were not the aim
of this interpretive qualitative study however welcome they might be as a means of triangulation.

4. The principal informant pool consisted only of those principal in the upper and lower ranges of SES status. The views of principals with a population of students receiving free and reduced lunch ranging between 20% and 60% were not represented.

5. Considering the recent passage of Senate Bill 362, the researcher recognizes that there may be other measures beyond the researcher's political purview that may already be intended to address some of the issues raised by the principals at both the state and district level.

**Essence of the Phenomenon**

The essence of the neoliberal assessment culture in schools as experienced by principals in the conducted survey appears to be "dissonance," and this condition is a direct result of the collision of principals' expressed attitudes towards educational purpose, educating the whole child, and their lived experiences with the function of the mechanisms of the assessment culture in their schools related to that purpose. The necessity of dissonance is built into this relationship primarily through the narrowness of the scope of the Milestone Assessment EOG/EOC instruments whose achievement and growth measures not only fail to accurately capture the value educators add to the lives of their students but also take time away from those efforts. Based on the findings of this study, it seems that the changes made recently to the audit system have not only failed to ameliorate this dissonance but have exacerbated it instead through inconsistency and flux that angers and confuses principals and other stakeholders rather than addressing the essence of the phenomenon.
When considering the essence of this phenomenon, my mind kept returning to the business theory on which the current assessment culture is based with the cycles of improvement from Deming (Kohn, 1993) and the theory of constraints from Goldrat (Mabin & Balderstone 2003). While focusing on educators' ability to deliver instruction is a worthy goal, this effort will lead to little genuine effect on the dissonance created by the narrow scope of the Milestone assessments. In order to explain the essence of this phenomenon appropriately, a metaphor other than business is required, and a ready example may be found in the comparison of education to the practice of medicine. Through informative contacts in the medical field, including my personal conversations with Dr. John Bishop, M.D., Dr. Steven Tankerlsey, M.D., and Lisa Holtz, program manager with the Wellstar Hospital System, the comparison below is helpful in explaining why the essence of the assessment culture seems best expressed as dissonance.

Patients who enter the hospital come with individual health backgrounds driven by both heredity and environment that determine their health needs, many of which are driven by factors beyond the hospital's ability to manage or control; further, the condition of each patient determines the department to which that patient goes in order to receive the appropriate care. The emergency room may often receive critically injured patients, while another part of the hospital may only take in cancer patients and still another is for patients needing elective surgery. And so each patient falls within the parameters of a specific function and location of the hospital as each patient has a different health background and needs specific interventions. The health situation possessed by a patient when that patient walks into the hospital is often a significant factor related to the level of health and potential for a positive outcome when that patient leaves. This is why no reasonable person would evaluate the performance of an emergency room doctor dealing
with a patient critically injured in a car crash using the same standards with which one would evaluate a doctors' performance related to a long-planned, elective surgery.

So too, a school district has various schools into which students enter, and each comes with varying degrees of intellectual, cultural, social, and physiological circumstances determined by both heredity and environmental factors that directly impact their ability to learn, and many of these factors are beyond the ability of schools to control or manage. Just as hospitals have departments that deal with various health issues, so school districts have schools in geographic population zones divided along socio-economic lines with the attendant issues and advantages ascribed to each zone. Principals in this study relate that students in predominantly lower socioeconomic schools tend to bring with them issues such as single-parent households, two working parents, or the necessity that students also work at night which are issues directly related to learning inhibiting factors such as the ready availability of food, clothing, and even shelter (Slade & Griffith, 2013). Students in higher socio-economic schools often have the advantage of ready access to food, shelter, and clothing along with other advantages such as private after-school tutoring. No educator doubts these factors and their impact on student success; yet, teachers are held to the same achievement standards across all socio-economic boundaries.

The growth measure used in Georgia education today, by contrast, is more commensurate with the way in which medical professionals are evaluated. Teachers' success is based on student peer groups, and as a result, their success is thereby also based on the performance of their teaching peers who provide those students educational services. So too, emergency room doctors are evaluated based on the nature of their patients, their patients' medical needs and the performance of their fellow emergency room doctors in relation to those factors. Unfortunately, the analogy breaks down here since the scope of health evaluation in medicine is expanded to
include a wide variance in health conditions unlike the Milestone assessments whose narrow band of evaluation fails to encompass both the higher achieving and lowest achieving students according to principals in this study.

