

THE EFFECTS OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM ON TEACHER  
ACADEMIC OPTIMISM AND COLLABORATION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS  
IN NORTH CENTRAL ALABAMA

by

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## ABSTRACT

Research on teacher academic optimism within the context of elementary schools is relatively scarce. This dearth of research is, in part, because teacher academic optimism is essentially a new construct; therefore, most studies have sought to confirm that academic optimism is a latent construct. The purpose of this study was to examine the links between participation in a collaborative partnership initiative, collaboration among teachers, and teacher academic optimism. Over the past ten years, the Alabama Legislature and the State Department of Education have made many efforts to bring about reform and positive change in schools. To date, there has not been any consistent empirical research exploring the effects of the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) in Alabama schools, an initiative that was designed to strengthen the instructional leadership within the school. Teachers within sixteen elementary schools within the Tuscaloosa City and the Tuscaloosa County school districts participated in the study. The rationale for this study was that because of the focus of the IPN program to increase leadership and collaboration among teachers and principals, and essentially to create a more collaborative working environment, both teacher collaboration and overall academic optimism among the teachers would increase because of participation in the program. The sample consisted of teachers from eight schools from Tuscaloosa City and teachers from eight schools from Tuscaloosa County. The participants completed a survey with questions used to measure academic optimism, collaboration, and perceptions of the Instructional Partnership Network program. It was found that while teacher academic optimism was not significantly higher in IPN schools as compared to non-IPN schools, perceptions about collaboration with colleagues was significantly higher in IPN schools as compared to non-IPN schools. Furthermore, there was a

statistically significantly positive correlation between teacher perceptions of the implementation of IPN and both academic optimism and teacher collaboration.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends who not only provided encouragement for me to complete this work, but who also provided emotional support when I needed it. A special thanks to my husband, Sean and our three daughters, Jarran, Jamilah and Jordan. Without them, this work might not have been completed.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

<i>df</i>	Degrees of freedom: The number of values that are free to vary after certain restrictions have been placed on data
<i>F</i>	Fisher's F ratio: A value that is computed using ANOVA that is a measurement of the departure from chance
<i>p</i>	Probability: The probability that is associated with the occurrence under the null hypothesis of a value as extreme as or more extreme than the observed value
<i>t</i>	T-value: The computed value of a t-test
<	<i>Less than</i>
>	Greater than

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **Overview**

This chapter introduces the background of the study, need and purpose, definition of concepts, statement of research questions, scope, and the limitations of this study. It lays out the plan to explore whether participation in the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) and the perception of the degree of implementation of the IPN are related to teacher academic optimism and collaboration in elementary schools in North Central Alabama.

### **Background of the Study**

Within many school districts, there exists a need for collaboration. The more principals routinely work with teachers on instructional improvement, the more likely principals are to share best practices and keep teachers connected to the core of their work (Goddard & Hoy, 2000). Recent calls for collaboration seem to be pressing for a more genuine sharing of decision-making authority, where principals and teachers jointly make decisions (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). An effective technique to connect with teachers and to help teachers bond with one another is to generate structures that inspire collaboration. Doing so may play an important role in helping teachers focus on instruction. When collaboration is absent and teachers work in isolation, little professional growth occurs (Pounder, 1999). Successful collaboration will require allocated time and specified goals or outcomes for each meeting of the collaborating team (Beard & Hoy, 2010).

There are a plethora of studies related to academic emphasis (Goddard, Sweetland, & Hoy, 2000; Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991; Shouse, 1996), teacher collective efficacy (Adams & Forsyth, 2006; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000, 2004), and faculty trust in parents and students (Hoy, Smith, & Sweetland, 2002; Smith, Hoy, & Sweetland, 2001). However, research on teacher academic optimism within the context of elementary schools is relatively scarce. This dearth of research is, in part, because teacher academic optimism is essentially a new construct; therefore, most studies have sought to confirm that academic optimism is a latent construct, as is demonstrated in the work of Beard and Hoy (2010). Thus, there is a need for further research on the factors that are associated with teacher academic optimism and collaboration. This study, then, will explore whether participation in the IPN and the perception of the degree of implementation in the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) are related to teacher optimism and collaboration in elementary schools in North Central Alabama.

### **Need and Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine the links between participation in a collaborative partnership initiative and both collaboration among teachers and teacher academic optimism. Over the past ten years, the Alabama Legislature and the State Department of Education have made many efforts to bring about reform and positive change in schools. The literature on school reform indicates that strong instructional leadership from the principal is a key to success (Keefe & Jenkins, 1991). To date, there has not been any consistent empirical research exploring the effects of the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) in Alabama schools, an initiative that was designed to strengthen the instructional leadership and collaboration within the school.

According to the IPN,

The Practice of Instructional Leadership involves efforts to be an effective instructional leader. . .one must engage in the following: (1) the development of a long-term curriculum evaluation and renewal calendar; (2) shared decision making and clear role expectations; (3) development and alignment of curricular goals; (4) written curriculum guides and scope and sequence charts; (5) the development of quality courses; (6) integrating fields of study and alignment process ensuring congruence between what is intended and what actually occurs; and (7) staff development. (Knight, 2011, p. 23)

Teacher academic optimism is individual teachers' beliefs that they can teach effectively, that their students can learn, and that parents will support them. As a result of these beliefs, the teacher may press the student to learn (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006). By doing so, teachers can set the higher standards and emphasize academics. Teacher academic optimism has the potential to help schools overcome the socioeconomic factors that may impede achievement (Hoy, 2002). Considering these points, this study will explore the extent to which participation in the IPN in elementary schools in North Central Alabama relates to collaboration practices and teacher academic optimism.

### **Definition of Concepts**

#### **Instructional Partnership Program**

The Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) for the Tuscaloosa City and County School Systems is defined as a partnership between teachers and principals to build the knowledge and skills of the teachers regarding professional practices and behaviors in order to help them improve student learning outcomes (Carpenter, 2012).

The instructional partnership network provides commitment to continuous learning to teachers and including openness to change, developing collaborative relationships with teachers and principals, focuses on adult learners, uses the maintenance of non-evaluative relationship

with teachers, developments and/or enhancement of teams and work across all grade-levels and content areas (Carpenter, 2012). The IPN will be discussed in this study in term of both “participation in the IPN” and “Implementation of the IPN”

### **Participation in IPN**

Participation in the IPN program was defined in this study as whether the teachers who took part in the study worked in schools that were part of the IPN program. Some of the teachers in this study worked in schools that were part of the IPN program. Other teachers, however, worked in schools in the same school districts that were not part of the IPN program.

### **Implementation of IPN**

The implementation of the IPN refers to the teachers’ perceptions regarding how faithfully the principal, teachers, and instructional coaches adhere to the policies, procedures and practices outlined in the IPN guidelines. The IPN program was meant to create an environment of partnership and teamwork among teachers and between teachers and principals (Carpenter, 2012; Knight, 2011). How well teachers and principals, and coaches work together in their schools to create an environment of teamwork and collaboration in relation to the goals and desired outcomes of the program was assessed using the IPN Scale.

### **School Academic Optimism**

Academic optimism refers to a school culture that is made up of collective efficacy, faculty trust in clients, and academic emphasis. Research has shown that these three factors combine to create a positive culture that is associated with high academic achievement despite the socio-economic status of the school (Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000, 2004; Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Hoy, 2002; Hoy, Tarter & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006; Hoy, Sweetland & Smith, 2002; Hoy & Hannum, 1997; Hoy, Tarter & Bliss, 1990; Hoy, Tarter & Kottkamp, 1991). In these studies academic optimism was viewed as a school property,



### **Teacher Academic Optimism**

Like school academic optimism, teacher academic optimism is comprised of three components: teachers' sense of efficacy, trust in clients (parents and students), and academic emphasis (Beard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2010). Here academic optimism is viewed as an individual characteristic which varies among teachers.

### **Teacher Collaboration**

Teacher collaboration is defined as the extent to which teachers work with other teachers, as well as how they perceive themselves to be involved and influential in school and classroom decision making with other teachers, as well as with the school's principal (Tschannen-Moran, 2001).

### **Socioeconomic Status**

Socioeconomic status (SES) of the school was assessed using a proxy variable; the percent free and reduced lunch (FRL) in the school. Schools with high FRL were conceived as having low SES and schools with low FRL were conceived as having a higher SES.

### **Statement of the Research Questions**

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a positive correlation between teacher perception of implementation of the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) and teacher academic optimism?
2. Is there a positive correlation between teacher perception of implementation of the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) and teacher collaboration?
3. Is teacher academic optimism higher in schools that participate in the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) than in schools that do not participate in the IPN?
4. Is collaboration higher in the IPN schools than in non IPN schools?

### **Scope and Limitations**

The study was limited to elementary school teachers in Tuscaloosa rural, suburban, and urban public school settings. There were 12 elementary schools in the Tuscaloosa City School District. There were 16 elementary schools in Tuscaloosa County School District. A total of 16 schools were invited to participate in the study, with six from the Tuscaloosa City School District and seven from the Tuscaloosa County School District agreeing to take part.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the need of this study, which was to explore whether participation in the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) and the perception of the degree of implementation relates to teacher academic optimism and collaboration in elementary schools in North Central Alabama.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Overview**

This chapter contains the conceptual framework that is used to guide the study, establishes theory, and provides the statement and rationale for the hypotheses regarding participation in the IPN and perception of implementation of the IPN as related to teacher academic optimism and collaboration.

#### **Conceptual Framework**

##### **Instructional Partnership Network**

The Instructional Partners Network (IPN) is a collaboration between the Alabama State Department of Education and the Alabama Best Practice Center (ABPC.) The purpose of the IPN is to maximize the work of the state-funded reading coach by shifting that role from a K-3 reading expert to an instructional coach, who is supported by district and regional content experts with the Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) and the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI). The Instructional Partnership Network works intensely with the coach, now called an Instructional Partner, and the principal to build knowledge and skills, and to help them develop the capacity of teachers and students (Carpenter, 2012).

In Alabama, there are five regional Instruction Partnership Networks (IPN): North Alabama, Central Alabama, Wiregrass, Southwest Alabama, and West Alabama. The IPN is supported by a Title II grant, participating regional inservice centers, and participating districts.

The IPN described several key anchors that define its program: (1) partnership at all

levels—classroom, school district, and state; (2) laser-like focus on student achievement; (3) use of instructional best practices; (4) common focus, including school-wide vision of effective teaching and learning; (5) committed and effective instructional leadership; (6) data-based decision making; (7) professional learning; (8) instructional coaching; (9) safe, distributed, collaborative culture; and (10) lateral support from colleagues using various sources of networking.

### **Academic Optimism**

Academic optimism is a construct that was created based on three specific properties that researchers have found to be highly important in student achievement: collective efficacy, academic emphasis on the part of the school, and faculty trust in students and parents (Hoy, Tarter & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006). Researchers have found that collective efficacy (Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000, 2004; Hoy, Sweetland & Smith, 2002), academic emphasis (Goddard, Sweetland & Hoy, 2000; Joy & Hannum, 1997; Hoy, Tarter & Bliss, 1990; Hoy, Tarter & Kottkamp, 1991), and faculty trust in students and parents (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Hoy, 2002) are individually important aspects of student achievement. However, when those properties are combined, the latent concept that is created, which is academic optimism, is strongly associated with student academic achievement when controlling for SES, past academic achievement, and demographic variables (Hoy, Tarter & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006).

