HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS’ PERSPECTIVES: WHAT DO TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW, DO, OR HAVE AS DISPOSITIONS TO TEACH ALL STUDENTS EQUITABLY?

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by
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to analyze high school principals’ perceptions on what it takes to teach all students equitably. More specifically, it focused on which teacher characteristics are advantageous in order to teach all students, regardless of students’ socioeconomic status, gender, ability, or race. In order to answer this question, I investigated the perceptions of high school principals in regard to what they think their teachers need to know and do, as well as what dispositions they need to have in order to teach all students equitably. This question was analyzed using interviews of 11 high school principals from three school districts in northern California. The analysis included the development of a continuum of understanding in regard to what teachers need to know and do, and what dispositions they should have in order to teach all students equitably. Results showed that principals have differing understandings of what it takes to teach all students. The discussion included a detailed plan about the implementation of a high-performance policy framework that can serve as a guide to facilitate changes to professional development programs, administrator and teacher preparation programs, and administrative and teacher evaluations.
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This study looked to understand principals’ perceptions of what it takes for teachers to be effective with all students, regardless of race, gender, ability, or socioeconomic status. More specifically, through this study, I investigated principals’ perceptions of the knowledge base, skills, and dispositions teachers use in order to reach each student. Chapter I introduces the broad issues that drove this research study. These issues are followed by the Research Question and the definitions that were needed to clarify its intent and scope. The Methodological Overview then describes the methods and methodology used. Lastly, the objectives are listed, followed by the significance of this study.

It is important to note that I refer to the terms “we” and “our” throughout the study. In using these terms, I refer to educators, which includes teachers, professors, and administrators. As a school administrator and former teacher, I feel part of the “we” and the “our” so use them as such throughout the paper.

Equity Over Equality

In order to fully enjoy equality, one must first have equity. Skrla, McKenzie, and Scheurich (2009) utilize a definition of “educational equity” formulated by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction; educational equity is:

…the educational policies, practices, and programs necessary to
eliminate educational barriers based on gender, race/ethnicity, national origin, color, disability, age or other protected group status; and, provide equal educational opportunities and ensure that historically underserved or underrepresented populations meet the same rigorous standards for academic performance expected of all children and youth. Educational equity knowledge and practices in public schools have evolved over time and require a comprehensive approach. Equity strategies are planned, systemic, and focus on the core of the teaching and learning process (curriculum, instruction, and school environment/culture). Educational equity activities promote the real possibility of equity of educational results for each student and between diverse groups. (pp. 3–4)

*Equality* gives everyone the same resources, but receiving the same goods is not the same as giving people what they need. The focus on equality rather than *equity* does not address some of our country’s biggest issues. Unfortunately, the U.S. has seen years of discrimination and bias, leading to stratification between the “haves” and the “have-nots.” The U.S. Census Bureau has consistently shown that females and minorities have lower income levels, even when they have reached the same educational levels as White males (Spring, 2010, p. 42). This systemic institutionalized racism prevents minorities, females, people with English as a second language, or people with disabilities to start at the same point (Spring, 2010). Additionally, Spring’s (2010) analysis shows that when minorities and females reach
the same educational level, they are still looked at as inferior and not valued as highly as are White males. The strict focus on equality leads to an unattainable American dream for some, with education reinforcing the status quo.

Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) expressed the concept of equity clearly by explaining that it “involves giving students what they need. It is not the same as equal opportunity; specifically, equal opportunity does not acknowledge that students have needs that require differentiation” (p. 74). By addressing equity before equality, we can ensure that students will have the same starting point and hence the same educational opportunities. The focus needs to shift to giving students what they need in order for them to be successful.

**Statement of the Problem**

Stevens and Wood (1995) ask the question, “How democratic can a society be if it provides unequal education?” (p. 312). Currently, public schools in America are not providing equal educational opportunities for all. In fact, this argument can surely stretch to the notion that American society as a whole is not meeting its creed of “equal opportunity.” Accordingly, Spring (2010) states, “Since the American Revolution, the ideal of equality has been seriously compromised by the denial of women’s rights, slavery, legal racial segregation, exploitation of Native Americans, and differences in wealth and status” (p. 31). This is the broad concern that drives this research study.

**Teachers as the Greatest Driving Force**

If schools are going to make the transformational change to close the
achievement gap, then the focus needs to start with the teacher. The teacher has been shown to be the most effective change agent within a school (Chetty, Friedman, Hilger, Saez, Schanzenbach, & Yagan, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Unfortunately, teachers state that they feel ill-prepared to work with diverse populations, and the teachers who are the least experienced are often working in the most challenging schools (Garcia & Shaughnessy, 2016).

I do not blame teachers for being ill prepared. Teachers need support in order to provide equitable educational opportunities for all their students. Indeed, how can one explicitly blame teachers for these shortcomings when there is still ambiguity as to the skills needed for teachers to be effective? Ball and Forzani (2011) argue that the U.S. needs to establish and define a “common core” of high-leverage teaching skills. This approach looks to build the profession of teaching from the inside out with easily identifiable skills that are readily accessible. Two vehicles that can arguably provide these skills are teacher preparatory programs and effective leadership of site principals.

**High-Leverage Teaching Skills and Teacher Perceptions**

In the United States, teacher preparation programs are not preparing teachers who are confident working with diverse youth (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1998). One reason for this is that for years many teacher preparatory programs were teaching skills that were not clearly defined – intended outcomes are so broad and ambiguous that many students graduate without the skills necessary to reach a diverse student body. In California, the adoption of teaching performance expectations (TPEs) is a
move in the right direction in regard to having a universal list of high-leverage
teaching practices. The long-term outcomes from the creation of TPEs are not known,
but are a promising shift in teacher education in California. Additionally, Darling-
Hammond and Ball (1998) suggest matching teacher standards to student standards,
as well as creating incentives for teachers to complete National Board certification.
This focus would create a common set of high-leverage teaching strategies as
described by Ball and Forzani (2011) and Skrla, McKenzie, and Scheurich (2009).

These high-leverage teaching strategies (which will be explained further in
Chapter II) include concepts such as teachers clearly communicating expectations,
using consistent and reliable classroom procedures and routines and ensuring students
are actively, cognitively engaged. I argue that a focus on a common group of
identifiable, high-leverage teaching skills, and matching them to student standards, is
a move in the right direction. However, I also argue that teacher preparation cannot
focus on high-leverage teaching practices alone if the goal is to close the achievement
gap. In many classrooms, this would shift the teacher’s focus to not only content area
or pedagogical concerns, but also toward an equity mindset. To this end, I am
interested in understanding the perceptions of principals in regards to the various
skills and the mindset that teachers need.

Leadership of Principals

The site principal is a highly influential person on campus. A five-year study
sponsored by the Wallace Foundation found that “leadership is second only to
classroom instruction as an influence on student learning” (Leithwood & Louis, 2011,
p. 3). The symbiotic relationship between the principal and the teacher can greatly affect student outcomes (Leithwood & Louis, 2011). This is evident when one considers that the principal is the person who directly hires, evaluates, and gives feedback to the teacher. But, do principals know what to look for with regard to a teacher’s ability to teach all students, and thus drive the equity movement?

Moreover, are the appropriate teaching skills — specifically with regard to equity — being validated by principals when they evaluate teachers? Principals’ ability to identify the characteristics and attributes that teachers need in order to carry out an equity mission is vital in order to actuate transformational change to an equitable school system.

**Geographical Challenges**

This study took place in a region in northern California that is in dire need for a shift toward equity within the state’s public school system. When compared to the state average, this region has fewer University of California and California State University transfers from its area’s high schools, a higher drop-out rate, and lower scores on recent statewide exams (DataQuest, 2015). Additionally, this region has fewer high school and college graduates, and higher rates of poverty and unemployment when compared to state averages (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). There is a shortage of highly-qualified teachers who have the content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and an equity mindset needed to influence change in achievement for all students. Within this context, it is vital to know what skills and perceptions principals believe teachers need in order to teach all students. Currently there is no
research from this region that looks at what characteristics a principal believes a teacher should have in order to teach all students. This is precisely what the current study seeks to understand.