If a growth measure that truly captured the range of student ability existed in the Georgia Milestone Assessment System, and such a growth measure were the only form of evaluating educators, there would be logical parity with the expectations of medicine; however, such is not the case. Schools are evaluated on a growth and achievement measure in the form of the CCRPI that implies all students start at the same point, have equal ability and access to resources, and that the range of their students' ability is truly assessed. While a growth and achievement measure unrelated to the circumstances of the patient would be considered preposterous in the medical field, such a measure is widely utilized in education without thought due to the insistence on the efficacy of a business model.

**Implications of Findings for Educational Practice**

The implications of the findings of this study apply to both state and district policy-makers and local educators alike. For state-level policy makers, a re-evaluation of the basic assumptions regarding the structure and implementation of the Georgia Milestone Assessment System is suggested by the lived experiences expressed by the principals in this study. As mentioned previously, Georgia Senate Bill 362 (Georgia General, 2018) allows a pilot program for participating districts to develop their own assessments that align with state standards, and this is a good sign that legislators understand the limitations of the current system. Local district policy-makers who are given such an opportunity, however, should also understand the limitations of a single test on a single day as well as the limitations of a narrow assessment that purports to accurately assess both growth and achievement.
For local educators, including principals and teachers, the results of this study show evidence that the current system is not perceived by some principals as an accurate reflection of the work and dedication that Georgia educators exhibit daily. While not undermining the usefulness and efficacy of some form of accountability, educators currently working under this assessment system should work to inform each other and the public at large of the glaring issues that serve to misrepresent the actual benefit certain public schools provide to the society at large that are not reflected in the CCRPI score. As important is the understanding that schools at both ends of the socio-economic spectrum are limited in their effectiveness to serve the needs of their constituents when constrained by such a narrow measure as the Milestones.

At the end of analysis, there is a firm truth: principals view educational practice as more than a business, more than what a mere achievement assessment can measure. In the climate of accountability, numbers, and the illusion of certainty that such a system provides, this study suggests that all stakeholders should re-examine the basic tenants of the neoliberal audit culture with a more transcendent view. Education requires the practitioner to possess the trust and confidence that knowledge and compassion can make the world a better place, the irrepresible optimism that such a world can exist, and the innate desire to make such a world reality. The lived experiences of the principals in this study show that they hold true to these qualities, and it is these qualities that are in dissonance with the measurable, yet restricting qualities of the assessment culture.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Any recommendation of future research suggested by this study must include the idea of incorporating practicing educators in the process of developing evaluation and assessment systems for use in schools if functional value is considered an important factor. Implicit in such a
decision, however, is the understanding of what is actually valued in the practice of education. Although the words "whole child" are used in the explanations of the motivations relating to the latest iteration of the CCRPI instrument (Georgia, Overview, 2018), little is changed that goes to the heart of the issue related to the scope of the Milestone Assessments and the inequity of the opportunities among schools' student populations that are being compared. The following are questions that would further elaborate on concerns raised in this study:

1. Do K-12 principals across all SES levels in Georgia believe the Georgia Milestone Assessments are too narrow in academic scope to properly measure growth and achievement in their students?

2. Do K-12 principals across all SES levels find functional benefit in the Georgia Milestone Assessments considering the time constraints of both giving the assessments and receiving the results, the lack of consistency in the assessment and its attending policies, and scope of those assessments?

3. How do principals define the term "Whole Child" in the context of educational needs related to instruction and assessment?

4. To what extent do efforts by corporate entities to provide educational services drive the political effort to ensure that achievement standards remain a major factor in claims of educational success?

5. What assessment technologies exist, such as "Computer Adaptive Testing," that might broaden the scope of assessment and bring equity to the growth/achievement dilemma?
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APPENDICES

A E-mail from State Senator David Purdue

On Thursday, November 12, 2015 3:44 PM, Senator David Perdue <perdue_donotreply@perdue.senate.gov> wrote:

Dear Mr. Bishop:

Thank you for contacting me about the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). I always appreciate the opportunity to hear from my fellow Georgians.