Hoy, Tarter and Woolfolk Hoy (2006) argued that reciprocal causality exists between each of the three elements of academic optimism. In this way, collective efficacy impacts both academic emphasis and faculty trust in students and parents. At the same time, academic emphasis impacts faculty trust in students and parents and collective efficacy. Finally, faculty trust in students and parents impacts collective efficacy and academic emphasis. In this regard,

Hoy, Tarter and Woolfolk Hoy (2006) explained that each of the three elements impacts the larger culture of academic optimism that exists with a school.

For example, when teachers have a high level of trust in students and parents, they are more likely to work together and place a greater emphasis on academic standards and academic performance because they feel that they have support from parents for those higher standards. In contrast, if teachers do not feel as though they have the trust of students and faculty, then they are less likely to place a great deal of emphasis on academic standards, or work together in order to improve academic standards.

Thus, academic optimism considers the role of the cognitive, the behavioral, and the affective as they relate to academic success. More specifically, Hoy (2006) asserted that optimism was the overarching theme that united efficacy, trust, and academic emphasis because each of these elements contained a sense of the possible. Hoy and his colleagues continued to expand the initial theories related to academic optimism (Hoy, Tarter, Woolfolk Hoy, 2006a, 2006b) to better fit school models.

Moreover, Hoy and his colleagues theorized that these three elements of organizational characteristics essentially operated together to form “a single powerful force” which could explain school performance (Hoy, Tarter, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2006, p. 427). This force, academic optimism, was actually a collective belief among school faculty that not only the conditions for improved student performance exist, but student performance will increase (Hoy, 2006). These three dimensions of academic optimism will be reviewed in the following sections.

### **Collective efficacy**

Social cognitive theory in relation to the notion of human agency was the foundation for the development of collective efficacy (Bandura, 1986). Collective efficacy is a group application of the concept of self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1997) Self-efficacy is defined

as a person's belief that he could perform appropriate tasks that would result in the attainment of desired satisfaction.

Bandura (1997) stated that individuals with high self-efficacy are more likely to seek challenges, set higher goals, put forth higher levels of exertion to accomplish goals, and give up less easily. These characteristics are further reinforced by the supposition that humans make intentional choices based on beliefs of expected results (Bandura, 1997). Bandura's social cognitive theory's concentration on the belief of human agency was essential to the development of the construct of teacher efficacy.

Self-efficacy was derived from four sources of cognitive processing: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, social persuasion, and affective according to Bandura (1986). Mastery experiences are experiences in which an individual's effort produces positive outcomes. These types of experiences reinforce and strengthen desired individual behaviors. Bandura declared that mastery experiences have the greatest influence on beliefs of self-efficacy. Vicarious experiences are those in which people compare their expected outcomes to the outcomes of others through observations. Individuals can gain needed confidence or increased self-efficacy in their abilities by observing positive outcomes of others in similar situations (Bandura 1989). Social persuasion occurs when a person's belief that he or she can produce positive results is encouraged or motivated by a group.

Social persuasion can give a person the needed support to accept and attempt new challenges. Bandura (1997) also defined affective states as the emotions and/or feelings within an individual which affect the individual's willingness to engage in particular actions or behaviors. These emotions could be the product of stress, anxiety, or depression, which shifts focus away from desired tasks. According to Bandura (1997), it was established that individuals

with a higher sense of self-efficacy would accept new challenges, set more challenging goals, and be more determined to accomplish goals.

Bandura (1997) stated that groups of individuals can develop collective beliefs and behavior characteristics about their shared purpose and accomplishments. He stressed that this organizational belief in the group's ability to accomplish organizational goals was collective efficacy. Also, Bandura acknowledged that while self-efficacy and collective efficacy are similar in sources, function, and processes they are distinct constructs. Collective efficacy in schools is found in the collective belief of teachers that their actions can and will impact student achievement (Goddard et al., 2004; Hoy et al., 2006; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Bandura (1993) discovered that schools that exhibited a strong sense of collective efficacy performed at higher rates than those schools that had lower rates of collective efficacy. Furthermore, Goddard, Hoy, and Woolfolk Hoy (2000) and Hoy, Sweetland, and Smith (2002) performed more studies in which collective efficacy was the main variable. Their studies revealed that student achievement could be explained by collective efficacy. Likewise, collective efficacy was a stronger determinant than SES or academic emphasis.

Hoy, Tarter, and Woolfolk Hoy (2006) established a positive relationship among student performance and three types of efficacy beliefs. These links were established in the self-efficacy beliefs among students (Pajares, 1994, 1997), self-efficacy beliefs among teachers (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), and the collective efficacy beliefs of teachers about the school (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000).

Ross and Gray's (2006) research provides continued support for Hoy and Woolfolk (1993), who determined a teacher's sense of efficacy is increased through accomplishment of daily tasks that are viewed as meaningful. Therefore, it is incumbent upon school leadership to

foster school climates that build teacher collective efficacy, which will, in turn, have a positive impact on student success and overall school performance (Hoy et al., 2006).

### **Academic emphasis**

Hoy (2006) stated that the extent to which a school strives for academic excellence and high academic achievement is the academic emphasis of the school. This denotes that the school has set high achievable goals, there is a serious and orderly learning environment, and there is high student motivation for academic success (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991). Academic emphasis is often identical with academic press, achievement press, and academic rigor. Academic emphasis is an organizational attribute that is rooted in the perceptions of the individuals of the organization. Goddard et al. (2000), stated that the beliefs of the group exceed the beliefs of the individuals and exhibit special characteristics. Another way of thinking about this is that individuals will be influenced by the beliefs of the larger group. A strong sense of academic emphasis within a school will put demands on students to succeed, and on teachers to expect high achievement (Goddard et al., 2000).

Academic emphasis has been reliably measured by a subtest of the Organizational Health Inventory (Hoy & Tarter, 1997). A number of studies have validated that academic emphasis of a school is significantly related to student achievement when controlling for SES (Goddard et al., 2000; Hoy & Sabo, 1998; Hoy et al., 1991). One study (Licata & Harper, 1999) found that a healthy school-level emphasis on academics had a significant effect on the overall health and environmental robustness of the school. The results have held in varying school levels and regardless of method—regression, structural equation modeling, or hierarchical linear modeling. In fact, Wang (1995) conducted an analysis of twenty school-effects studies and academic emphasis was one of six characteristics most cited as effective school factors contributing to student success.



In a study of academic emphasis and achievement, Lee and Bryk (1989) discovered that a school's academic focus was linked to student achievement regardless of Socioeconomic (SES) and minority status. The study also found that there was less distribution of achievement among races in schools that had orderly and disciplined learning environments.

Also, academic emphasis was focused on as a component of healthy school climate (Hoy et al., 1991; Hoy & Sabo, 1998; Hoy & Tarter, 1997). According to Hoy and Hannum (1997), the organizational climate of a school is "the set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another" (p. 291). These internal characteristics are measured by the Organizational Health Inventory (OHI). This instrument measures the six dimensions of organizational school climate, which includes academic emphasis.

Moreover, Hoy and his colleagues' (1991) examination of school climate research discovered that the actions of principals can have significant, although indirect, influence on student learning. Through the development of orderly and disciplined learning environments, placing a strong emphasis on academic accomplishments and successes, and fostering high performance goals for students, principals can influence student achievement (Hoy et al., 1991). Goddard et al., (2000) affirmed that school climates that exhibit a strong academic emphasis would have normative effects that strengthen teaching, learning, and student achievement. Their hypothesis was that schools with high academic emphasis have norms of higher expectations for student achievement that are all-encompassing and thoughtful; the organizational climate will force members to strive to meet the high expectations for academic success (Goddard et al., 2000). In this study, it revealed that academic emphasis is positively related to differences in student achievement and reading and math when controlling SES.

This study also established the philosophy that academic emphasis fosters student academic success by establishing an instructional environment where teachers attempt to work with purpose to improve student learning (Goddard et al., 2000).

### **Faculty trust in students and parents**

Faculty trust in students and parents is a group belief within schools that operates from an open and healthy school climate and has a positive influence on the success and effectiveness of the school (Goddard et al., 2001; Hoy et al., 1990; Tarter et al., 1989; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998, 2000). Many researchers have argued trust is an essential school characteristic that influences student learning (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Goddard et al., 2001; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Bryk & Schneider (2002) conducted a decade of a rigorous case study research and longitudinal statistical analyses from more than 400 Chicago elementary schools. The authors spent roughly four years in 12 different school communities observing school meetings and events; conducting interviews and focus groups with principals, teachers, parents, and community leaders; observing classroom instruction; and talking to teachers about the progress and problems in their reform efforts (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). In this study, it was noted that improvement in a school's contribution to student learning is a direct measure of its changing academic productivity. By joining evidence on the schools' changing academic productivity with survey results on school trust over a long period of time, they were able to document the powerful influence that such trust plays as a resource for reform (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Byrk and Schneider (2002, p. 28) described the relationship between parents and school professionals as mutually dependent and vulnerable. As with the formation of teacher trust, parent trust of the school and principal, rooted in discernments about the intentions and behaviors of school professionals ultimately translate into shared parent norms about school and

principal trustworthiness (Forsyth, et.al, 2005). To the extent that these norms are positive, a palpable, supportive environment emerges, boosting confidence of teachers and principals that educational goals are achievable.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) wrote that research on organizational trust ascended from the cold war era in which psychologists and philosophers considered the nationwide phenomenon of distrust and detachment from the governmental establishment among young adults. It was the effective schools research that introduced us to the idea of trust between schools and families, but this research did not clearly establish the link between schools, student achievement, and school-parental relationships (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986).

The development of trust in schools by Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) was derived as a construct through a series of studies that examined faculty trust in principal, colleagues, and students and parents. Trust is defined as a person's willingness to be vulnerable to another based upon the confidence that the other party is benevolent, reliable, competent, open, and honest (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

After concluding a widespread review of the literature on trust, they established six facets of trust: willingness to risk vulnerability, benevolence, reliability, competence, honesty, and openness. This led to defining trust as "a willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open" (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 429). The facets of trust are described in the following paragraphs.

Vulnerability is the "willingness to be vulnerable". It is a necessary condition for trust, because people do not have a need to trust anyone to whom they are not vulnerable (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Vulnerability is a reliance on the actions of others and a belief that those

actions will not be detrimental, but favorable to the vulnerable party (Hoy et al., 2005). There is an existence of trust when the vulnerable party acts in spite of recognized vulnerability.

Benevolence is the belief that a person's interests will be protected (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) assert that benevolence is one of the most common aspects of trust. The absence of benevolence will cause teachers to be distrustful rather than supportive (Hoy et al., 2005).

Reliability is defined by Butler and Cantrell (1984) as a belief that one can count on others to follow through with their commitments. According to Mishra (1996), having trust in someone is the confidence that he or she will perform as we expected them. We can depend on those we trust to do as they say they will.