**Purpose of the Study**

Many studies have concluded that teachers are the most important contributors to student achievement (Chetty, Freidman, Hilger, et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Other research has determined that the person who is most involved with shaping teacher skills is the principal (Leithwood & Louis, 2011; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). In fact, the principal is very influential in shaping the culture of the entire school (Leithwood & Louis, 2011; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). This culture is shaped through constant communication with teachers within the school site. Thus, with these research findings in mind, the purpose of this study was to understand what high school principals think teachers need to know in order to teach all students, regardless of race, gender, ability, or socioeconomic status.

**Research Question and Methodological Overview**

The primary purpose of this research was to investigate which qualities high school principals think are required for teachers in attaining an equity mindset in order to teach all students. More specifically, the research question is: What do school principals think new teachers need to know, be able to do, and have a disposition to ensure equity within their classroom?

A theoretical lens was used to guide and organize qualitative research. Creswell (2013) suggests that this lens can provide a transformative perspective that
can mold the kinds of questions asked. Maxwell (2012) adds that the lens a researcher has is associated with the systems of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that support and inform his or her research (p.39). I base my operational definitions of the terms embedded in the research question on a social justice foundation as outlined in my review of existing literature (see Chapter II).

There are three main terms within the research question I would like to define using this theoretical lens, the first being “know,” followed by the term “do,” and finally “disposition.” I define know as “the knowledge base that principals believe all new teachers need in order to teach all students equitably.” The term do refers to the actions that teachers actually take within the classroom in order to ensure equity. And, the term disposition refers to the equity consciousness a teacher must have in order to be an equity advocate for all students. Table 1 provides the operational definitions I use, along with what principals may expect to see in relation to these terms.
Table 1

*Clarification of Terms within the Research Question*

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<th>Term</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Principals’ Expectations</th>
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<td>Know</td>
<td>Knowledge base required to ensure an equitable education (e.g., knowledge of content and curriculum).</td>
<td>Knowledge newly-credentialed teachers should have with regard to equity within their classrooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do</td>
<td>What the teachers actually do in the classroom in order to ensure equity (e.g., pedagogy, high-leverage teaching skills).</td>
<td>What teachers should be able to do in regard to equity within their classrooms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposition</td>
<td>Equity consciousness needed to ensure equitable outcomes for all students (e.g., critical consciousness, advocacy, etc.).</td>
<td>What level of equity consciousness a new teacher must have in order to be an equity advocate for all students.</td>
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The research design, discussed in detail in Chapter III, employs a qualitative approach. Eleven (11) high school principals in northern California were interviewed in order to answer the overarching research question. Document analysis was performed before the interviews in order to gather insight into the principals’ backgrounds and the schools’ demographics.

**Objectives**

The first objective of this study was to establish a rapport and build a collegial relationship with the participants so that there would be an open dialogue/response during the interviews. The second objective was to construct knowledge by exploring the principals’ perceptions regarding what makes teachers successful with all types of students. The third and final objective of this study was to investigate variations in perceptions about equity and teaching all students as these relates to teacher education, administrator education, the teacher evaluation process, and the choices pertaining to professional development for teachers and administrators.
Significance of the Study

Within the region in northern California where this study took place, it was important to understand what principals know in regard to the skills teachers need in order to teach all students. I sought to find out what the next steps should be in the quest to create equity for all. More specifically, if this research revealed that principals do know what it takes for teachers to create equitable classrooms, then my focus should move toward addressing why change is not occurring. Perhaps the solution would be changing perceptions and attitudes, or addressing the evaluation process. On the other hand, if the study revealed that principals are not able to identify what is needed to create equity within schools, then the focus would move to critiquing administrator preparatory programs and adjusting educational leadership standards in order to ensure a focus on equity. Regardless of the outcome, the significance is clear: without knowing what principals know about equitable teaching skills and perceptions, I could not be diagnostic in my approach to determining the next steps in creating equity for all students.

Dissertation Overview

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. In Chapter I, I have introduced the study, providing context for the research problem. In the literature review presented in Chapter II, I analyze current research on teacher and administrator preparation programs in regard to equity, characteristics of equitable teachers and principals, and barriers to equity that teachers and principals face. Chapter III discusses the research design, including the methodological framework,
participant selection and analysis procedures, data collection and analysis procedures, and trustworthiness. Chapter IV describes the findings of the research. Finally, in Chapter V, I discuss the implications of the findings.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines in-depth the literature available in regard to the research question: What do school principals think new teachers need to know, be able to do, and have the disposition for in order to ensure equity within their classroom? Figure 1 illustrates a concept map of some key themes that came about in this chapter from a macro- to a micro-analysis.

Figure 1: Concept Map Summarizing the Key Concepts Addressed in the Literature Review
This literature review primarily focused on teachers and principals. The first examination of the literature included how pre-service teachers can be prepared to have a social justice mindset. This was followed by what the research implies regarding the characteristics needed by teachers to teach all students. The next section reviews literature on how administration preparatory programs can prepare principals with a social justice mindset. Lastly, barriers that may hold teachers and administrators back from reaching all students and providing an equitable education for all are examined.

**Teachers as Change Agents**

Creating this overarching theme of equity is a good starting point, but how do we attack this in the U.S. public schools? As previously mentioned, I argue that we must address this problem “in the trenches,” meaning that we must start with teachers. The literature showed that teachers have an important role as they have the greatest impact on student achievement. Sanders and Rivers (1996) showed that students who had a high-performing teacher for three years had a 52% difference on the Fifth Grade Tennessee Mathematics Exam when compared to students who had a low-performing teacher.

In the previous chapter, I noted the income achievement gap as an equity issue. Chetty, Friedman, & Rockoff, (2011) conducted a study involving 11,571 students in grades K–3. The researchers used a value-added approach to see how teacher quality affected students’ earnings when they reached age 27. The findings suggested that a single standard deviation improvement in teacher quality in a single
year would, by age 27, generate earnings gains between $107,000 and $214,000 for a classroom of 20 students (p. 1,657). The Cheety, Friedman, & Rockoff study was based on a value-added methodology which, while not comprehensive, still sent a strong message. The results express that teachers are important to student success.

Darling-Hammond (2000) further expressed the teacher’s importance by noting, “Teacher quality variables appear to be more strongly related to student achievement than class sizes, overall spending levels, or teacher salaries” (pp.32-33). She added, “The research indicates that the effects of well prepared teachers on student achievement can be stronger than influences of student background factors, such as poverty, language background, and minority status” (pp. 32–33). Thus, the research supports the notion that teachers are the main driving force for academic achievement. School leaders and teacher education programs need to focus on building the skills necessary for teachers to produce classrooms of equity and, in turn, schools of equity.

**Program Standards and Equity**

The National Council for Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE) and the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) both provide accreditation to teacher education programs in California (although the NCATE no longer exists, it is important to acknowledge its focus on equity for historical reference). Both organizations include equity within their mission and value statements. For example, as part of its mission and scope, NCATE (2008) had a call to action with two teacher competencies related to social justice:
- Demonstrate fairness in educational settings by meeting the educational needs of all students in a caring, non-discriminatory, and equitable manner.

- Understand the impact of discrimination based on race, class, gender, disability/exceptionality, sexual orientation, and language on students and their learning (pp. 11–12).

Likewise, CCTC (2014) has noted that the organization “value[s] and promote[s] equity, quality, inclusiveness and diversity in standards, practices, people, and the workplace” (p. 1). Moreover, the first standard in the California Standards for the Teaching Professions (CSTP) is “Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning” (CCTC, 2014, p. 4). Lastly, the TPEs include numerous areas that address inclusivity and equity (CCTC, 2016).

If standards and mission statements tell us education for all is important, then what characteristics are needed from teacher education programs in order to ensure that the needs of all students are met? The next section looks at the research surrounding the outcomes of teacher education as it relates to equity and social justice. Cochran-Smith (2004) described this quest for transformation by stating, “As we define outcomes of teacher education, we need to keep social justice issues front and center in our considerations. We need to preserve a place for critique in the face of consensus” (p. 208). I briefly look at different philosophies of teacher education as they relate to equity, and then turn to teacher education programmatic outcomes that most commonly present themselves in the literature. I then briefly explore an
ideology which the literature shows to be detrimental to movement toward equity in the classroom.