On July 16, 2015, I supported the reauthorization of the ESEA by voting in favor of S. 1177, the "Every Child Achieves Act." This much revised version of the "No Child Left Behind Act" (NCLB) passed the Senate by an overwhelming margin of 81-17. The legislation effectively ends Washington's heavy-handed influence over our public K-12 education system and returns power to the state and local level where it belongs.

After much consultation with parents, teachers, and school officials, the Senate crafted S. 1177 to restore control and accountability to those who work directly with children. This legislation ends the federal mandate for the Common Core State Standards Initiative (Common Core) and dismantles the federal testing benchmarks put into place by NCLB. Under this reauthorization, the federal government cannot, under any circumstances, force states to adopt Common Core curriculum plans, and states do not have to use federally mandated standardized tests as their primary resource to measure academic achievement.

In addition, S. 1177 guarantees that schools are equipped with skilled teachers by prohibiting federal oversight of teacher qualification requirements. Instead, the reauthorization expands the authority of states and local school districts to allocate funds to teaching improvement programs designed to benefit the unique needs of districts.

My parents, and my wife Bonnie, were schoolteachers. I understand the importance of quality leadership in schools and wholeheartedly believe that parents and teachers know better than Washington about how to best educate children. I am very encouraged by the revisions that S. 1177 makes to NCLB and believe this legislation will lead our education system in the right direction.

Again, thank you for taking the time to talk to me about this important issue. The future of our nation lies in the hands of our children. I look forward to working with my colleagues to ensure every child receives a quality education, and I will keep your thoughts in mind whenever legislation regarding our public education system is discussed in the Senate.

Kindest regards,

David Perdue
United States Senator
B Anticipatory Data Reduction

Research Question: How do the dual goals of 1) student growth required by the TKES/LKES and 2) school achievement required by the CCRPI influence principals’ attitudes, concerns and actions as they prepare their students for the single measure of those goals, the Georgia Milestones assessments?

Perspective regarding TKES and LKES instruments
- How important do you believe a performance rating based on student assessment results is to the evaluation of an educator’s job performance?
- What impact does the student assessment component of the TKES and LKES have on teachers and your assistant principal(s) in their daily work?
- How would you change the student assessment component of the TKES and LKES to improve educational practice in your school?

Perspective regarding significance of CCRPI and Milestones
- To what extent do you value the Georgia Milestone Assessment System as an educational tool, and what is the educational philosophy that supports that stance?
- How important does your district leadership place on the importance of your ability to raise the achievement component of your CCRPI score as a function of your desires as principal?
- How well do you understand the scoring process that translates Milestone scores to your school’s CCRPI score, and in what ways, if any, would you change that scoring process?
- To what extent does your school’s CCRPI score impact your own daily work, your staff, and your community?

School-wide achievement goals and the strategies
- How does the student growth/achievement measure impact your approach to supervision of administrators and teachers?
- What factors do you consider when developing specific school-wide achievement goals?
- How are your decisions regarding the allocation of educational resources in your school impacted by the nature of the Georgia Milestones Assessment System and the CCRPI?

Evaluation of unintended consequences and Milestone paradigm effectiveness
- In your personal experience, how has school culture been affected by No Child Left Behind and subsequent efforts by Federal and State agencies to evaluate educational practice?
- What ethical dilemmas, if any, have confronted you at any point in your career as the result of student assessment and or school assessment?
- What do you perceive as unintended consequences, if any, of the Georgia Milestone Assessment System, the TKES/LKES assessment system, and the CCRPI school evaluation tool?
- How would you characterize both your intellectual and emotional attitude towards the ways in which assessment is being used in education today, and what is your prediction for the future of our current student, educator, and school evaluation systems?

Categories of analysis
- Perspective regarding TKES and LKES instruments
  - Thoughts and philosophy on educational practice that is reconciled with an essentialist “core.”
  - Specific activities and attitudes related to evaluation and documentation related to that evaluation.
  - Open-ended discovery of perceived flaws in evaluation system

- Perspective regarding significance of CCRPI and Milestones
  - Core beliefs about student learning associated with educational philosophy
  - Perceived pressure from district as immediate external source regarding performance
  - Specific information regarding what principal’s perceive as functional or flawed
  - Perceived pressure from internal sources within the school community including self-imposed pressure.