Competence is a person's ability to complete expected tasks properly within certain standards (Hoy et al., 2005). Trust instills a belief that a person can meet our expectations of performance of responsibilities.

Honesty is a crucial prerequisite of trust. Hoy and colleagues (2005) stated that when actions and intentions are united, honesty, character, and integrity are exposed. The actions and words of a person must be aligned (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Openness is the degree a person is willing to share and be vulnerable. Those who exhibit the characteristics of being open display a vulnerability to others, which fosters trust from others (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

The importance of these facets of trust will vary based on individuals and circumstances. According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000), there are a number of organizational characteristics that influence trust in organizations. Some of these are structures, policies, leadership, and culture (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999).

Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) recognized that schools that displayed an elevated level of faculty trust in students and parents also revealed higher levels of shared decision-making with both faculty and parents.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) continued this inquiry by exploring the connection of trust in schools to communication, collaboration, school climate, organizational citizenship, and proliferation of rules. They recommended that schools that exhibited a climate of open, honest communication would be high in trust. They also hypothesized that principals who demonstrated trust in teachers through decision-making processes would also increase all aspects of trust in a school.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) studied trust as a collective school trait that explained the degree to which teachers, as a whole, displayed the many facets of trust. From this research they developed an instrument to measure trust as a school characteristic that positively related collective teacher efficacy and academic achievement.

Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) finalized a massive study of trust in schools linking faculty trust in students and parents to school effectiveness and student achievement in reading and math. The researchers posited that trust demonstrated itself in a variety of ways in the relationship among teachers, students, parents, and school administrators. Some aspects of trust that affect these relationships were trust helps facilitate open and honest communication and aids decision-making and problem-solving processes; trust protects students and parents from the vulnerability of misunderstanding or confusion; trust reduces confusion; trust reduces tension, suspicion, and resentment; lack of trust increases the likelihood that rules may be needed to sustain order. This study established an indirect link between faculty trust and student achievement through collective efficacy even when controlling for SES.

As researchers work to conceptualize ways to access their teachers' belief and dispositions the challenges in the classroom, a new construct, academic optimism, is emerging from research on positive psychology, optimism, social capital and collective school properties that make a difference in achievement for all students (Beard, 2008).

One of the first studies of academic optimism (Hoy et al., 2005) was a confirmatory factor analysis that revealed the structure and composition of the construct within elementary schools. The research included 146 Ohio elementary schools with 3,400 teachers participating. In this study, academic optimism was defined as the strong emphasis on subject matter being taught combined with the belief that the school working together can achieve success because there is trust in students and parents to follow through on their commitments. The data used in the study consisted of the academic emphasis subscale of the Organizational Health Inventory (Hoy et al., 1991; Hoy & Miskel, 2008; Hoy & Tarter, 1997) to measure the academic emphasis of the school. Collective efficacy was measured using the 12- item Collective Efficacy Scale (Goddard et al., 2000). Faculty trust was measured by the Omnibus Trust Scale (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). The final analysis established that academic optimism is a combination of teacher collective efficacy, academic emphasis, and trust in clients when controlling for Socioeconomic (SES).

The following study by Hoy et al. (2006), a confirmatory factor analysis confirmed the construct of academic optimism in high schools. This study also verified that academic optimism had a positive and direct effect on school student achievement in both math and science controlling for Socioeconomic (SES), population density, and previous student achievement. The schools included urban, suburban, and rural schools which were assigned a value for urbanicity based on population density. Operationally, the same instruments from the previous study were

used to measure academic emphasis, collective efficacy, and faculty trust in students and parents. As theorized, academic optimism was positively related to achievement. The researchers discovered in their study that learned optimism is an individual variable, but academic optimism is a collective property by which a school working together can gain greater achievement for each individual student. A group laboring together and believing in a high but achievable outcome can raise even the lowest schools up in status.

Another study on academic optimism (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006) focused on enabling school structure by examining what principals can do to cultivate a culture of academic optimism in secondary schools. Harmonious with the preceding two studies, academic optimism was identified as a general construct composed of academic emphasis, collective efficacy, and faculty trust. Academic optimism was also directly related to school achievement even when controlling for SES. Furthermore, it showed that principals who created school structures in which the rules, policies, and procedures enabled teachers and enhanced the learning mission of the schools had cultures of academic optimism.

Smith and Hoy (2007) researched inner city schools in Texas consisting of 99 elementary schools academic optimism with the effects of urbanization. All of the schools in this study were located in and around districts with populations over 650,000. As in the previous studies, academic optimism proved to be a general construct composed of teacher collective efficacy, faculty trust in clients, and academic emphasis. Also, academic optimism explained student achievement in mathematics, even controlling for SES and school size.

Hoy and his colleagues continued their focus on academic optimism adding further confirmation that academic optimism is also an individual teacher concept with essentially the same structure as school academic optimism (Beard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2010). Teacher

sense of efficacy, trust in students and parents, and academic emphasis are the three personal components that combine to form the construct of teacher academic optimism and all three of these elements interact and reinforce one another (Beard et al., 2009). Their results also gave credence to the notion that teachers' sense of trust in both parents and students is a unified construct called teacher trust in clients. However, teacher trust in parents consistently loaded higher than teacher trust in students, which supports Bryk and Schneider's (2002) claim that teacher-student trust in elementary schools operates primarily through teacher-parent trust. Academic optimism, at both the school and individual levels, consisted of cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors of optimism merging into a single integrated construct.

Kirby & DiPaola (2011) studied the relationships among academic optimism, community engagement, and student achievement in urban schools across one district. Data was collected from all 35 urban elementary schools across one district in Virginia. The researchers' findings indicated that in schools where the faculty are optimistic that their students can succeed despite the obstacle of low SES and where the community is engaged, students are more likely to achieve at higher levels. The study also supported the community engagement, collective efficacy, trust in clients and academic press did not act as predictors to collectively influence student achievement.

Bevel & Mitchell (2012), studied the relationship between academic optimism (AO) and elements of reading achievement. The findings revealed that academic optimism was positively correlated with reading achievement as were all t components of academic optimism, collective efficacy, faculty trust and parents and academic emphasis. However, SES using free and reduced lunch was negatively correlated with all the variables. This study confirms prior studies that have



found academic optimism to be linked to achievement and further demonstrate the positive relationship between academic optimism and reading achievement in a sample of elementary.

Wu, Hoy & Tarter (2013) tested the theory of academic optimism in Taiwan elementary schools and expanded the theory by adding new variables, collective responsibilities and the enabling school structure model. The findings indicated that the two concepts added to the model, enabling structure and collective responsibilities both of which had significant indirect effects on student achievement through academic optimism. Also, the study discovered that the theoretical foundations (efficacy, trust, and academic emphasis) of the latent construct of academic optimism were confirmed again in the schools in Taiwan.

In a more recent study, Mitchell & Tarter (2016) tested the effects of the principal's professional orientation towards leadership/enabling school structure with two mediating variables, school academic optimism and professional teacher behavior. Data consisted of 45 elementary schools and 9 middle schools. The study also included two controlled variables, school level and SES. The findings suggest confirmed that school academic optimism as an important influence on reading achievement and the importance of enabling school structure in establishing a context in which academic optimism and professional teacher behavior can thrive.

### **School Academic Optimism**

The academic optimism of schools grew from wide-ranging efforts on positive psychology, which extended outside the traditional concentration on pathology to examine the school connection in terms of optimism and gratification (Hoy, 2012). School academic optimism is comprised of cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. These components—teacher efficacy (cognitive), teacher trust in students and parents (affective), and teacher academic emphasis (behavioral) —interrelate with each other to generate a constructive force for positive educational outcomes. Collective teacher efficacy is the perception of teachers in a

school that the efforts of the faculty as a whole will have a positive effect on students. Collective efficacy is a belief or expectation; it is cognitive. Faculty trust in students and parents is based on the willingness of teachers to collaborate with students and their parents based on beliefs that they are benevolent, reliability, competent, honest, and open (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Trust is an affective response. Academic emphasis is a focus on learning and a press for particular behaviors in schools that encourage high academic achievement. Thus, academic optimism is conceived as a triadic set of interactions with each element.

These mechanisms are not only equivalent in essence and purpose but also in their potential and positive impacts on student achievement. Hoy et al. (2006) suggested that these three factors worked together to generate a positive academic setting, which they defined as the academic optimism of a school. Moreover, Hoy et al. (2006) presented that academic optimism in a school has an impact on school achievement, even when social and financial factors are taken into account. Additional studies have also maintained that academic optimism is associated with student achievement in inner-city and elementary schools (Smith & Hoy, 2007).

### **Teacher Academic Optimism**

A similar theoretical framework has been used to describe academic optimism at the teacher level. Teacher academic optimism is a construct that is comprised of three elements of academic optimism, are a sense of efficacy to be effective in the classroom, trust in both parents and students, and academic emphasis to require a high level of work and performance from students (Beard, Hoy & Woolfolk Hoy, 2010).

### **Teacher Academic Emphasis**

Teacher academic emphasis has been defined as a school's motivation towards academic excellence. High, yet attainable, goals are set for students, the environment is orderly, students

are motivated, and students respect academic achievement (Hoy & Miskel, 2005; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991).

The academic emphasis has relation with the aspects of behavior, teacher's collective efficacy, cognitive and academic trust of the parents and students with emotional aspect (Hoy, Tarter, & A. Hoy, 2006). Academic emphasis is the norm and behavior description of the school environment at the level of class as well as school level (MacGuigan & Hoy, 2006). The academic emphasis depends on this that how much the school has considered the progress and academic success part of its goals; at these conditions the goals are very good but are achievable for the students, learning environment is regular and serious, the students are with high motivation to try hard and academic achievement are important to them. Academic emphasis is a central behavior that would lead into encouraging to academic success of the students (Hoy, Tarter, & A. Hoy, 2006). Academic progress of the students is located at the main core of academic emphasis so that it emphasizes on the success and progress of all the students even the students having problem with the traditional classroom structure. The teachers create a student-centered educational environment in where risk taking is promoted (Hoy et al., 2008). Teachers with a human approach deal with the discipline in the classroom and effectively promote the optimism and flexibility and self-determination of the students. The classroom that is based on the student-centered factor has emphasis on the interests, abilities, knowledge and needs of the students. It would create more positive relationships so that students are willing to help each other. So the academic emphasis is based on the behaviors that would lead into the success of the students, valuing the hard work and learning. Collective self-efficacy of teachers has root at the self-efficacy theory of Bandura. Teachers believe that they have the skills needed to help students to achieve their educational goals and create change in learning.

Marzano (2001) conducted a large meta-analysis study of several school-effects research that led to a list of nine factors related to positive school reform. “Pressure to achieve,” “time” (referring to time on task and time in quality instruction, and “monitoring” (referring to the consistent evaluation of student learning and goal obtainment) were three of the most highly correlated variables (Marzano, 2001, p. 50).