**Social Justice Concepts in Teacher Education**

The current trend teacher education programs are focusing on is preparing teachers who can work with every type of student. Cochran-Smith (2008) suggested four tactics that can be used by teacher education programs to prepare teachers to have a deep sense of equity and social justice: 1) critique of knowledge, 2) culturally-conscious interpretive frames, 3) methods and strategies that overtly address equity/inequality, and 4) advocacy and activism that call attention to systematic injustice. What these ideas have in common is that teachers need to learn social justice concepts starting from within their mindset or consciousness, then move on to pedagogy skills. Even though the wording may change a bit, these concepts were listed in the literature many times as a way to prepare teachers for work toward equity and social justice (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich, 2009).

In another example, Nieto (2000) presented seven items that should be included in teacher education programs to meet equity goals: 1) critical pedagogy, 2) community and collaboration, 3) reflection, 4) social/critical consciousness, 5) social change and change agents, 6) culture and identity, and 7) analysis of power. Cochran-Smith (2008) and Nieto (2000) agreed that teachers must be critical, culturally-proficient advocates who are able to address power relations. It is worth noting that Nieto (2000) also addressed the concept of developing community and collaboration.
This is an important overarching theme when trying to transform a system that includes systemic inequities.

I use a combination of these concepts to shed light on current research on teacher education programs and their approaches to preparing equity conscious teachers. These concepts include *curriculum integration* of social justice/equity ideologies within the coursework, *promotion of a critical consciousness* in teachers, and the *creation of teachers as activists*. It is important to refer to the research question and the operational definitions described in Table 1 when looking at these three concepts. Integration of a social justice curriculum more closely aligns with the knowledge – or *know* – base a teacher must have. Promotion of a critical consciousness and the creation of teachers as activists align with the *disposition* of a teacher. Lastly the creation of teachers as activists aligns more closely to the *do* or the action done by a teacher.

**Social Justice Curriculum Integration in Teacher Education**

The fourth NCATE (2008) standard states that teacher credentialing programs should include a curriculum, field experience, and clinical practice focused on diversity. More specifically, candidates need to “understand the influence of culture and education and acquire the ability to develop meaningful experiences for all students” (pp. 34–36). It is important to state that the terms “diversity,” “equity,” and “social justice” are often used interchangeably. *Social justice* and *equity* can often be interpreted to mean the same thing, and are often used interchangeably. However, it is worth some attention that, in many ways, *diversity* has turned into a benign term
without much substance and therefore cannot be substituted for the other terms (Gay, 2000).

McDonald and Ziechner (2009) explained that teacher candidates should be exposed to social justice pedagogy and social justice philosophies during their teacher education preparation. As Nieto (2000) explained, teacher education programs must weave a social justice perspective throughout the program and “promote teaching as a lifelong journey of transformation” (p. 184). This is not as simple as just having a diversity course, since, as Nieto concluded, most such courses do not address social justice concepts and avoid asking difficult questions related to access, equity, and social justice. Teaching students how to ask questions about equity teaches them to be critical thinkers.

**Teacher Education for Critical Consciousness**

When teachers are critical of their teaching world—including curricular aspects of that world—they create a valuable lens for examining equity. However, the research suggested that if a teacher is to truly understand equity issues, s/he must look within her/himself. In order to address the tough issues regarding equity in education, teachers must first deconstruct their own previously-held assumptions, then put on the critical lens. In the literature, the term *critical consciousness* is used to explain this process. Ukpokodu (2007) addressed this by stating, “It is critical that teachers learn to deconstruct who they are as socio-cultural/racial beings and how their socio-cultural/racial worldview and positionalities might influence their thinking, perception, knowledge base, relationship, and practice” (p. 4).
Deconstruction in order to discover truth has been expressed by others in the literature as well. Palmer (1998) made reference to the development of a critical awareness from within in order to discover absolute truth (pp.30-32) and Jennings (1995) used the term “critical social consciousness” as a primary concept in order to educate for social justice and to affirm diversity (p. 243). The common theme in the literature is that pre-service teachers must unlearn before they learn, and part of this process is self-reflective and critical. Cochran-Smith (1995) addressed this by stating, “We must unlearn racism.” She explained that “we must interrogate the racist assumptions that are deeply embedded in the courses and curricula we teach” (p. 117).

In their book on work with in-service teachers and school reform, Skrla, McKenzie, and Scheurich (2009) used the term equity consciousness. They described four key beliefs that someone with equity consciousness should have:

- That all children (except only a very small percentage, e.g., those with profound disabilities) are capable of high levels of academic success;
- That “all children” means all, regardless of a child’s race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, learning differences, culture, language, religion, and so on;
- That the adults in schools are primarily responsible for student learning; and,
- That traditional school practices may work for some students, but are not working for all children. Therefore, if we are going to eliminate the achievement gap, it requires a change in our practices (pp. 82–83).
As Skrla and colleagues explained, teachers’ levels of equity consciousness are diverse. For example, “authentic equity consciousness” is the highest level; teachers who possess authentic equity consciousness “have it, understand it, and live it on a daily basis” (p. 84). I contend that this level of equity consciousness is needed in order for teachers to advocate for all children (discussed in greater detail in the next section).

**Teacher Education for Advocacy**

The literature argued that in order to teach for equity, in-service teachers must have a social justice mindset toward their students which directly affects how they organize their classrooms and the curricula. Many researchers defined this social justice mindset as one in which the teacher has an activist or socio-political view on education (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Freire, 1970; Greene, 1998; Kriesburg, 1992). Cochran-Smith (2004) explained that the educational community is not sure what the professional image is for teachers, and that it is not clear if teachers are explicitly taught to fight antiracist initiatives or to function as activists, though this assertion is made despite that the first standard of the CSTP pertains to providing equal educational access to all (CCTC, 2014, p.4).

Few would argue publicly against the idea that an educator’s role is to ensure equitable delivery of education to every child. The teacher with an activist mindset would be more likely to embrace the role of a social change agent in the face of injustice within the basic tenets of a democratic society. The teacher as an activist would not let bystander indifference keep him or her from doing what is morally
right. Thus, a main goal of teacher education should be to develop the political consciousness and ideological background to be able to recognize the inequalities then challenge them in order to make things morally right (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

The concept of preparing a teacher to be an activist can be described using different terms. The book *Using Equity Audits to Create Equitable and Excellent Schools* (Skrla, McKenzie & Scheurich, 2009) defined this role as an equity-orientated change agent, using seven key characteristics:

1. Having an equity attitude;
2. Avoiding demonizations;
3. Initiating courageous conversations;
4. Demonstrating persistence;
5. Remaining committed but patient;
6. Maintaining an assets attitude; and,
7. Maintaining a coherent focus.

The term *equity agent* is synonymous with *civil rights worker* or *change agent*, as described by Cochran-Smith (2004).

As previously addressed, integrating social justice and equity into the curriculum, developing a critical consciousness, and fostering the teacher as an activist can lead to a teacher with an equity mindset. The literature suggested that the inclusion of these three components can help prepare a teacher who is ready to teach all students, regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, or ability level. The
next question, then, is what would such a classroom look like? In other words, what does teaching for all students look like?

**Teaching Skills for All Students**

A summary of eight skills that all teachers need in order to teach all students can be found in Skrla, McKenzie and Scheurich’s *Using Equity Audits to Create Equitable and Excellent Schools* (2009):

1. Using consistent routines;
2. Clearly communicating expectations for learning;
3. Stimulating students with high-level and complex tasks;
4. Ensuring students are actively, cognitively engaged;
5. Extending student learning through teacher-to-student and student-to-student discussion and frequently assessing individual student learning;
6. Differentiating instruction to meet individual student needs and capitalizing on individual assets;
7. Using an asset model to respond to students’ varying cultures; and,
8. Demonstrating respect and care in all interactions with all students and students’ families.

This list corresponded to other research pertaining to high-quality teaching skills (e.g., Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter, 2012). It is important to reference Table 1 when looking at this list of eight items. Within these high-leverage teaching skills, Items #1 through #6 are aligned with what teacher must do in the classroom. Items #7 and #8 address the disposition a teacher must have. Along with these eight
traits, research on high quality teaching skills also references terms such as “culturally relevant pedagogy,” “equity pedagogy,” and “teaching for social justice.”