- School-wide achievement goals with strategies developed to meet those goals
  - Specific activities related to encouraging staff to fulfill achievement goals
  - Examples of goals and the motivations behind setting those goals
  - Specific strategies and what effect certain cut scores or district-wise school comparisons may have.
  - Specific information on how goals based on achievement results impact resource allocation

- Evaluation of unintended consequences and Milestone paradigm effectiveness
  - Specific philosophies and concerns related to the impact of Educational policy since NCLB.
  - Specific narratives regarding conflicts between altruism and audit necessities.
  - Specific examples of instances when strategies to fulfill State goals result in poor educational practice.
  - Elaborated intellectual philosophy of education and emotional relationship to current educational culture to determine parity or conflict.
C *Initial Interview Questions*

**Category 1: Perspective Regarding TKES and LKES instruments**

1. Can you describe one or two formal and or informal training experiences you have had regarding TKES and LKES evaluation systems? What was the atmosphere in the room, and how did the training make you feel about the instrument's viability to determine the efficacy of educational outcomes?
2. What interesting or influential experiences have you had (positive and/or negative) related to evaluating teachers using the TKES instrument? Within those experiences, what were the specific interactions with the teachers, and what were the specific outcomes?
3. What experiences have you had (positive and/or negative) related to evaluating administrators using the LKES instrument? Within those experiences, what were the specific interactions with the teachers, and what were the specific outcomes? How do you value those experiences?
4. Can you describe one or two experiences during your use of the TKES/LKES instruments where you had to explain or reconcile requirements or stipulations of these instrument in which you did not fully support or believe in yourself? If so, how did that make you feel? Do you have an analogous situation in careers or situations other than education that you have thought of or used to justify such support?
5. Did you ever encountered situations when using these instruments where you identified flaws within their construction or implementation by the district or state, and if so, can you please describe them? Can you describe what solutions to such problems or reactions by those to whom you engaged to solve such issues?
6. If you only had five words to describe your overall experience with the TKES/LKES evaluation system, what five words would you use?

**Category 2: Perspective regarding CCRPI and Milestones**

7. What experiences in education have you had that fundamentally influenced your educational philosophy?
8. What experiences with your district have you had during the implementation or management of the CCRPI and/or Georgia Milestones implementation?
9. Has there been any indication of urgency related to raising achievement scores as reported by the Georgia Milestones or the CCRPI? If so, describe the experience in terms of how you perceived the stakes related to improvement.
10. What experiences have you had that revealed portions of the CCRPI as functionally flawed in the sense that your educational setting has little or no control or influence over the outcomes reported?
11. What functional flaws exist in the Georgia Milestone Assessment system, if any, and how do those flaws impact you in your daily work?
12. If you only had five words to describe your overall experience with the CCRPI evaluation instrument, what five words would you use?
Category 3: School-wide achievement goals with strategies developed to meet those goals
13. What experiences have you had related to the CCRPI and Georgia Milestones that created the greatest sense of pressure for you and/or your staff to achieve improved scores?
14. Describe experiences with you administrative team or staff when you set achievement goals and include any discussions or perceptions related to the stakeholder motivations related to those goals.
15. What experiences have you had with any staff related to setting goals associated with "cut scores" where prior data is used to determine likely future outcomes.
16. What positive or negative experiences have you had when sharing data with staff for the purposes of informing or motivating change? If negative, what is your perception of the source of the negativity? If positive, what factors contributed to the positivity?
17. What experiences have you had where achievement goals directly impacted your decision making process related to resource allocation?
18. Have you ever been faced with a dilemma related to resource allocation that required you to weigh the options of providing resources equally to all students as opposed to devoting all or most of your resources to a specific group of students more likely to improve a desired achievement outcome?
19. If you only had five words to describe how you feel about the way achievement goals and strategies impact your experience as a school leader, what five words would you use?