### **Teacher Trust in Clients**

Research by Bryk and Schneider (2002) concluded that trust among teachers, parents, and students created schools that were more apt to experience substantial gains in student achievement in comparison to schools with weak trust relationships which saw little to no increase in student achievement scores. After conducting a meta-analysis of several leadership research pieces, Fullan, Bertani, and Quinn (2004) also addressed the issue of trust. They listed trust as one of ten crucial components to a successful school. “Low-trust cultures do not have the capacity to engage in the great effort and difficult work of improvement. High-trust cultures make the extraordinary possible, energizing people and giving them the wherewithal to succeed under enormously demanding conditions and the confidence that staying the course will pay off” (Fullan et al., 2004, p. 45). Clearly, these elements of academic optimism have been shown crucial to school improvement and student achievement.

If teachers trust their students—that they have the capability to benefit from teachers’ efforts, they have openness to learn from the educational experiences and they are honest, it is only then a trusting (between teacher and student) relationship is nurtured. If teacher trust their students only then they are able to set high expectations for students and look up to parental support in their quest (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Forsyth, Barnes, and Adams (2005) found that a trusting environment is predictive of internal school conditions and consequences. Trust appears to be very important for developing positive relationships with the students. If a teacher

trusts students, it helps in creating an environment where students are more likely to challenge their (own) capabilities and learn from their previous errors. According to Adams, Forsyth, and Mitchell (2009) this influences students' academic achievement and often makes parents think that the best interest of the students keeps the teachers motivation high to work harder.

### **Teacher Self-Efficacy**

Teacher self-efficacy has been identified as one teacher trait coupled with student achievement (Woolfolk Hoy & Weinstein, 2006). The three elements of teacher academic optimism are functionally reliant on one another. Teacher trust in parents and students fosters a sense of teacher efficacy, and a sense of teacher efficacy develops and strengthens trust. Subsequently, when the teacher trusts parents, they set high academic standards with the confidence that they will not be challenged by the parents, and high academic standards in turn reinforce the teacher's trust. Therefore, when a teacher believes she or he has the capability to effect student achievement positively, the teacher stresses upon high standards of academic achievement which in turn enhances the teacher sense of efficacy. All the elements of academic optimism interact with each other to create teacher sense of academic optimism. Furthermore teacher self-efficacy, trust in parents and students and academic emphasis are considered as cognitive, affective and behavioral dimension of the construct of academic optimism.

### **Collaboration**

Collaboration is increasingly extolled as an important feature in the management of excellent schools (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). For several years, researchers and instructional specialist have encouraged teacher collaboration in school settings (Friend & Cook, 2009). This assumption is a reasonable one, given that teachers are experts who are acquainted with the ways in which their students function and how they learn. Through teacher preparation programs and a number of professional growth opportunities and field work with their students, teachers gain

exceptional knowledge about instructional and classroom organization methods. To make the most of openings for knowledge dispersion and innovation, teachers should be closely involved in collaborating in educationally-related matters that pertain to advances in student results (Goddard, 2010).

Collaboration is a practice greatly stressed by the professional learning communities model, though there are varying systems schools utilize to achieve teacher collaboration. According to Hord (1997), a professional learning community as a collegial group of faculty and staff who are united in their commitment to student learning. Hord writes that professional learning communities contain these characteristics: supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice (Hord, 1997).

Seashore and her colleagues further state that by using the term professional learning community we signify our interest not only in discrete acts of teacher sharing, but in the establishment of a school-wide culture that makes collaboration expected, inclusive, genuine, ongoing, and focused on critically examining practice to improve student outcomes. ...The hypothesis is that what teachers do together outside of the classroom can be as important as what they do inside in affecting school restructuring, teachers' professional development, and student learning. (Seashore, Anderson, & Riedel, 2003, p. 3)

In essence, collaboration is a constructivist, inquiry-based practice for adult learners. A collaborative school culture allows for "the possibility of individual transformation as well as the transformation of the social settings within which individuals work" (Grossman, et al., 2001, p. 948). Meirink, Meijer, and Verlopp (2007) also find that collaborative settings such as the professional learning community are preferred in most schools as a forum to facilitate the

exchange of ideas and to assist in the formulation of common instructional designs and assessments (p. 146). Meirink et al., (2007) cites Fishman, Marx, Best, and Tal's (2003) research that points to the understanding that "teacher learning is often conceptualized as a change in cognition (knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, emotions) that can lead to changes in teaching practice" (Meirink et al., p. 147). Langer and Colton (2005) say that one result of teacher collaboration is "collective efficacy," (p. 25) whereby teachers take on the belief that they can make a positive impact on instructional practice and student learning together.

Robbins and Alvy (2003) indicated that schools with effective collaboration models focus ultimately on student learning. When the genuine collaboration exists in a school, there is a shared responsibility for all facets of learning, from designing curriculum to diagnostically assessing students' learning needs. Because true collaboration takes time to develop, many schools have varying levels of implementation of effective collaboration, which has varying levels of effect on student learning. (Robbins & Alvy, 2003). Hargreaves and Dawe (1989) define four levels of collaborative structures within schools:

- Fragmented individualism—the traditional form of teacher isolation
- Balkanization—consisting of subgroups and cliques operating as separate subentities
- Contrived collegiality--leading to a proliferation of unwanted contacts among teachers that consume already scarce time with little to show for it
- True collaborative cultures—deep personal enduring cultures central to teachers' daily work (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 141).

Within collaborative groups, there are three key features that demonstrate promise in supporting teacher learning and changing classroom practice:

1. Collaboration in the intellectual work of teaching. Teachers engage over the school year in cycles of ‘ . . .planning, enacting, and reflecting upon one’s teaching’ (Palinscar et al., 1998, p. 10) Teachers become accepting of new practices as they try them out in a supported and safe context and observe the results in their own and each other’s classrooms (Guskey, 2002).
2. A common orientation to teaching and learning. Teachers work with a body of concepts and principles related to their content area and come to some shared understanding of those concepts and how to apply them (Louis et al., 1996; Palinscar et al., 1998).
3. Sharing of expertise. Teachers make available to one another their specialized content knowledge and ‘pedagogical content knowledge,’ instruction approaches for facilitating students’ learning of the content (Palinscar et al., 1998; Thomas, Grossman, Myrhe, & Woolworth, 1998; Little, 2002a; Sherin, 2002) (ctd. in Hindin et al. (2007, p. 352-353).

Because learning is a social process, the collaborative context of interactive planning and reflecting upon student outcomes is even more important (Lieberman & Mace, 2008).

Lieberman and Mace (2008) assert that teachers learn through “practice (learning by doing), through meaning (learning as intentional), through community (learning as participating and being with others), and through identity (learning as changing who we are)” (p. 227).

Collaboration allows teachers an opportunity to come together in an attempt to increase practice, and through this effort to assist novice educators, many veteran teachers also find a renewed interest in their craft, which may have been flagging or on the verge of burnout prior to the experience. The formation of teacher teams, such as those required by collaborative



professional development models, serves to combat the sense of frustration and feelings of isolation that grow when teachers do not have supportive and reflective collaborative partners.

### **Principal Collaboration**

Modern advances in national responsibility standards and shifting demographics in schools have encouraged boards of education, school systems, and researchers to place increasing pressure on principals to be actively involved in the instructional supervision of teachers (Hallinger, 2003, 2005). In fact, studies have shown that instructionally motivated transformational leadership influences the teachers' instructional practices (Goddard et al., 2010). Extensive research has pointed to the significance of teacher association to students' learning, educational practices, and variances among schools in academic achievement (Goddard, 2007).

Expert principals know how to construct processes in which important decisions are made through collaboration. Collaborative decision making process with potential benefits of higher quality decisions and greater ownership and implementation of decisions, but it also can be costly in terms of time and energy, with no guarantee that potential benefits will be realized.

Hoy and Tarter (1995) have developed a model to guide administrators in issues of who to include in decision making. It is based on the proposition that there are some decisions that subordinates will accept with question because they are indifferent to them.

The principal's role is critical in the development of a collaborative culture that empowers teachers (Sui, 2008). Research reports that a principal must be seen as an instructional leader at the school site for change to be effected; thus the school leader is a key indicator in determining whether or not implementing a collaboration model will be effective (Chance & Segura, 2009). Robbins and Alvy (2003) further underscore the principal's role in establishing a collaborative community of learners. School leaders must promote trustful, honest

relationships with faculty members in order to establish a culture that satisfies the adult learner's "innate needs and desires to improve, grow, and learn" (p. 101). School leaders must establish an urgency for teachers who are engrained in their classroom lives to partake in continuous, collegial collaboration. In essence, with all of the research and assistance available, it is the duty of school leaders to develop a clearly focused collaboration plan that fits the culture of the school, the demands of the community, and the needs of the students and teachers.

### **Teacher Collaboration**

Prior research revealed a link between teacher collaboration and an increase in academic performance for students (Goddard et al., 2007; Louis et al., 2009). For instance, Goddard, Goddard, and Tschannen-Moran (2007) conducted a survey of elementary school teachers and concluded that, after monitoring for student characteristics and school social environment, teacher collaboration for academic development is a positive predictor of variances among schools in student achievement. This research established a direct link between teacher collaboration and student achievement. These findings suggest that, in schools where the principal provided shared instructional leadership, higher rates of teacher collaboration occurred. Further, where teachers spent more time collaborating on instruction, student learning increased. Finally, school leaders had an indirect but statistically significant impact on student achievement.

The study of teacher collaboration is grounded in the theory of situated learning, which describes learning as "an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice" (Lave & Wenger, 1991; p. 31). Education researchers have pointed to the isolation of teachers in independent, rather than interdependent, practice as a barrier to realizing the potential of teachers' work (Little, 1990; Pounder, 1998), with Little, Gearhart, and Kafka (2003), noting that the "culture of isolation, privacy, and noninterference prevents teachers from getting around to the hard work of improving instruction" (p. 188

According to The Teacher Collaboration Improvement Framework (TCIF), designed by Gajda and Koliba (2008) out of their research and work with the Vermont State Department of Education, identified six key action steps in effective teacher collaboration models:

- (a) Raise collaboration literacy
- (b) Identify and inventory communities of practice
- (c) Reconfigure teacher teams
- (d) Assess quality of collaboration
- (e) Make corrections
- (f) Recognize accomplishments (p. 135).

DuFour and Eaker (1998) point out that effective collaboration models “do not emerge spontaneously or by invitation” (ctd. in Gajda & Koliba, 2008, p. 134). Hord (2008) is a proponent of the collaborative learning model because it facilitates the act of intentional learning by faculty members and allows them to explore and identify the focus of their learning. It is the leadership that administrators and teacher leaders bring to the culture of a school that shape the work of collaborative teams and lead them in the direction of positive instructional change.

### **Collaboration with Parents**

Collaboration with parents must not be ignored in a school which focuses on nurturing a high level of academic optimism. Parents are the strongest connection a district has to a community, and research consistently indicates that schools with a high level of parental involvement also enjoy greater success in the standardized testing arena. As such, teachers should be encouraged to continue to provide parents active avenues for involvement in their children’s education. This collaboration demonstrates an investment in students’ academic success.