“Teaching for all students” has also been labeled *culturally relevant pedagogy*, which Ladson-Billings (1995) defined as “a pedagogy of oppression not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment” (p.160). Further, she argued:

Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and, (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the current status quo of the social order. (p. 160)

The term *social justice pedagogy* has also been used in the literature to describe these teaching characteristics. Giroux (1992) defined social justice pedagogy as a “deliberate attempt to construct authentic conditions through which educators and students can think critically about what stands as knowledge, how knowledge is produced, and how knowledge is transformed” (p. 99). *Equity pedagogy* is another title used to describe equitable teaching traits. Banks and Banks (1995) defined equity pedagogy as “teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and help create and perpetuate, a just, humane, and democratic society” (p. 152).
Based on the literature, I question whether the terms *culturally relevant pedagogy*, *social justice pedagogy*, and *equity pedagogy* are synonymous in regard to the overarching theme to teach all students at a high level. In order to teach for all students, the literature suggested that teachers embrace diversity, engage the students in knowledge construction, and create a critical consciousness within the students.

**Embracing diversity.** One key characteristic found among teachers with an equity mindset is that they embrace diversity. *Embracing diversity* was a common theme in the literature, though it has been expressed through terms such as *asset model* (Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich, 2009) and *cultural competence* (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) illustrated the use of equity as an asset by arguing, “…embracing diversity is not just acknowledging or seeing it, but also affirming it as an asset” (pp. 73–74). Research on using diversity as a strength suggested that the teacher must first understand the meaning of diversity and how it is associated with his/her own life, as well as students’ lives (Banks & Banks, 1995, p. 157). Using diversity as a strength employs an asset mindset toward differences that goes beyond monthly celebrations of races or annual multicultural potlucks. The construction of new knowledge by students allows teachers to more fully understand the perspectives of diverse student bodies.

**Construction of knowledge.** Equitable classrooms allow students and teachers to engage in the construction of knowledge. This is vital in that 21st century skills and the Common Core movement require students to think differently and form alternative solutions. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2015) developed a
framework of skills needed for students to be successful with learning in this day and age. Two of the key skills listed are creativity and critical thinking, and a strong argument can be made that both are needed for knowledge construction. Banks and Banks (1995) addressed this concept of knowledge formation in discussing equity pedagogy, which they described as allowing students to make their own meanings and to question knowledge. Creativity and critical thinking are not only useful tools for knowledge formation, they are also vital for the development of the critical consciousness in students.

**Critical consciousness in students.** The act of developing a critical consciousness – or, as previously mentioned, equity consciousness – has already been explored in regard to the teacher’s mind. However, research also showed that in order for a classroom to be equitable, the teacher must foster a critical consciousness among students. Beyer (2001) and Ríos, Stowell, Christopher, and McDaniel (1997) both suggested using a social justice approach to increase students’ awareness of inequality issues. Ladson-Billings (1998) concurred: “Beyond those individual characteristics of academic achievement and cultural competence, students must develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores, and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities” (p. 162).

In sum, educators are more likely to create successful students if they allow them to ask questions and derive alternative solutions. Teachers will be more likely to have equitable classrooms if they embrace diversity, encourage knowledge
construction, and foster critical consciousness among students. It is important to note these three concepts align with what the teacher is willing to do. This willingness to do is also directly correlated with the teacher’s particular disposition. Simply put, if a teacher possesses an equity-centered mindset and personality traits aligned with that mindset, then they are more willing to engage in activities such as developing a critical consciousness in students. As I discuss in the next section, teachers will not be able to make such a significant change within the classroom alone. They need supportive and active principals who are willing to move toward more equitable classrooms.

**Principals as Change Agents**

As described earlier, a great portion of the literature averred that teachers are the most important change agents in schools. However, there was countering research that suggested that principals are the most influential individuals on school campuses. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) argued that principals are responsible for the climate, attitudes of teachers, organization of curriculum and instruction, and students’ opportunities to learn, among other areas. These authors cited the 1977 U.S. Senate Committee Report on Equal Educational Opportunity which “identified the principal as the single most influential person in a school” (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 5). I do not make the argument that the principal is a more vital contributor than the teacher when it comes to student success. However, I do continue with the premise that in order for teachers to be at their best, they need quality principals supporting them. I would argue that the teacher/principal
relationship is symbiotic as they both need to be on the same page regarding what it
takes for all students to be successful. With this in mind, I turn to the principal’s role
in providing equity within education by analyzing administrators’ preparation for
equity and the characteristics of equitable administrators.

Within the literature on administration preparation programs as they pertain to
equity, there was some alignment with the teacher education program literature
analysis. In both cases, three main themes come to the surface: *curriculum
integration* in programs, *development of a critical consciousness* for pre-service
administrators, and the *promotion of advocacy for the underserved* within the
educational system.

**Curriculum Integration in Administrator Training**

Curriculum integration pertains to providing social justice and equity concepts
throughout principal preparation programs. Brown (2004a) discussed this, coming to
the conclusion that social justice and equity issues should be integrated within the full
master schedule. According to Brown (2004a), this type of integration includes an
analysis of the “systematic nature of inequities reproduced daily” (p. 93). This would
go beyond the traditional approach of providing a diversity course. Rather, Brown
(2004a) suggested that the concepts of social justice and equity should be integrated
program-wide. Further, Jean-Marie, Normore, and Brooks (2009) explained that
leadership preparation programs in education need to develop a broader sense of
understanding in regard to social justice, democracy, and equity (p. 19). Both Brown
(2004a) and Jean-Marie and colleagues (2009) alluded to the idea that administrative
preparation programs need to turn the focus away from individualistic ideas and more toward big picture items. By being critical of the systematic nature of inequalities, administrators can start to develop a moral obligation to fix the broken system of public education.

**Critical Consciousness in Administrators**

The literature clearly stated that in order to give principals the skills necessary to be willing and able to challenge current structures, and thus create access and opportunity for all students, a critical consciousness component must be included in administration preparation programs. Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian (2006) defined critical consciousness as “curriculum or content that raises student [i.e., pre-service administrators] consciousness about power, privilege, and associated issues, for example, white racism, heterosexism, and the ways schools are typically structured to perpetuate power inequities” (p. 214). This approach equips future principals to challenge their own personal past assumptions. Jean-Marie and colleagues (2009) directly addressed how the concept of the critical consciousness interrelates with principal preparation by stating, “leadership preparation programs should promote opportunities for critical reflection, leadership praxis, critical discourse, and develop critical pedagogy related to issues of ethics, inclusion, democratic schooling, and social justice” (p. 20). In both cases, integrating the critical consciousness by administration preparation faculty is looked at as a way to challenge the status quo.
Hernandez and Marshall (2009) expanded on this concept of critical consciousness in claiming that administration preparation programs should teach students that we as humans have a multitude of world views. Based on this concept, the suggestion is that professors of administration preparation programs should teach future administrators to question whether their own worldviews are good for students. Understanding that one’s own worldview may be harmful for students is only one step, however, the leader who develops a critical consciousness must also take action.

**Preparation for Advocacy Among Administrators**

Educational leaders cannot stop with a critical consciousness in order to produce change. To have a school of equity, administrators must see educating for all as a moral obligation (Evans, 2007). In addition, Jean-Marie, Normore, and Brooks (2009) suggested that school leaders must become advocates in order to produce positive change. As previously stated, this goes beyond just having a critical consciousness because it requires action. Parker and Shapiro (1992) more specifically claimed that principals need to be advocates for the disadvantaged. This can include populations disadvantaged by race, gender, ability level, ethnicity, etc.

Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian (2006) further asserted that principals need to have a good understanding of power relations in order to be advocates, and they must act on this understanding. For example, the authors specifically addressed the idea that principals should understand how language acquisition, reading and math curriculum and instruction, pull-out programs, disabilities, and data affect power relations in schools. The combination of curriculum integration, development of a
critical consciousness, and advocacy within administrative preparatory programs can create valuable skills that principals in our diverse schools truly need.