Category 4: Evaluation of unintended consequences and Milestones paradigm effectiveness
20. What has been your experience with the evolution of student, educator, and school assessment systems throughout your career as an educator?
21. What experiences have you had that reveal a significant difference between your personal philosophy of education and that of Federal or State philosophies as revealed by accountability systems?
22. What experiences have you had that reveal parity between your personal philosophy of education and that of Federal or State philosophies?
23. Can you relate an experience or two where unintended consequences have occurred due to the implementation of an educational strategy related to growth and/or achievement goals?
24. What experiences have you had where you were required to implement a district policy related to assessment that you believed was ineffective and/or detrimental to student learning?
25. If you only had five words to describe the relationship between your own educational philosophy and that of the Federal or State government, what five words would you use?
## Co-Occurrence Analysis

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E  Network View of Initial Codes and Quotes
Etic Themes with Category Codes

- Achievement Strategies: data analysis (26-0)
- Achievement Strategies: Five Words (19-0)
- Achievement Strategies: Resource allocation (30-0)
- Achievement Strategies: Resource dilemma (11-0)
- Achievement Strategies: Teacher Response (21-0)
- Assessment Paradigm: Five words (14-0)
- Assessment Paradigm: negative outcomes (27-0)
- Assessment Paradigm: positive outcomes (9-0)
- Assessment Paradigm: Unintended/Ineffective/Consequences (20-0)
- CCRPI/Miles: Dist. Support (11-0)
- CCRPI/Miles: Ed Phil (23-0)
- CCRPI/Miles: Emotional Impact on Principal (29-0)
- CCRPI/Miles: External Stakeholder Concerns (19-0)
- CCRPI/Miles: Five Words (29-0)
- CCRPI/Miles: Functional Flaws (43-0)
- CCRPI/Miles: Internal Stakeholder Concerns (23-0)
- CCRPI/Miles: Pressure (26-0)
- T/LKES Actual Exp: Concerns (31-0)
- T/LKES Actual Exp: Positive (21-0)
- T/LKES General Use: Concerns (14-0)
- T/LKES General Use: Positive (6-0)
- T/LKES training: Concerns (7-0)
- T/LKES training: Positive (8-0)
- T/LKES: Five Words (25-0)
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#### Word Use Frequency Pie Chart

- **Time**: 28.1%
- **Account**: 11.2%
- **Measure**: 9.0%
- **Improving**: 6.3%
- **Pressure**: 5.5%
- **Move**: 5.0%
- **Standard**: 4.4%
- **Valid/Verify**: 2.1%
- **Adjust**: 2.1%
- **Collaborate**: 1.9%
- **Oversight**: 1.9%
- **Target**: 1.9%
- **Waste**: 1.9%
- **Opportunity**: 1.7%
- **Structure**: 1.7%

Use < 1%:
- **Benefit**: 1.1%
- **Inconsistent**: 1.1%
- **Confusing**: 0.8%
- **Represent**: 0.6%
- **Anxiety**: 0.6%
- **Nerve**: 0.5%
K Likert-type Survey Questions

Choices provided in the Qualtrics (2018) program for the questions below were as follows:
(1) Strongly disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Neither agree nor disagree; (4) Agree; (5) Strongly Agree

Category 1: Perspective Regarding TKES and LKES instruments related to the Teacher/Leader Effectiveness Measure (TEM/LEM)
1. An educator performance rating based on student assessment results (such as a student growth component as a % of the TEM/LEM) is a valuable measure of an educator's performance.
2. Even though the student assessment component of the TKES (a student growth component as a % of the TEM) will not be in effect until 2020, the awareness of that component currently has a significant impact on the ways my teachers conduct their educational practice.
3. Even though the student assessment component of the LKES (a student growth component as a % of the LEM) will not be in effect until 2020, the awareness of that component currently has a significant impact on the ways my administrators conduct their educational practice.
4. Even though the student assessment component of the TKES/LKES (a student growth component as a % of the TEM/LEM) will not be in effect until 2020, the awareness of that component currently has a significant impact on the ways I guide my teachers and administrators.
5. Keeping the student assessment component of the TKES and LKES instruments (student growth component as a % of the TEM/LEM) scheduled to be in effect in 2020 would improve educational practice in my school.
6. My overall attitude towards the student assessment component of the TKES and LKES scheduled to be in effect in 2020 is positive.