Similarly, Hallinger (2014) noted that developing “relational trust” between teachers, students, and parents was monumental in building an optimistic school atmosphere and had an influence on the collective in maximizing student success (p. 560). Positive involvement from parents may also result in a higher level of academic optimism for teachers.

### **Theoretical Rationale**

The concept of academic optimism was developed by Seligman (1998) who, in his book *Learned Optimism*, defined optimism as the process of reacting to setbacks from a presumption of personal power. That is, Seligman believed that people could learn to be optimistic and take charge of a situation when a setback occurred, in order to use the setback as an asset to move forward. Seligman specifically applied this concept to the school setting by considering how a “child’s explanatory style affect[ed] his performance in the classroom” (p. 56). Seligman (1998) hypothesized that, ultimately, success is not linked to the student who is most talented, but rather to the student who is both “adequately talented and optimistic” (p. 98). Success occurs because students who have “learned” to be optimistic bounce back faster and gain more from their failures than pessimistic children, who tend to wallow in the depression that follows their failure, rather than using their failure as a catalyst for positive change.

It should be noted that Seligman’s (1998) definition of academic optimism is not contrary to the definition of academic optimism used in this study, which is that academic optimism is a perspective on school effectiveness that argues a combination of collective efficacy, faculty trust in clients, and academic emphasis can improve school performance independently of the social and economic settings of the school; as the academic optimism of schools increases, student achievement increases (Hoy et al., 2006). Instead, the two definition of academic optimism are about teachers who have efficacy in their own abilities to effect change regardless of the social and economic conditions that may be present within their schools.

Seligman (1998) described positive psychology at the subjective level to be about positive subjective experiences: wellbeing and satisfaction; flow, joy, sensual pleasures and happiness; and the acquisition of knowledge about the future e optimism, hope and faith. At the individual level, he said positive psychology “is about positive personal traits and the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future mindedness, high talent and wisdom” (Snyder & Lopez, 2005, p. 3).

When teachers have opportunities to engage in professional discourse, they can build upon their unique content, pedagogical, and experiential knowledge to improve instruction (Goddard, et al., 2007). Furthermore, collaboration can take place when teachers communicate often about their professional work. It is noted that these cases visibly exhibit that schools can offer several opportunities for teachers to collaborate for the improvement of instruction, nevertheless not all schools do. Though, not all teachers have opportunities to participate in professional discourse about their own learning and instruction (Goddard, et al., 2007). For example, they may work in schools with no formal mechanisms for collaboration and where administrators tightly control educational decisions involving curriculum, assessment, and student placement (Goddard, et al., 2007).

According to a study of teacher autonomy and control, Smylie et al. (1996) discovered that individual teacher autonomy was negatively associated with student achievement; on the other hand, team control over resources and accountability for outcomes was positively associated with student success (Goddard, et al., 2007). Although not related directly to collaboration, their results imply that the mutuality and shared responsibility that emerges when

teachers collaborate may actually improve instruction and student teaching (Goddard, et al., 2007).

The Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) for the Tuscaloosa City and County School Systems consist of school-based instructional coaches whose work is influenced by Jim Knight's partnership approach to school improvement. According to Jim Knight (2011), the theoretical framework for Instructional Coaching as a partnership approach, seeing coaching as a partnership between coaches and teachers. This approach is articulated in seven principles: (1) the development of a long-term curriculum evaluation and renewal calendar; (2) shared decision making and clear role expectations; (3) development and alignment of curricular goals; (4) written curriculum guides and scope and sequence charts; (5) the development of quality courses; (6) integrating fields of study and alignment process ensuring congruence between what is intended and what actually occurs; and (7) staff development. (Knight, 2011, p. 23)

It is the goal of this partnership to become the impetus for growth, change and efficacy. Partnership puts teamwork at the center of teacher performance while addressing the complexity of school improvement. The instructional partnership network provides commitment to continuous learning to teachers and including openness to change, developing collaborative relationships with teachers and principals, focuses on adult learners, uses the maintenance of non-evaluative relationship with teachers, developments and/or enhancement of teams and work across all grade-levels and content areas. Through these commitments, the instructional partnership network will increase teacher optimism and teacher collaboration.

## Statement and Rationale for Hypotheses

This study will explore the extent to which participation in the Instructional Partnership Network in elementary schools in North Central Alabama relates to collaboration practices and teacher academic optimism.

After a review of the literature, the following hypotheses were developed:

The Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) for the Tuscaloosa City and County School Systems may be defined as a true partnership, not a compromise, but rather a synergistic way of being with others. It is described as one that values equity, promotes choice, respects and empowers voice, endorses deep reflections, and fosters reciprocity (Darling, 2007). Thus, if teachers can build their personal academic optimism, then they may positively affect the optimism of the school as a whole.

H<sub>1</sub>: There will be a positive correlation between the perception of degree of implementation of the IPN and teacher academic optimism.

To date, there has not been any consistent empirical research exploring the effects of the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) in Alabama schools, an initiative that was designed to strengthen the instructional leadership within the school.

According to the IPN,

The Practice of Instructional Leadership involves efforts to be an effective instructional leader. . . one must engage in the following: (1) the development of a long-term curriculum evaluation and renewal calendar; (2) shared decision making and clear role expectations; (3) development and alignment of curricular goals; (4) written curriculum guides and scope and sequence charts; (5) the development of quality courses; (6) integrating fields of study and alignment process ensuring congruence between what is intended and what actually occurs; and (7) staff development. (Knight, 2011, p. 23). Prior

research revealed a link between teacher collaboration and an increase in academic performance for students (Goddard et al., 2007; Louis et al., 2009).

H<sub>2</sub>: There will be a positive correlation between perception of the degree of implementation of the IPN and teacher collaboration.

The goal of the Instructional Partnership Network is to become the impetus for growth, change, and efficacy. Academic optimism considers the role of the cognitive, the behavioral, and the affective as they relate to academic success.

H<sub>3</sub>: Teachers in schools who participate in the IPN will have higher levels of teacher academic optimism than teachers in schools who do not participate in the IPN.

Partnerships situate humility at the center of professionalism, while concentrating on the difficulty of school improvement (Carpenter, 2012). Collaboration is increasingly extolled as an important feature in the management of excellent schools (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). To make the most of openings for knowledge dispersion and innovation, teachers should be closely involved in collaborating in educationally-related matters that pertain to advances in student results (Goddard, 2010).

H<sub>4</sub>: Teachers in schools who participate in the IPN will have higher levels of collaboration than teachers who do not participate in the IPN.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the theoretical framework and academic literature related to the concepts and ideas that were relevant to this study. From those concepts and ideas, the theoretical rationale for conducting this study was discussed. In addition, the hypotheses that were formulated from this study based on the academic literature that was reviewed were presented.



## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

### **Overview**

This chapter contains the sample, design and data collection, measures and statistics that will examine the relationships between participation in the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN), perception of implementation of the IPN, and collaboration and teacher academic optimism.

### **Research Questions**

1. Is there a positive correlation between teacher perception of implementation of the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) and teacher academic optimism?
2. Is there a positive correlation between teacher perception of implementation of the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) and teacher collaboration?
3. Is teacher academic optimism higher in schools that participate in the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) than in schools that do not participate in the IPN?
4. Is collaboration higher in the IPN schools than in non IPN schools?

### **Hypothesis**

H<sub>1</sub>: There will be a positive correlation between the perception of degree of implementation of the IPN and teacher academic optimism.

H<sub>2</sub>: There will be a positive correlation between perception of the degree of implementation of the IPN and teacher collaboration.

H<sub>3</sub>: Teachers in schools who participate in the IPN will have higher levels of teacher academic optimism than teachers in schools who do not participate in the IPN.

H<sub>4</sub>: Teachers in schools who participate in the IPN will have higher levels of collaboration than teachers who do not participate in the IPN.

### **Sample**

Convenience sampling was used in this study based on the school districts to which the researcher had easy access and based on the time and financial resources that were available to conduct the study. Teachers within sixteen elementary schools within the Tuscaloosa City and the Tuscaloosa County school districts were invited to participate in this study. The final sample consisted of teachers from six schools in the Tuscaloosa City School District and seven schools in the Tuscaloosa County School District. The sample was not arbitrary; care was taken to select rural, suburban, and urban schools to embody a varied set of schools from within Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Four schools in each system were chosen because of their participation the IPN, and four schools in each system were chosen because of their lack of participation in the IPN.

### **Design**

In this study, teachers were the unit of analysis. This study employed a quantitative methodology, using a questionnaire. The rationale for a quantitative study was to garner a measurable understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. In this case, the purpose was to pinpoint the connection between participation in the IPN, perception of the degree of implementation in the IPN, and collaboration and teacher academic optimism.

### **Data Collection**

With permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the school districts, the school principals, and the teachers, data were collected from teachers at regularly scheduled faculty meetings. Data for the percent free and reduced lunch (FRL) of the students in the school

were obtained from the Alabama Department of Education, and were used as a proxy for the SES of the school. Higher percentages of FRL were representative of lower school SES and lower percentages of FRL were representative of higher school SES. Data were also collected from the teachers and principals regarding their number of years of experience and the number of years of each principal at the current school. Participants were assured that their confidentiality would be protected, and no effort was made to collect data from teachers who missed the meeting.

### **Measures**

For the purpose of this study, the independent variables were participation in the IPN (IPNPAR) and the perception of Implementation of the IPN (IPNPER). For the dependent variables, the following scales were used: Teacher Academic Optimism Scale, Teacher Collaboration Scale and the Instructional Partnership Network Scale. The following sections explains each instrument.

#### **Instructional Partnership Network (IPN)**

The Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) for the Tuscaloosa City and County School Systems is defined as a partnership between teachers and principals to build the knowledge and skills of the teachers regarding professional practices and behaviors in order to help them improve student learning outcomes (Carpenter, 2012).

It is described as one that values equity, promotes choice, respects and empowers voice, endorses deep reflections, and fosters reciprocity (Hammond- Darling, 2007). The IPN scale assessed the Teachers' perception of the IPN (IPNPER). This scale was developed from the several key anchors that define its program:

- (1) partnership at all levels—classroom, school district, and state;
- (2) laser-like focus on student achievement;
- (3) use of instructional best practices;
- (4) common focus, including school-wide vision of effective teaching and learning;
- (5) committed and effective

instructional leadership; (6) data-based decision making; (7) professional learning; (8) instructional coaching; (9) safe, distributed, collaborative culture; and (10) lateral support from colleagues using various sources of networking.

This scale is a Likert-type scale consisting of eleven items, with a 5 point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) with a range of scores from 11 to 55.

Some sample items include:

- The principal, the instructional partner and teachers at this school treat others as equals and with respect
- The principal, instructional partner, and teachers work together to ensure that all students achieve.

This scale measured teachers' perception of the degree of implementation in the IPN (IPNPER). The reliability on this scale in a pilot study was .74

### **Teacher Participation in IPN (IPNPAR)**

A variable was created to measure whether the teachers worked in schools that participated in the IPN program. The variable was coded as a dummy variable with 0=Non-IPN School, and 1=IPN School.