**Equity-Oriented Administrator Characteristics**

When curriculum integration, development of a critical consciousness, and promotion of advocacy are brought together, it is possible to see connections between what is needed in administrator and teacher education preparatory programs in order to create equity for all students. It is important to note that the individual characteristics teachers and principals possess, and what they actually do, are directly related. Furthermore, personal qualities discussed earlier in regards to what is needed by teacher educators to be successful in creating an equitable classroom are diverse. The characteristics needed for principals to be equitable leaders in schools are just as varied.

Skrla, McKenzie, and Scheurich (2009) coined the term *equity orientated change agent* to refer to the skills educators need, the focus being that leaders’ primary goal should be to create equity within the school. The research shows that a wide range of skills and individual characteristics are needed for a principal to be successful in creating a school environment where all students can succeed. Furman (2004) cited a series of essential communication skills, including listening with respect, striving for knowing and understanding others, and working on teams. Herrity and Glasman (2010) interviewed 27 “expert” principals on what they thought new principals needed to know in order to be successful with culturally and
linguistically diverse populations. The authors concluded that knowledge of the following was essential (p. 64):

- The rationale and theory of bilingual education
- Second language acquisition
- Bilingual instructional methodology
- Organizational models and scheduling for bilingual instruction
- Awareness of cultural norms and diversity issues
- Pragmatics related to diversity

Finally, Touchton and Acker-Hocevar (2001) directed attention toward the importance of principals’ knowledge of poverty and how it affects student success. They addressed concepts such as effective pedagogical techniques for students of poverty and how the context of poverty affects the community and school.

In terms of actions within the school setting, Theoharis (2007) inferred that successful educational leaders’ main focus needs to be the elimination of marginalization in schools, and that in correcting these marginalizing conditions, schools will become more inclusive. Theoharis (2007) learned that successful leaders “restructured their schools by eliminating pullout/segregated programs, such as tracked math classes, and pullout/self-contained special education or ELL services” (p. 310).

The scope of skills listed above is extensive. However, the literature clearly articulated how effective equitable administrators operate and what skills they need in order to mimic successful experiences for all students. This leads to the question of
whether that is, in fact, possible. More precisely, if the literature is clear on what is required in order to prepare teachers and principals with an equity mindset, why is it not happening?

To this point, the literature showed some concrete ways in which teacher and administrator preparatory programs can develop change agents who can give rise to equitable schools. However, this phenomenon is not occurring as evidenced by ongoing achievement gaps based on race, socioeconomic statuses, and ability levels (California Department of Education, 2016). For whatever reason, we are not focusing on the type of work that creates equitable schools (California Department of Education, 2016). It is alarming to fathom that remedies to fix these achievement gaps in America may be available but aren’t being used by educators. This is especially concerning if we believe that schools can be the great equalizer among U.S. citizens. Unfortunately, it is clear that something needs to change in order to close the achievement gap (Edmonds, 1979)

**Barriers to Teaching All Students**

Literature pertaining to the barriers that are keeping teachers and principals from creating an environment in schools where all students learn was exhaustive and the list of barriers was extensive. Yet, it is important to note that the two main concepts that occurred most often in the current literature—for both teachers and administrators—are *deficit thinking* and a *lack of equity focus*.
Deficit Thinking

Deficit thinking is an alarming barrier that is preventing teachers from addressing equity issues. There are currently U.S. teachers who do not believe all students can succeed; Skrla and colleagues (2009) cited the 2009 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher which showed that “only 36% of teachers and 51% of principals believe that all of their students have the ability to succeed academically” (p. 3). This finding was astonishing given the fact that our schools are so diverse. It begs the question, who do these teachers and principals believe can be successful and who do they believe cannot be successful?

Howard (2010) elaborated on this issue by asserting that if students are shown to be academically deficient, they are often looked at in a negative way. Diamond, Randolph, and Spillane (2004) conducted a study wherein they interviewed teachers on their beliefs about student success. They found that “when students were majority African American and low-income, teachers held more deficit-oriented beliefs about them than when students were majority white or Chinese, or when a higher percentage came from middle-income families” (p. 93). Because some teachers can and do have negative views of minority students in regard to their ability to achieve, the development of a critical consciousness could challenge this thinking (Capper et al., 2006). In confronting deficit thinking, teachers can speak openly about what the focus should be and how to get there.

Lack of Equity Focus

Literature shows that messages communicated to teachers through induction
programs, teacher evaluations, and teacher preparation programs are not focused on equity. Pinto et al. (2012) pointed to this when discussing teacher induction programs. These support programs are often required for teachers during their first two years of employment. Even though induction programs have good intentions, the research suggests that the focus of these programs is based solely on technical skills rather than the development of an equity mindset. And having an equity mindset will undoubtedly make teachers more likely to be advocates for social justice.

Pinto et al. (2012) concluded that because teachers are not directed to focus on their own biases, they tend to look at the evaluation criteria in teacher performance assessments (TPAs) for guidance. TPAs are used as an assessment tool for new teachers in order to move from a preliminary credential to a clear credential. California has its own version of the TPA called CTPA, and not one of the CTPA’s eight chapters has a focus on equity (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2009). As Pinto et al. (2012) argued, this focus on TPAs does not allow for a transformational approach or the development of a critical consciousness, but rather allows an approach that enforces the status quo.

California teachers are evaluated based on the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2009):

- Standard 1: Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning
- Standard 2: Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning
• Standard 3: Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Student Learning

• Standard 4: Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students

• Standard 5: Assessing Students for Learning

• Standard 6: Developing as a Professional Educator

Only two of these standards (1 and 4) were related to equity. Moreover, within the entire 22-page CSTP document, equity was only listed once as a term and there was no mention of integrating critical thought into the curriculum, developing a critical consciousness in students, or construction of knowledge, all concepts that have showed promise in the promotion of equity per the literature (Banks & Banks, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998). This lack of focus on creating equity and the push to keep power relations intact creates a culture where change is looked at as negative and anything that threatens the current culture is viewed as a deficit.

**Barriers to Principals’ Desire for Equity**

Principals wanting to make a transformational change for equity are often faced with resistance. Theoharis (2008) conducted an autoethnography on seven urban principals which looked to examine the resistance they faced when pursuing an equity-orientated agenda. Theoharis (2008) identified eight main concepts encompassing the idea of resistance: 1) parent expectations; 2) scope of the principalship; 3) momentum of the status quo; 4) obstructive staff attitudes; 5) bureaucracy; 6) lack of resources; 7) harmful state and federal regulations; and, 8)
principal preparation. According to Theoharis (2008), many of the administrators faced such deliberate discouragement that it actually took a personal toll on them. This is harmful as it shows that even if a principal wants to pursue an equity agenda, s/he is faced with huge barriers. Once again, a deficit mindset and a lack of focus on equity play a major part.

**Deficit Thinking**

One of the barriers principals (and teachers) come across is deficit thinking. This can include a principal’s own deficit thinking and/or the thinking of others.

Ryan (2003) interviewed 35 principals to see how they viewed racism in diverse schools. He found that many principals did not see racism as an issue and thus considered racism as insignificant. Ryan (2003) concluded that the administrators were not addressing racism because they either did not recognize it or they did not want to, in part because they benefitted from its operation. Ryan (2003) explained this by stating how the administrator is placed in a position where they have reaped the rewards of the system. Added to this is the fact that the system has provided them with a good living and an elite status. He further explained that the administrator is now in a position wherein he/she must support the system that has given him/her these benefits (p.161). This desire to maintain the status quo and keep power at bay overtly enhances the creation and propagation of deficit thinking. As Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, and Nolly (2004) noted, the deficit mentality that educators have about equity – and lack thereof – can act as a resisting force to social justice.
The deficit mindset not only contributes to how people feel about our difficult schools, but also to how people view minorities in general, making it extremely dangerous (Skrla, McKenzie & Scheurich, 2009). Flessa (2009) interviewed four principals of urban schools and found that they viewed the schools’ issues as being outside the school. Furthermore, they often cited the parents and the community as being the culprits. Clycq, Nouwen, and Vandebroucke (2014) found similar results when they conducted factor analyses and ethnography to explore common school successes and failures. They found that “deficit thinking is often present in the discourses of school personnel and a conflict perspective seems predominant in the relationship between the school and the [minority] home environment” (p. 813). By making the parents and the community the issue, principals and school staff maintain the status quo power balance because the school is not willing to look at the places that need to change. Therefore, there is no pressure to have an equity agenda because the beneficiaries are those with the least amount of power or influence. In turn, the deficit model diverts the focus of the principal away from equity, the opposite effect desired by an equity consciousness. Skrla et al. (2009) listed one of the main components of having an equity consciousness as on-campus adults being those most responsible for student learning.