Category 2: Perspective regarding CCRPI and Milestones
7. The Georgia Milestones Assessment System (EOG/EOC assessments, grades 3-12) is a valuable educational tool.
8. My district leadership highly values my ability as a principal to raise the achievement component of my school's CCRPI.
9. I fully understand the scoring process that translates Milestone scores to my school's CCRPI score.
10. The achievement component of my school's CCRPI score significantly impacts my daily work, my staff, and my community.
11. The achievement component of my school's CCRPI score is a valuable indicator of the quality of instruction provided by my staff.
12. The student growth measurement of the Georgia Milestone Assessment System is more valuable to me when making educational decisions than the achievement portion of the CCRPI.
**Category 3: School-wide achievement goals with strategies developed to meet those goals**
13. Student performance on the student growth measure of the Georgia Milestone Assessment significantly impacts my approach to supervision of teachers.
14. Student performance related to the student achievement measure of the Georgia Milestone assessment negatively impacts my approach to supervision of teachers.
15. I develop achievement improvement strategies to influence overall achievement results rather than achievement results from one specific level to another – such as moving a level two student to a level three.
16. I base instructional resource allocation decisions primarily on assessment score results.

**Category 4: Evaluation of unintended consequences and Milestones paradigm effectiveness**
17. School culture at my school is significantly impacted by the Georgia Milestone Assessment System.
18. I have encountered philosophical dilemmas related to resource allocation or other strategies when attempting to satisfy or succeed at achievement goals related to the Georgia Milestone Assessment System.
19. I have encountered negative unintended consequences as a result of the implementation of the Georgia Milestone System and the TKES/LKES Assessment System.
20. I have a positive attitude about the way students, educators, and schools are evaluated through the various assessment systems such as the Georgia Milestones, TKES/LKES, and the CCRPI.
21. My school has a population of students that fall within the indicated range below:
   1. 0-19% Free and Reduced Lunch participants
   2. 20-60% Free and Reduced Lunch participants
   3. 61-100% Free and Reduced Lunch participants

140
### J Likert-type Survey Results - General

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## Likert-type Survey Results – Above 50% and SES

Survey results above 50% in either "Agree" or "Disagree" ranges. Range of "Agree" includes "Somewhat Agree," "Agree," and "Strongly Agree." Range of "Disagree" includes "Somewhat Disagree," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranges</th>
<th>HSES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q4 Agree 66.7%</td>
<td>Even though the student assessment component of the TKES/LKES (a student growth component as a % of the TEM/LEM) will not be in effect until 2020, the awareness of that component currently has a significant impact on the ways I guide my teachers and administrators.</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither 8.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree 25.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q7 Agree 79.2%</td>
<td>The Georgia Milestones Assessment System (EOG/EOC assessments, grades 3-12) is a valuable educational tool.</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither 4.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree 16.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q8 Agree 91.7%</td>
<td>My District leadership highly values my ability as a principal to raise the achievement component of my school's CCRPI.</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither 8.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree 0.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q9 Agree 79.2%</td>
<td>I fully understand the scoring process that translates Milestone scores to my school's CCRPI score.</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neither 8.3%</td>
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<td>16.7%</td>
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<td>16.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q10 Agree 75.0%</td>
<td>The achievement component of my school's CCRPI score significantly impacts my daily work, my staff, and my community.</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neither 4.2%</td>
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<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree 20.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q11 Agree 54.2%</td>
<td>The achievement component of my school's CCRPI score is a valuable indicator of the quality of instruction provided by my staff.</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neither 0.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree 45.8%</td>
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<td>16.7%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q16 Agree 37.5%</td>
<td>I base instructional resource allocation decisions primarily on assessment score results.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neither 8.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree 54.2%</td>
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<td>33.3%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q17 Agree 54.2%</td>
<td>School culture at my school is significantly impacted by the Georgia Milestone Assessment System.</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neither 25.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree 20.8%</td>
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<td>16.7%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q18 Agree 66.7%</td>
<td>I have encountered philosophical dilemmas related to resource allocation or other strategies when attempting to satisfy or succeed at achievement goals related to the Georgia Milestone Assessment System.</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neither 16.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disagree 16.7%</td>
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<td>33.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q19 Agree 58.3%</td>
<td>I have encountered negative unintended consequences as a result of the implementation of the Georgia Milestone System and the TKES/LKES Assessment System.</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neither 16.7%</td>
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