### **Teacher Academic Optimism**

The Hoy Teacher Academic Optimism Scale is a norm referenced scale instrument that will be used to measure teacher academic optimism (Beard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2010). It is made of up of three Likert-type subscales, including teacher efficacy, teacher trust in students and parents, and teacher academic emphasis. The first subscale teacher efficacy (TE), is determined by the teacher's self-reported perceptions of their effectiveness in the classroom, especially as it relates to their ability to fulfill teaching goals and affect positive outcomes for

students. This subscale has three items on a 5 point scale ranging from never (1) to always (5) with a range of scores from 3 to 15. Some samples items are:

1. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in schoolwork?
2. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?

The subscale has a reported Cronbach Alpha of .73 (Beard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2010).

The second subscale, trust in students and in parents (TTC), is comprised of four items, with a 5-point scale that ranges from never (1) to always (5) with the range of scores from 4 to 20. Some sample items include:

- I trust the parents of my students.
- I have confidence in my students.

This subscale has reported Cronbach Alpha of .79 (Beard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2010).

The third and final subscale is academic emphasis (AE). It considers teacher expectations for student academic performance in their classroom and includes four items on a 5-point scale that ranges from never (1) to always (5) with the range of score from 4 to 20. For example:

- I ask students to explain how they get their answers.
- I don't accept shoddy work from my students.

This subscale has a reported Cronbach Alpha of .71 (Beard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2010).

The measurement of teacher academic optimism (TAO) at the individual level is created by combining the measures of these three components of academic optimism (Hoy, 2006). The reliability and construct validity of the subscales have been supported in several factor analytic studies (Goddard, et al., 2000, 2004; Hoy & Tarter, 1997; Hoy, et al., 1991; Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

## **Teacher Collaboration**

Teacher collaboration (TCS) is defined as the extent to which teachers perceive themselves not only to be involved but to exercise influence over school and classroom-level decisions (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Teacher collaboration will be defined operationally by the score on the Teacher Collaboration Scale by Goddard, Goddard, and Tschannen-Moran (2007). The scale is a 5-item Likert-type scale, ranging from not at all (1) to frequently (6) with scores ranging from 5 to 30. Some sample items include:

To what extent do teachers work collectively to influence these types of decisions?

- Planning school improvement
- Selecting instructional methods and activities

The reported reliability of the scale in previous studies ranged from .87 to .94 (Goddard, 2007).

## **Socioeconomic Status**

For the purpose of this study free and reduced lunch data was gathered from the state departments website based on information reported from the schools. Free and reduced lunch data then served as the proxy variable for SES. SES was determined by subtracting the percent free and reduced lunch from 1.

## **Variables**

This study used descriptive statistics, correlations, analysis of covariance and regression to test the relationships between the variables.

The independent variables were participation in the IPN (IPNPAR) and the perception of Implementation of the IPN (IPNPER). Participation in the IPN (IPNPAR) is a categorical variable and the perception of IPN implementation (IPNPER) is a continuous scale. The

dependent variables were Teacher Academic Optimism and Collaboration. The observed variables of teacher academic optimism were:

1. Teacher trust in students and parents (TTC);
2. Individual teacher efficacy (TE); and
3. Teacher academic emphasis (AE).

The control variables included the following:

1. Socio Economic Status (SES);
2. Years of experience as principal in that school (YrsPrincipal);
3. Years of experience teaching (TeacherExperience);
4. Educational level of the teacher (EducationalLevel); and
5. Years instructional coach in that school (YrsCoach)

The initial step was to calculate the descriptive statistics for each of the variables. In order to complete this step, the study drew out means, standard deviations, and ranges. In addition, this study explored the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, using correlational analysis. Two regression analyses were also conducted. The first linear regression was with teacher academic optimism (TAO) as the dependent variable while controlling for SES, participation, and perception of IPN. The second linear regression was with collaboration (TCS) as the dependent variable while controlling for SES, participation, and perception of IPN.

For the linear regression models, two additional variables were created: CIPNPER, and IPNERXIPNPAR. The CIPNPER variable was the IPNPER variable centered on the mean values. This was done because the IPNPAR variable was a dummy variable. In addition, the IPNERXIPNPAR variable was an interaction variable that was comprised of the mean IPNPAR

variable and the IPNPER variable. This variable was used as an independent variable to measure the interaction between teacher participation in the IPN program and their perception of the IPN program.

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the methods that were used to conduct this study. A complete explanation was provided about the rationale for conducting this study using quantitative method. A complete explanation was also provided about the variables that were collected and analyzed for this study, as well as what the variables were used to measure.



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### **Overview**

This chapter contains a presentation of the statistical analyses that were performed in order to address the research questions that were formulated for this study. This chapter begins with a discussion of the descriptive statistics of the variables of interest in the analysis. Then, the statistical tests are performed that allow for the research questions to be answered. Finally, a summary of the results of the statistical analyses is provided in relation to each of the research questions.

#### **Descriptive Statistics**

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the educational experience of the participants, as well as their perceptions on the scales used in the study. Two hundred and forty-five teachers in 13 schools were surveyed. Of this sample 131 teachers (53.3%) were in schools that participated in the Instructional Partnership Program, while 114 teachers (46.3%) were in schools that did not participate in IPN. The participants were in schools where the principal had an average of about 5 years working as principals (YrsPrincipal) with a range from 1 to 15 years, and where the instructional coaches had about four years as instructional coaches (YrsCoach) with a range from 1 to 10 years. The mean years of experience as teachers (TeacherExperience) for the participants in this study was about 11 years with a range from 1 to 36 years. In addition, the mean education (EducationalLevel) value of 1.68 indicated that the participants in this study

had between a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree as the range of values was 1 for Bachelor's degree, 2 for Master's Degree, 3 for Educational Specialist, and 4 for Doctorate.

*Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Teacher Experience and Perceptions*

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
IPNPAR	1.47	0.50	1.00	2.00
IPNPER	4.16	0.73	1.45	8.00
YrsPrincipal	5.05	3.82	1.00	15.00
YrsCoach	4.17	2.52	1.00	10.00
TeacherExperience	11.11	7.86	1.00	36.00
EducationalLevel	1.68	0.63	1.00	4.00
SES	42.96	10.50	17.91	58.86
TE	7.44	1.10	3.67	9.00
TTC	3.61	0.54	2.00	5.00
AE	4.21	0.47	2.50	5.00
TAO	5.08	0.52	3.19	6.25
TCS	4.70	0.93	1.00	6.00

The mean value for SES was 42.96, which indicated that about 57% of the students in the schools from which the participants were drawn received free or reduced lunches. The mean score of teacher self-efficacy (TE) was 7.44 on a scale that ranged from 1 to 9. The mean score to the items that measured teacher trust in parents and students (TTC) was somewhat low at 3.61 on a scale that ranged from 1 to 5. This indicated that the teachers believed that they had little trust in parents and students for support. Interestingly, the mean score of 4.21 to the items that measured academic emphasis (AE), which was coded on a 5-point scale, was also fairly high. Teachers indicated that they had high expectations of students, did not accept poor work, and gave students challenging work.

Furthermore, the teachers had a somewhat positive perception of the instructional partnership program at their schools. As the score to this scale was from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree, the mean score of 4.16 suggests a somewhat positive perception about

implementation of the IPN (IPNPER). In addition, the teachers in the sample had a high level of agreement that collaboration among colleagues occurred in their schools (TCS). The mean score on the collaboration scale was 4.70 on a five-point scale. The participants indicated that they had a high level of collaboration with colleagues (TCS) with mean scores of 4.70.

### **Reliability of Scales**

Table 2 shows the Cronbach's alpha for reliability for the scaled variables in this study. The three sub-scales that comprise the academic optimism scale are teacher self-efficacy (TE), teacher trust in clients (TTC), and academic emphasis (AE). The Table shows that the Cronbach's alpha for teacher trust in clients (TTC) and teacher self-efficacy (TE) were 0.77 and 0.93, respectively. An alpha score above 0.7 is considered to indicate an acceptable level of reliability among items in a scale. In contrast, the alpha for academic emphasis was 0.16 or 0.30 depending on whether the item of "I don't accept shoddy work from my students" was included as scored or reversed. The issue of how this item was worded had an impact on reliability, and is an issue that is discussed further in the next chapter. If the question was included as is, then the reliability was only 0.16. However, if the item was reversed, then the alpha was 0.30. The overall alpha for the academic optimism score (TAO) was 0.70, which means that the academic optimism scale used in this study was considered to have an acceptable level of reliability based on the items that made up the scale despite problems with the teacher academic emphasis (TE) subscale. The alpha score for perception of implementation of IPN (IPNPER) was 0.74 and the reliability of the collaboration scale (TCS) was .93

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Scores for Scaled Variables

TAO	0.70
TTC	0.77
AE	0.16 or 0.30
TE	0.79
TCS	0.93
IPNPER	0.74

### Correlation Analysis

The first hypothesis formulated for this study was that there will be a positive correlation between the perception of degree of implementation of the IPN (IPNPER) and Teacher Academic Optimism (TAO). The second hypothesis that was formulated was that there will be a positive correlation between the perception of degree of implementation of the IPN (IPNPER) and Teacher Collaboration (TCS). In order to test both of these hypothesis, a correlation analysis was conducted.

Table 3 shows the results of a correlation analysis for the variables of participation in the IPN (IPNPAR) perception of implementation of IPN (IPNPER), teacher academic optimism (TAO), collaboration (TCS), and SES. The table shows that IPNPER was positively and significantly correlated with TAO, which confirms the hypothesis that there would be a positive correlation between the perception of degree of implementation of the IPN (IPNPER) and teacher academic optimism (TAO), ( $r=0.359$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The table also shows that there was a positive and significant correlation between IPNPER and TCS, which confirms the hypothesis that there would be a positive correlation between the perception of the degree of implementation of IPN and teacher collaboration ( $r=0.673$ ,  $p<0.01$ ).

Table 3: Correlation Analysis of Independent Variable of IPN with Dependent Variables

Variables	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>1 IPNPAR</b>	-.23***	-.26**	-.44**	-.03	.10	-.02	.04	.03	.16*	.08	-.33**
<b>2 IPNPER</b>		.02	.10	-.001	-.07	.02	.33**	.29**	.10	.36**	.67**
<b>3 YrsPrincp</b>			-.25**	.03	-.15*	0.31**	.03	-.13*	-.03	-.03	.07
<b>4 YrsCoach</b>				.01	-.08	.20**	-.01	-.04	-.04	-.04	.12
<b>5 TeachExp</b>					.39**	.01	.09	-.18**	-.05	-.01	.04
<b>6 EducLevel</b>						.00	.08	-.10	-.04	.01	-.05
<b>7 SES</b>							.17**	.13*	.09	.19**	-.08
<b>8 TE</b>								.27**	.30**	.89**	.22**
<b>9 TTC</b>									.19**	.59**	.21**
<b>10 AE</b>										.58**	.08
<b>11 TAO</b>											.25**
<b>12 TCS</b>											

\*p<0.05      \*\*p<0.01

### Unhypothesized Relationships

Participation in the IPN (IPNPAR) was correlated with collaboration ( $r = .33, p < .01$ ) however it was not correlated with teacher academic optimism ( $r = .08, p > .05$ ). The correlation results also showed that SES was positively and significantly correlated with TAO ( $r = .19, p < .01$ ) but not with TCS. TAO and TCS were positively correlated ( $r = .25, p < .01$ ) with each other. However, TAO and TCS were not significantly correlated with the number of years in which the participants had been teachers or principals, as well as the number of years in which they had been teachers or their levels of education. Because of the lack of significant correlation between the variables regarding experience and education, those variables were removed from further analysis in this study.