**Lack of Equity Focus**

Similar to teachers, principals also face the barrier of having a limited focus on equity issues within their day-to-day activities. It is worth noting that the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSEL), which was
created by WestEd and the Association of California School Administrators, is used in most school districts to evaluate principals in California. These standards include six indicators of success for all students; within all six indicators, there is only one sentence about cultural diversity and the word “equity” appears only twice (West Ed, 2014). It is obvious that there is an effort to address equity concerns, yet it is a stretch to say that equity is the focus, especially when the word is written only twice in the entire structure by which principals are to be assessed.

This lack of focus on equity issues is evident at school sites as well. As Pinto et al. (2012) explained, “Overwhelmingly, school administrators placed the greatest emphasis on classroom management/organization, teaching/learning to address learner differences and curriculum/policy knowledge as priorities for new teacher induction over social justice” (p. 9). It is important to note that school administrators did mention that addressing learner differences is important. This finding could suggest that these school administrators do consider the issue of equity. However, I would argue, as does the research, that the focus on equity is usually narrow if at all. Brown (2004b) suggested that traditional and technical leadership is what is valued most. Angus (1994) labeled some of these technical skills, including management, decision-making, delegation, motivation, communication, planning, and leadership. With the focus on technical skills, the equity agenda gets put aside. In fact, one can argue that leaders who are actively pursuing an equity agenda may have their competence questioned (Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001).

A variety of different conclusions can be drawn about why equity is not a
primary focus. Glass (2003), for example, suggested that high stakes achievement tests have directed our focus away from solving social problems. Regardless of the culprit, it is obvious that equity is not a focus for principals. In fact, many cannot even define “equity” appropriately. Pinto et al. (2012) interviewed 41 principals on their perceptions of the role and importance of equity for principals and, in this context, many administrators inaccurately defined the concept. The authors explained: “Equity definitions tended to focus on learning styles or special needs rather than on issues of race, class, gender, and so forth” (p. 10).

**Summary and Conclusion**

This literature review was based on a few premises. First, education is currently not meeting the needs of all students. Second, in order to meet the needs of all students, the focus of education must be on equity. And third, the teacher is the person best suited to carrying out the mission for equity at the school site. In the preceding sections, I looked at what characteristics are needed in teacher education programs in order to produce equitable schools. I found three main themes: *curriculum integration of equity concepts, development of critical consciousness*, and *creation of the teacher as advocate*. I then looked at the characteristics that teachers need to drive the equity movement in schools. Once again, three main themes came to the surface: *embracing diversity, knowledge construction*, and *development of critical consciousness within students*.

Next, I explored literature on administrator programs and the creation of leaders of equity. The themes of embracing diversity, knowledge construction, and
development of critical consciousness overlapped with what I found with respect to teacher education programs. I looked at common characteristics among equitable administrators and found they were varied, showing how the scope of principalship is vast. Finally, I examined barriers that have been identified in the literature and found that administrators and teachers both face deficit thinking and a lack of focus on equity.

There was limited research on high school principals’ perceptions of the skills an equitable teacher needs to teach all students. This is precisely why the current study is necessary. I analyzed high school principals’ perceptions toward the question, *What do incoming teachers need to know, understand, and be able to do in order to teach all kids in an equitable manner?* If principals do not have a good understanding of what skills a teacher needs in order to be equitable, then there is a high likelihood that the status quo will be replicated. Without such an understanding, principals will not know what characteristics to look for when hiring, and they surely will not be able to evaluate teachers appropriately. If the language of equity is not brought to the surface within the principal/teacher relationship, then education for all will not be attainable.

Chapter III explores the methods used in the study. The organization of the chapter includes a detailed explanation of the research design, data collection, and data analysis.
CHAPTER III

METHODS

Schwandt (2007) stated that research should take the form of an argument that looks to connect “theoretical claims, method, and empirical claims” (p.265). This section maps out the process I used to collect data to answer my research question, and in turn, create meaning of the arguments staged through Chapters I and II. First, I briefly discuss the purpose of my study and the research question, then I outline the research design and data analysis methods. Finally, I transparently discuss the evaluative structures I used to ensure the trustworthiness of my study.

School principals evaluate and hire new teachers and therefore play a vital role in ensuring that all students achieve academic and social success. My study sought to capture high school principals’ perceptions of the skills new teachers need in order to teach all students equitably. Specifically, the research was guided by the following research question as stated and operationally defined in Chapter I: What do school principals think new teachers need to know, be able to do, and have a disposition to ensure equity within their classroom? In order to answer this question, I employed a qualitative research design.
Research Design

The term qualitative can be difficult to define concretely, but researchers have developed some basic assumptions regarding qualitative inquiry and what it means (Glesne, 2011; Schwandt, 2007). Glesne (2011) defined qualitative research as “a type of research that focuses on qualities such as words or observations that are difficult to quantify and that lend themselves to interpretation or deconstruction” (p. 283). Unlike in quantitative approaches, qualitative researchers use the data collected to look for patterns but not to reduce to a number or norm (Creswell, 2014). Indeed, as Schwandt (2007) noted, one of the tasks of qualitative inquiry is to understand the meaning of human action through non-numeric data. As such, I employed a qualitative approach in this study because I wanted to understand the perceptions of high school principals. These perceptions are non-numeric and consequently cannot be described accurately using numeric or quantitative means. The design of this study can be defined as a “basic interpretive qualitative study.” As Merriam (2002) suggested, within a basic interpretive qualitative study the goal is to process the perspectives of people involved in the study.

Within the interpretivist paradigm it is assumed that reality is socially constructed and that the variables that make up this reality are complex and not easily understood (Glesne, 2011). Therefore, the goal of interpretivist research is to “unearth meaning” (Schwandt, 2007) and to seek the answer to “what is” (Glesne, 2011). A qualitative research design that incorporates interpretivism is the most useful for this study as it seeks to learn how school principals make meaning and
perceive the “what is” in regard to equitable teaching practices.

**Conceptual Framework**

This research makes a direct link from a qualitative approach to an activist research theme. Fine (1994) described a key aspect of activist research as the act of attaching “what it is to what it could be.” While utilization of the qualitative approach allowed me to examine principals’ perceptions of “what is,” the activist research theme enabled me as the researcher to make connections to “what it could be” in regard to the equitable education for all students. This link between the interpretivist approach and activist research enables the outcome of the research to have possible social justice implications in regard to equity within schools.

In many ways, social justice is also an ambiguous term in that it has been defined in numerous ways (Bogotch, 2002; Connell, 1993; Dantley & Tillman, 2006). For this study, I used the frame that Theoharis (2007) created in terms of his focus on social justice. According to Theoharis (2007), the focus of social justice is to address and eliminate the marginalization in schools on the basis of race, class, gender, disability, and sexual orientation. This social justice theme aligns with my personal belief that all children can learn at high levels, regardless of their differences. I followed Maxwell’s (2013) suggestion to be careful within the research design to not let personal goals create any bias within my study.

**Research Sites**

The study was conducted within a particular region in northern California. According to DataQuest (2015), this area falls behind the state in many key areas:
higher dropout and truancy rates, more English language learners, and lower rates of people transferring into CSU and UC systems (DataQuest, 2015). The most recent U.S. Census report (2010) reveals that within this region 16.4% of people have a bachelor’s degree or higher versus the state average of 30.7%. It is evident that the area selected for the study is in great need of good teachers who can transform the mindsets of students.