### Academic Optimism and Collaboration

The next two hypotheses that were formulated were that participation in the IPN (IPNPAR) and perception of the implementation of IPN (IPNPER) would be associated with an

increase in academic optimism (TAO) and that participation in the IPN (IPNPAR) the perception of the implementation of IPN (IPNPER) would be associated with an increase in collaboration (TCS). First, a linear regression analysis was performed with the dependent variable of the academic optimism (TAO) score regressed on the independent variables of SES, IPNPAR, CIPNPER, and IPNERXIPNPAR. The CIPNPER variable is the IPNPER variable centered on the mean values. This was done because the IPNPAR variable was a dummy variable. In addition, the IPNERXIPNPAR variable was an interaction variable that was comprised of the mean centered IPNPAR variable and the IPNPER variable. This variable was used as an independent variable to measure the interaction between teacher participation in the IPN program and their perception of the IPN program.

It is important before examining the results of the regression to ensure that the model was statistically significant, meaning that the variance in the dependent variable was explained by the independent variables. The way in which to determine if the regression model was significant was by examining the results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the model. The null hypothesis for the test was that the variance in the dependent variable was not significantly explained by the independent variables. The alternative hypothesis was that the variance in the dependent variable was significantly explained by the independent variables. The results of the ANOVA showed that the null hypothesis could be rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted that the variance in the dependent variable was explained by the independent variables ( $F=16.381$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

Table 4 shows the results of the linear regression analysis. The results show that all of the independent variables were significant predictors of TAO. The positive beta coefficients for the variables of SES, IPNPAR, CIPNPER, and CIPNPERXIPNPAR meant that as the SES of the

students in the schools increased, meaning that fewer students received free or reduced lunches, along with a more positive perception of the IPN program, teacher academic optimism also increased. In addition, the negative beta coefficient for CIPNERXIPNPAR indicated that the interaction between perception of IPN and actually participating in IPN significantly impacted teacher academic optimism. This result allowed for the hypothesis that teachers in schools that participated in the IPN program would have high academic optimism than teachers in schools that did not participate in the IPN program not to be confirmed.

*Table 4: Teacher Academic Optimism (TAO) Regressed on Independent Variables*

	<u>B</u>	<u>S.E.</u>	<u>β</u>	<u>t</u>
SES	0.009**	0.003	0.172	2.994
IPNPAR	0.192**	0.061	0.184	3.127
CIPNPER	0.637**	0.146	0.89	4.349
CIPNPERXIPNPAR	-0.218*	0.087	-0.512	-2.514
(Constant)	4.418***	0.155		28.44
Adjusted R-Squared	0.201			

\*p<0.05      \*\*p<0.01      \*\*\*p<0.001

Next, a linear regression analysis was performed on the teacher collaboration (TCS) variable regressed on the independent variables of SES, IPNPAR, CIPNPER, and IPNPERXIPNPAR. As before, the results of the ANOVA test were examined in order to determine if the regression model could be determined to be significant. The null hypothesis for the test was that the variance in the dependent variable was not significantly explained by the independent variables. The alternative hypothesis was that the variance in the dependent variable was significantly explained by the independent variables. The results of the ANCOVA showed that the null hypothesis could be rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted that the

variance in the dependent variable was explained by the independent variables ( $F=60.554$ ,  $df=4$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

Table 5 shows the results of the linear regression analysis. The results show that while TCS values are lower than the TAO values for the teachers who participated in the IPN program, there was a significant relationship between IPNPAR and TCS. In other words, teachers who participated in the IPN program had a high perception about collaboration with colleagues. In contrast, there was not a significant relationship with TCS for the teachers who were in schools that did not participate in the IPN program. This result allowed for the hypothesis that teachers in schools that participated in the IPN program to have higher levels of collaboration than teachers who did not participate in the IPN program to be confirmed.

*Table 5: Collaboration (TCS) Score Regressed on Independent Variables*

	<u>B</u>	<u>S.E.</u>	<u>β</u>	<u>t</u>
SES	-0.007	0.004	-0.079	-1.715
IPNPAR	-0.343***	0.087	-0.184	-3.935
CIPNPER	0.352	0.208	0.276	1.692
CIPNPERXIPNPAR	0.282*	0.123	0.371	2.286
(Constant)	5.524***	0.221		25.023
Adjusted R-Squared	0.494			

\* $p<0.05$

\*\* $p<0.01$

\*\*\* $p<0.001$

### Summary

This chapter presented the findings of the statistical analyses that were performed in order to answer the research questions that were formulated for this study. It was found that while teacher academic optimism was not significantly higher in IPN schools as compared to non-IPN schools, perceptions about collaboration with colleagues was significantly higher in IPN schools as compared to non-IPN schools. Furthermore, there was a statistically significantly



positive correlation between teacher perceptions of the implementation of IPN and both academic optimism and teacher collaboration. These findings will be discussed in more detail in relation to the literature that was reviewed in the next chapter, along with a discussion of the implications of the findings and ideas for future research.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### **Overview**

This chapter contains a discussion of the findings of this study, as well as the larger implications of those findings. This chapter begins with discussion of the findings of the study in relation to each of the research questions that were formulated for this study. The findings are compared to the research that was examined in the literature review. Then, the implications of those findings on actual educational practices are discussed. Finally, ideas and recommendations for future research are presented.

#### **Findings**

The first research question that was formulated for this study was is there a positive correlation between teacher perception of implementation of the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) and teacher academic optimism? It was hypothesized that there would be a positive correlation between the perception of degree of implementation of the IPN (IPNPER) and Teacher Academic Optimism (TAO). The results of the data analysis that were performed showed that there was a positive and statistically significant correlation between IPNPER and TAO. The reason for this relationship between IPNPER and TAO may have been because of the larger goals and framework of the IPN program. The focus of the IPN program on collaboration, interaction, and improvements in student achievement and instructional leadership may have made the teachers in this study feel more positive about their own abilities, as well as their trust in principals, colleagues, and even parents and students (Hallinger, 2014; Seashore, Anderson &

Riedel, 2003). Another way of thinking about this is that the teachers who positively perceived the implementation of the IPN program in relation to the larger goals of the program experienced significant increases in their own academic optimism.

The second research question that was formulated for this study was is there a positive correlation between teacher perception of implementation of the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) and teacher collaboration? It was hypothesized that there would be a positive correlation between the perception of degree of implementation of the IPN (IPNPER) and Teacher Collaboration (TCS). The results of the data analysis that were performed showed that there was a positive and statistically significant correlation between IPNPER and TCS. One reason for this relationship between IPNPER and TCS may have been due to the fact that an important part of the IPN program was teacher collaboration (Carpenter, 2012). In this regard, the teachers who had positive perceptions of the IPN program, may have embraced the teacher collaboration aspect of the program, and enjoyed the effort to require increased collaboration with colleagues.

The third research question that was formulated for this study was is teacher academic optimism higher in schools that participate in the Instructional Partnership Network (IPN) than in schools that do not participate in the IPN? It was hypothesized that teachers in schools who participated in the IPN would have higher levels of teacher academic optimism than teachers in schools who did not participate in the IPN. The results of the data analysis showed that the teachers in schools that participated in the IPN program did not have high levels of teacher academic optimism. The data analysis showed that the interaction between perception of IPN and actually participating in IPN significantly impacted teacher academic optimism. In this

regard, the teachers who actually participated in the IPN program (IPNPAR) had a lower level of positive perception of the program, and, in turn, lower levels of academic optimism.

The fourth research question that was formulated for this study was is collaboration higher in the IPN schools than in non-IPN schools? It was hypothesized that teachers in schools who participated in the IPN would have higher levels of collaboration than teachers who do not participate in the IPN. The results of the data analysis showed that the hypothesis that teachers in schools that participated in the IPN program to have higher levels of collaboration than teachers who did not participate in the IPN program to be confirmed. The IPN program required more collaboration and interaction among teachers as school districts and teachers work with the Instructional Partner (Carpenter, 2012). In this regard, the IPN schools had a collaborative model built in to the way in which they functioned because of their involvement with the program (Robbins & Alvy, 2003).

### **Implications of the Findings**

Beyond the actual findings of this study, it is important to discuss the larger implications of the findings in relation to the IPN program, as well as in relation to broader issues of academic optimism and collaboration among teachers. One of the implications of this study might be the need for educational leaders to examine the implementation process of the IPN program. The results of this study showed that there was a negative relationship between perceptions of implementation of the IPN program and actual participation in the IPN program. While teachers who held positive perceptions of the IPN program (IPNPER) also had higher levels of teacher academic optimism (TAO) and teacher collaboration (TCS), there was a negative interaction between participation in the IPN program (IPNPAR) and perception of the implementation of the program (IPNPER). In this regard, the way in which the program is implemented within each school may have an important impact on initial perceptions of the program that could be

important in increased teacher academic optimism among as many teachers as possible. In other words, by increasing the number of teachers who hold positive perceptions of the implementation of the IPN program, it might be possible to increase the number of teachers who hold positive perceptions about collaboration with colleagues and their own academic optimism.

In addition, the finding that teacher collaboration (TCS) and perceptions of the implementation of IPN (IPNPER) were found to be positively correlated is certainly an important finding given the desire within education to move beyond the traditional model of teachers working in isolation to teachers actually being part of a collaborative process with other teachers and with principals (Hord, 1997). In Tuscaloosa City and County schools, and potentially across the State of Alabama, the IPN program might serve as a catalyst to encourage greater collaboration among teachers and principals with the added benefit of increasing feelings of academic optimism among teachers.

Even more, if the IPN program cannot be expanded into additional schools, the results of this study could be used by principals and school leaders to implement other efforts to increase collaboration among teachers and principals. While the IPN program is focused on improving student reading in grades K-3, the larger effort of the program is encouraging collaboration, instructional leadership, and student outcomes (Carpenter, 2012). It is those larger goals that school leaders should not ignore because they seem to be an important part of the feelings of academic optimism and teacher collaboration that was found in this study. Teachers who had positive perceptions of the implementation of IPN also had higher academic optimism and higher perceptions about the collaboration that occurred among teachers.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

While the findings of this study provided important information about the relationship between aspects of the IPN program, particularly the collaborative part of the IPN program,

questions were also raised that could be addressed in future studies. One of the issues that was raised in this study was whether these findings, especially the finding that academic optimism was not significantly different between the teachers in the IPN schools and the teachers in the non-IPN schools might be different if a more diverse sample of schools had been used. Within the State of Alabama, there is diversity in terms of the cultures of communities and cities, and the impact those cultures on the school districts. Using a larger sample of teachers from school districts in different parts of the state, and including both large cities such as Birmingham, Mobile, and Huntsville, along with smaller rural school districts in the central part of the state, might provide more information about the impact of IPN on academic optimism among teachers.

By sampling teachers from the across the state, it might be possible to determine a larger range of cultural issues that impact the relationship between the IPN program and perceptions of academic optimism and collaboration among teachers. By investigating the larger cultural issues and cultural environment of schools, both those that are engaged in IPN from across the state and those not engaged in IPN, it might be possible to not only understand why some teachers experience improvements in academic optimism from the program, but also why other teachers do not experience the same improvement in academic optimism.

Even more, by replicating this study with teachers from across the State of Alabama, it might also be possible to compare specific details about the implementation of IPN in different school districts. While the program is supposed to be implemented in the same way across the schools, the reality may be very different. What might be considered small or unimportant differences in how the program is implemented in different school districts could have significant impacts on the outcomes for both teachers and students. By examining the implementation of the program, it might be possible to understand how certain aspects of

implementation lead to positive outcomes in terms of academic optimism and collaboration among teachers, as well as how other aspects of implementation might result in lower academic optimism and less collaboration among teachers.

Another recommendation for future research is to investigate the longer-term impact of IPN participation on academic optimism and teacher collaboration. This study captured the perceptions of teachers in relation to whether their schools participated in IPN at one moment in time. The positive outcomes related to perceptions of academic optimism and teacher collaboration in IPN schools might be a short-term experience. As participation in the program occurs over more years, the benefits of the program for teachers might be reduced. The benefit of this type of study would be to provide information to principals and school leaders about whether additional efforts might need to be made within the IPN program to ensure that the benefits gained from the program in the early years are carried through over the longer-term.

Once again, the goal of engaging in additional research about the IPN program would be to understand how the program can be used not only for its primary focus to improve student reading achievement, but also for the underlying focus on teacher collaboration and improvements in educational leadership. The argument might be made that research regarding the Instructional Partnership Program is only of interest to educators and policymakers in Alabama. This specific program is likely only of concern to educators and policymakers in Alabama, but most states have similar types of program that have been implemented in recent years with the goal of improving student outcomes through improvements in teacher collaboration and educational leadership (Friend & Cook, 2009; Hord, 1997). Investigating why efforts to increase teacher collaboration and student outcomes work and why they don't work is

necessary so that the time, money, and effort that are placed in this programs result in the outcomes that are desired for both students and educators.

The findings of this study cannot be generalized past the Tuscaloosa County and Tuscaloosa City school districts. However, the methodology used in this study and the findings of this study can be used to inform additional research into issues of academic optimism and teacher collaboration in schools in which programs have been implemented to improve student outcomes by improving teacher collaboration and educational leadership. Understanding the importance of this study should not be about the fact that the focus was on a single program in a single part of Alabama. Instead, the importance of this study was on the broader issues of academic optimism and teacher collaboration in relation to the program.

### **Summary**

This chapter contained the findings of the study, as well as a discussion of the larger implications of the findings of the study and recommendations for future research. While the focus of this study was on two school districts in Alabama, there are many larger implications that can be used to inform additional research, both within Alabama and across the United States. The issue of academic optimism and teacher collaboration has become important within education in recent years as school leaders and policymakers work to attempt to improve trust, self-efficacy, and collaboration in order to improve teacher classroom practices and behaviors and overall student outcomes. This study adds to the literature on these issues and provides questions for additional areas of investigation.



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## APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL



Office of the Vice President for  
Research & Economic Development  
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

April 27, 2016

Denise Arrington  
Tameka Sharnery  
ELPTS  
College of Education  
The University of Alabama  
Box 870302

Re: IRB # EX-16-CM-042 "The Effects of the Instructional Partnerships Program on Teacher Academic Optimism and Collaboration in Elementary Schools in North Central Alabama"

Dear Ms. Arrington:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research. Your protocol has been given exempt approval according to 45 CFR part 46.101(b)(2) as outlined below:

*(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:*

*(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.*

Your application will expire on April 26, 2017. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of Continuing Review and Closure Form. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of FORM: Continuing Review and Closure.

**Please provide a copy of the Tuscaloosa City School System approval documentation for the IRB file prior to beginning any research within the Tuscaloosa City Schools.**

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the assigned IRB application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,



Carumbato T. Myles, MSM, CIM, CIP  
Director & Research Compliance Officer  
Office for Research Compliance

APPENDIX B: TUSCALOOSA CITY APPROVAL



**Approval to Proceed with Research, Dissertation,  
Related Studies**

**Title of Research:** The Effects of the Instructional Partnership Program on Teacher Academic  
Optimism and Collaboration in Elementary Schools in North Central Alabama

**Applicant(s):** Denise P. Arrington **Date Submitted:** 04/26/2015

**Email Address:** darringt@tusc.k12.al.us **Phone Number:** 205-454-5529

**Duration of Project:** From 05/2016 To 12/2016 **Department:** Educational Leadership

**Prerequisite: Adherence to Tuscaloosa City Schools' Board Policy:**  
[http://www.tuscaloosacityschools.com/pages/Tuscaloosa\\_City\\_SchoolDistrict/Departments/HR/Policy\\_Manual/Section\\_M\\_Education\\_Agency\\_Re/file\\_ME](http://www.tuscaloosacityschools.com/pages/Tuscaloosa_City_SchoolDistrict/Departments/HR/Policy_Manual/Section_M_Education_Agency_Re/file_ME)

- 1. IRB Approval
  - Must contain signature (e-signature, not acceptable)
  - Date Submitted: 4/28/16
- 2. Methodology/Abstract (explaining study)
  - Survey or other instrument for quantitative study
- 3. Consent form, explanation, etc. clearly states participant does NOT have to participate in study; participation is strictly voluntary
- 4. History of Protocol:  New Application  Renewal of Previously Approved Application  
If this is a renewal, indicate the initial Approval Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Approved
- 6. Denied  
Explanation (if needed):

Superintendent or Designee Signature:  Date: 4/29/16

Additional Comments:



APPENDIX C: TUSCALOOSA COUNTY APPROVAL



November 16, 2015

Tameka Shamery Rice  
11604 Arlington Avenue  
Northport, AL 35475

Dear Ms. Rice:

Your request to conduct a study in the Tuscaloosa County School System is granted. Your proposal is clearly written and you have complied with the requirements of our system. You are approved to begin your study.

I have contacted the principals and made them aware of your needs and asked them to consider your request. Since there are many researchers requesting studies at any given time, we leave the final decision to participate to the building principal.

I wish you continued success with your project.

Sincerely,



Walter W. Davie, Ed.D.  
Interim Superintendent

c Principals

## APPENDIX D: SURVEY

Years Teaching Experience \_\_\_\_\_

Education Level \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create difficulties for teachers in their school activities. Please indicate your opinion about each of the statements below. Your answers are confidential.	Nothing		Very Little		Some Influence		Quite a bit		A Great Deal
1. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Directions: Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the statements below from Never (1) to Always (5).	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
4. I trust the parents of my students.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I can count on parent support.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I trust my students.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have confidence in my students.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I ask students to explain how they get their answers.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I don't accept shoddy work from my students.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I give my students challenging work.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I press my students to achieve academically.	1	2	3	4	5

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your school from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6).	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
12. Teachers in this school trust the principal.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Teachers in this school trust each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. The teachers in this school are suspicious of most of the principal's actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Teachers in this school typically look out for one another.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. The teachers in this school have faith in the integrity of the principal.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Teachers in this school are suspicious of each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. The principal in this school typically acts in the best interest of teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. The principal in this school does not show concern for the teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Even in difficult situations, teachers in this school can depend on each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. Teachers in this school do their jobs well.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. Teachers in this school can rely on the principal.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. Teachers in this school have faith in the integrity of their colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. The principal in this school is competent in doing his or her job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. Teachers in this school are open with each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. When teachers in this school tell you something, you can believe it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27. The principal doesn't tell teachers what is really going on.	1	2	3	4	5	6

<p>Directions: Please indicate your opinion about each question by marking any one of the nine responses in the columns on the right side, ranging from (1) “none at all” to (9) “a great deal” as each represents a degree on the continuum.</p> <p>Please respond to each of the questions by considering the combination of your current ability, resources, and opportunity to do each of the following in your present position.</p>	This questionnaire is designed to help us gain a better understanding of the kinds of things that create challenges for teachers in their school activities. Your answers are confidential.								
	Not at all		Very Little		Some Degree		Quite a bit		A Great Deal
28. How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
29. How much can you do to motivate students who show low interest in school work?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
30. How much can you do to calm a student who is disruptive or noisy?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
31. How much can you do to help your students value learning?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
32. To what extent can you craft good questions for your students?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
33. How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
34. How much can you do to get students to believe they can do well in school work?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
35. How well can you establish a classroom management system with each group of students?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
36. To what extent can you use a variety of assessment strategies?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
37. To what extent can you provide an alternative explanation or example when students are confused?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
38. How much can you assist families in helping their children do well in school?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
39. How well can you implement alternative teaching strategies in your classroom?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your school from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
40. The principal, the instructional partner and teachers at this school treat others as equals and with respect.	1	2	3	4	5
41. The principal, instructional partner, and teachers work together to ensure that all students achieve.	1	2	3	4	5
42. Teachers at my school collaborate to learn and implement effective teaching practices.	1	2	3	4	5
43. Our school uses a collaborative process to develop learning targets for our students.	1	2	3	4	5
44. The principal and the instructional partner meet regularly to ensure that the teachers receive the support and help needed.	1	2	3	4	5
45. Teams of teachers analyze student achievement data, formative assessment data, and other important data. This data is used to drive planning and professional development.	1	2	3	4	5
46. Adult learning is a priority and the principal, instructional partner and others use data to facilitate formal and informal job embedded professional learning.	1	2	3	4	5
47. Teachers in this school are provided with intense, focused support for professional learning through modeling, dialogue, and honest feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
48. Our school culture allows for collaboration where adults learn together, improve together, and celebrate together in a safe, transparent, and data driven environment.	1	2	3	4	5
49. Our school offers opportunities to network with other teachers during face-to-face meetings and/or electronically.	1	2	3	4	5

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your school from Not at all (1) to (6).  To what extent do teachers work collectively to influence these types of decisions?	Not at all	Very rarely	Rarely	Sometimes	Most of the time	All the time
50. Planning school improvement	1	2	3	4	5	6
51. Selecting Instructional methods and activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
52. Evaluating curriculum and programs	1	2	3	4	5	6
53. Determining professional development needs and goals	1	2	3	4	5	6
54. Planning professional development activities	1	2	3	4	5	6

55. Is your principal confident when performing job related tasks? Rate their level of confidence from 1 to 5. 1 is not confident, 3 is somewhat confident and 5 is very confident. Yes or No \_\_\_\_\_ Confidence Level \_\_\_\_\_

56. What principal behaviors have a positive influence on your work? Give examples.

57. What principal behaviors have a negative influence on your work? Give examples.