Principals from 11 high schools in Northern California were invited to participate in the study. The high schools are located in three separate school districts in neighboring communities. As shown in Table 2, the number of students in each of the high schools ranged from 1,684 to 2,400. The proportion of students in special education spanned 8.2% to 12.6%. The proportion of students living below the federal poverty line spanned 41% to 87%. The percentage of students of color ranged from 60% to 99%, and the percentage of teachers of color varied from 17% to 26%. It is important to note that the average percentage of students of color from the high schools was 74%, while the average percentage of teachers of color was 21%.
Table 2

Participant High School Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Students in Special Ed (%)</th>
<th>Students in Poverty (%)</th>
<th>Students of Color (%)</th>
<th>Teachers of Color (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B</td>
<td>1,750</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School C</td>
<td>1,910</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School D</td>
<td>2,210</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School E</td>
<td>1,870</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School F</td>
<td>2,370</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School G</td>
<td>1,720</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>82</td>
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<tr>
<td>School H</td>
<td>1,680</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>School K</td>
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<td>9</td>
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</table>

*Note: All data retrieved from DataQuest via http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/*

The sites were appropriate for this research for two primary reasons. First, historically, the sites studied have had a diverse student population. This was vital in that the research question looked to address teaching qualities that would help all students be successful regardless of their race, ability, gender, etc. Secondly, the specific area studied had a need for this research. It was important for this particular region to have answers about how to reach all students in order to eradicate the pitfalls and the failures the region has experienced, such as high drop-out rates and lower rates of college attendance (DataQuest, 2015).
Selection of Participants

An interpretivist looks to examine the voices and experiences of individuals in order to gather their perceptions of reality (Glesne, 2011). The use of interviews allowed me to understand the epistemologies, voices, and experiences of the study participants. Specifically, I sought to understand the perspectives in regard to the research question of individuals with great power (e.g., principals). It is important to clarify that, in terms of “power,” I am referring to the ability of the principal to hire, fire, and evaluate new teachers. The participants in this study include 11 high school principals from three districts within a region of California. As shown in Table 3, the administrative experience within this group ranged from 5 to 21 years; years of teaching experience ranged from 4 to 14 years. The age range spanned from 30 years old to the upper fifties. The gender range consisted of 8 males and 3 females. During the interviews, 10 of the 11 participants self-identified as White, and 1 person identified as Latino. I thought this was a particularly unique finding as it showed a lack of minority representation within the region’s high school principal ranks. The large number of Caucasian principals is disproportionate to the area’s demographics. Lastly, the education levels of the 11 participants consisted of eight (8) with master’s degrees, two (2) having bachelor’s degrees, and one (1) having two master’s degrees. All principals worked at a comprehensive high school except for two (2), with one (1) working at a continuation school and the other (1) working at a charter school. Based on this information, as shown in Table 3, the participant list appears quite diverse in most areas except gender and ethnicity.
Table 3  

*Description of Interviewee Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Years of Admin Experience</th>
<th>Years of Teaching Experience</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Educational Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2 MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>BA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I identified principal participants from this northern California region using purposeful convenience selection (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). It is important to note that I use the term “selection” rather than “sampling”—while Schwandt (2007) used the term “sampling,” Maxwell (2013) made the case that the term is inappropriate for qualitative research as it implies representing a population. The research design did not permit that I could generalize findings. Instead, the study aimed to provide insight idiosyncratic to the particular setting in northern California; therefore, the term selection is more appropriate for my study.

The purposeful component of the selection logic was due to the relevance of the principals’ positions to the overarching research question, together with their
current setting within the particular districts being studied. According to Maxwell (2013), when using *purposeful selection* “settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to your questions or goals” (p. 97). In my study, principals could answer the research question in a more powerful way than could assistant principals due to the fact that they hire, evaluate, and fire teachers. It is vital that the person who hires, fires, and evaluates teachers understands what it takes for teachers to teach all students. That is why the principals’ perceptions were such an important data point for this study. Focusing on high school principals made the selection more homogeneous since the research isolated a particular subgroup of administrators (Glesne, 2011). Even though the selection was by convenience and on the basis of homogeneity, the intention was that the selection would still consist of a diverse set of individuals.

Finally, it is worth noting that I chose the principals based on their “convenience and availability” (Creswell, 2014, p. 158), although the purposeful component outweighed the convenience aspect. For example, I did not choose an assistant principal over a principal just because the assistant principal was a shorter drive away. By being purposeful, I maintained the legitimacy of the findings.

I began my list by looking through the websites of high schools within this particular region of northern California. Additionally, I employed *network selection* in order to find matching participants for my research. Network selection allowed me to “obtain knowledge of potential cases from people who know people” (Glesne, 2011, p. 45). The network selection was conducted by tapping into my own
connections, including colleagues, past professors, and classmates.

To recruit study participants, I sent a letter and the informed consent form to all 11 principals, requesting that they take part in the study (see Appendix A). All 11 agreed to participate in this study. The final selection was based on telephone conversations and email correspondence, which was used to determine if the participants met the established criteria and could meet the time requirements. The goal was that the selection process would yield a list of roughly 10 principals based on two key factors: 1) I wanted to focus on three specific districts, thus limiting the total number of principals available; and, 2) I felt confident that a sample size of 11 principals was expansive enough given the similar existing literature related to the topic and the research design (for example, two highly-cited scholarly articles related to my study had fewer than ten participants) (Maxwell, Locke, & Scheurich, 2013; Theoharis, 2008).

**Data Collection**

Data collection was conducted for this qualitative study through document analysis, observation, and semi-structured interviews. As Merriam (2002) suggested, document analysis and interviews are common sources of data for a qualitative study. The documents analyzed included demographical and job-related materials. The intention was that these documents would give me further insight into the participants before their interviews. I planned to acquire the documents at least two weeks before each interview so that I could develop the contextual understanding of the participant before I interview him or her.
The second form of data collection was the interviews. Interviews were conducted between June and August 2016. The nature of the study required that I travel throughout this northern California region that included 11 different high schools to interview 11 different principals. The length for each interview was one to two hours, and all interviews were audiotaped. The times and locations of each interview were based on convenience for the interviewees. Before each interview, the informed consent form was reviewed with the participant. I took notes during the interview, and these notes consisted of a combination of my perceptions, the respondents’ responses, and key environmental considerations.

Interviews were semi-structured being that the interviews included a predetermined interview protocol, but also allowed for varying degrees of conversation based on probes. Although the order was not entirely predetermined, a strategy to the order of the themes to enhance participant responses was utilized. I selected questions on equity after I built rapport and received background information so that the participants did not become defensive or close-minded to possible themes and connections about equity (see Appendix B). This semi-structured protocol was developed using 12 categories: 1) background, 2) school information, 3) student characteristics, 4) teacher characteristics, 5) teacher evaluation, 6) classroom resources, 7) instructional support, 8) instructional quality, 9) hiring, 10) use of data, 11) professional development, and 12) equity.

At the conclusion of each interview, I reviewed my notes in order to gain a deeper conceptual understanding of the interview experience. I also listened to the
audio recording and wrote any extra notes concerning data points I may have missed. I then compared my notes to those from previous interviews and made brief preliminary observations in order to connect the concepts between interviews. Lastly, I sent the interview audio recordings to a professional transcriber in order to prepare them for data analysis.

**Data Analysis**

A large part of the data analysis was conducted at the same time as the data collection. This was done with the review of the interview recordings and my notes from the documents and interviews. Once the interviews were transcribed, I focused my analysis on the transcripts. At the same time, I looked for thematic relationships from the observation notes. During this process, I followed Marshall and Rossman’s (1999) six phases of analytical procedures:

1. Organizing the data;
2. Generating categories;
3. Coding the data;
4. Testing emergent understandings;
5. Searching for alternative explanations; and,
6. Writing the report.

Schwandt (2007) defined coding as “a procedure that desegregates data, breaks them down into manageable segments, and identifies or names those segments” (p. 32). I used thematic analysis to make meaning through the coding process (Glesne, 2011). Thematic analysis was used in the form of constant case
comparison. Glesne (2011) illustrated that constant case comparison looks at the differences among “participants, settings, or word use” (p. 187). In the case of this research, the coding of each individual was compared not only by theme but also between individuals. The coding was then visually represented through the computer program Dedoose in order to decipher patterns in the data that could include similarities or differences.

The analytic process combined coding by hand and the use of Dedoose (version 6.1.18, 2015). The coding by hand occurred during the review of my interview notes, as well as when I reviewed the transcripts from the interviews. I coded, cut out the pieces of the code, and categorized information by theme. I used Dedoose to solicit similarities and differences among the interviews, as well as track themes in the data. As Merriam (2002) suggested, this interpretive qualitative approach looks to recognize common themes or patterns.

Another step in the process that brought the data analysis to life was visual representation. For each of the interviews that was transcribed and charted for themes and relationships, I also created one concept map showing how the themes of all the interviews were interrelated. This was a dynamic versus a static process in that thoughts were always emerging and changing (Derbentseva, Safoyeni, & Canas, 2007). The purpose was to not only to visually represent connections and categories of themes within the data, but to also constantly alter and challenge my thinking as I processed the themes. This visual analysis helped with the categorical understanding of emerging developments and theoretical underpinnings.
Document analysis and interview data were integrated and analyzed by the utilization of Dedoose as the files were linked to cases within Dedoose. Unlike the interviews, the document data were not professionally transcribed. Instead, my memos were entered into my electronic field journal (Glesne, 2011). The memos represented a personal reflective piece, i.e., a reminder of ideas I wanted to expand on later (Maxwell, 2013). This organization help make the input into Dedoose more organized. My field notes were also organized by theme and date in order to make the input into Dedoose a smooth process. Similar to the memos, these field notes ranged from a prescriptive scientific piece to a reflective piece containing associations and personal thoughts. As Schwandt (2007) suggested, “the making of field notes is itself an interpretive practice, not merely a kind of recording” (p.117). Lastly, I created a narrative summary for every interview which helped me reflect and draw meaning from the interview. The design sequence by which I conducted my research is shown in Figure 2 below:
The themes I created, along with the sub-themes that emerged from the interviews from my study, are summarized in Table 4 below. All themes had corresponding sub-themes that reflected statements provided by the principals as important skills, traits, or knowledge required to teach all students equitably. I recognized the themes of Equity Understanding, Know, Do, and Disposition as being the most important discussion points in the interviews in relation to the research question. Each theme was then followed by a short description of what characterized that theme. I used these descriptions when categorizing each quote into the appropriate theme category.
Table 4

*Summary of Themes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sub Themes/Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equity Understanding</strong></td>
<td>The ability to understand the concept of equity.</td>
<td>• Fairness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Equal access/opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Giving every student what he/she needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Know</strong></td>
<td>The knowledge base needed in order to teach all students equitably.</td>
<td>• Non-importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Non-negotiable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Content vs. content delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Knowledge construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do</strong></td>
<td>The actions in the classroom needed in order to teach all students equitably.</td>
<td>• Active students/engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Direct instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Checking for understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disposition</strong></td>
<td>The mindset required in order to teach all students equitably.</td>
<td>• Equity consciousness/growth mindset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each theme and sub-theme within Table 4 contains my analysis as well as my interpretation of the theme or sub-theme. My interpretations have three important layers: the first is an overall lens from my personal experiences as a White, middle-income principal; the second consists of the information I have recently been studying within my doctorate program and this dissertation; and, the third reflects my actual experiences when interviewing each principal. These conversations and meetings contained many aspects in regard to each principal’s personality traits, individual backgrounds, and philosophies, as well as how those factors paired with mine.

**Trustworthiness**

To increase the credibility of this research, I triangulated the data collection procedures by using interview audio recordings, document analysis, journal entries,
interview transcripts, and autobiographical/demographic documents. I completed and used my journal and memo notes in order to make sure that my data were well represented from multiple sources. As Maxwell (2013) averred, “Not writing memos is the research equivalent of having Alzheimer’s disease; you may not remember your important insights when you need them” (p. 20).

Another important layer of trustworthiness in my study was the discussions about themes and reflections with my research team which consisted of five doctoral students and our chair. We met to discuss our reflections on our research and to gain valuable feedback which allowed me to test my internal assumptions and emerging thoughts pertaining to the data.

**Role of Researcher**

It was important to reveal during the interviews that I was (and am) a principal. More specifically, I am a Caucasian male who grew up in the area where I conducted my research. I acknowledge that my research had the possibilities to bring about certain specific and personal feelings due to my background and belief system. For example, as a former teacher and coach, I felt strongly (and still do today) that the term “talent” is too often embraced. I believe that people can be taught and coached to be excellent and great. More specifically, in education this means that I believe all people have the capacity to learn, regardless of their gender, race, or socioeconomic status. With this comes the possibility that my lens could have created a specific viewpoint that was unique to me.
Secondly, it was important to acknowledge that my relationship with the participants was that of colleague. Perhaps this relationship allowed the participants to not feel any danger in speaking with me. It should also be noted that the participants may have had the feeling that I was judging them since I was a colleague. The majority of participants were White male administrators. I acknowledged that I had some things in common with the participants as I am also a White, male administrator. This could have possibly helped the participants feel more open and willing to speak freely about their ideas. Lastly, my background as an administrator has allowed me to experience first-hand experiences like the teacher evaluation process and teaching in schools. I believe that my role was a strength as it allowed me to have a background in the context of the area and experience with the challenges public school principals face. These reflections on my role as the researcher are important because, as a qualitative interpretive researcher, I am the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2002).

**Ethics**

I conducted the IRB training during December 2015 and submitted the completion in January of 2016. As recommended by the IRB, I was careful in regard to confidentiality, participant understanding of the study, and the act of securing vital documents. To assure confidentiality, I created pseudonyms for the schools and participants in the study. I was also careful to not mention the exact location of each school within the specified region of northern California. Secondly, I explained the study to all participants so that they were aware of the purpose of the study. Lastly, I
made sure that the interview transcripts on my computer required an access password; any hard copies were stored in a locked box or office.
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

In this chapter, I state the findings from the 11 interviews. First, I highlight demographic information about the participants, then I explore the equity understandings of the principals. Following this section, I show an analysis of the know, i.e., the knowledge base required for teachers to teach all students equitably according to the participants. Next in the analysis, I explain the principals’ perceptions of do, or the activities that go on in the classroom, that contribute to success for all students. Finally, in the last section of this chapter, I provide an analysis on the disposition of teachers needed in order for them to teach all students equitably according to principals’ perceptions.

The focus of my study was to look at what principals perceive teachers need to know and do in order to teach all students equitably, as well as what kind of disposition they need to do so. The term *equitably* is not placed last within this phrase on the basis of importance; rather, it is the lens through which this study is based. In essence, the idea of equity is the lens that this study looks to encompass. The principals in this study had some similarities and some differences in how they perceived the idea of equity which thus influenced their lenses.

It is important to revisit the working definition of *equity* that I am using as introduced in Chapter II. A section of the definition that is of particular importance
reads “Equity strategies are planned, systemic, and focus on the core of the teaching and learning process” (Skrla, McKenzie & Scheurich, 2009, p.1). The idea that equity is at the core of the classroom places some significance on the principals’ perceptions of what they think teachers need to know and do, as well as what dispositions teachers need in order to teach all students equitably. I agree that equitable changes can occur in the classroom, and therefore I carried that lens when interviewing principals about equity, along with the know, do, and dispositions I discussed earlier in this chapter.

**Principals’ Conceptual Understandings of Equity**

The principals had various views on what equity means and how it relates to teaching students. These differing viewpoints came from a combination of their cultural backgrounds, past experiences, and current professional stances, among other factors. I brought up the concept of equity indirectly when discussing the know, do, and disposition teachers need, but I did not directly address what equity meant to the participants until after exploring those concepts; I simply asked, “What does equity mean to you”? After this initial question, I then decided whether to probe further, depending on the principal’s response. The findings in regard to this particular question resulted in four themes: *fairness, equal access/opportunity, equity versus equality, and giving every student what he or she needs to be successful.*

I mentioned the idea of equity when I asked the principals about their perceptions regarding the know, do, and dispositions of teachers because I stated the term “equitably” at the end of each main question regarding the three focus areas.
For example, for *know* I asked, “What types of content knowledge do teachers need to have in order to teach all students equitably.” However, I did not ask how principals defined “equity” until the end of the interview. I asked the question directly, involving equity last in order avoid any potential shutdown in the interview process.

The principals were not at all reluctant in answering the questions regarding equity; it seemed as if the vast majority had been exposed to the term. However, the principals interviewed in my study did have differing ideas on the details involved on what equity actually means.

**Fairness: What Does It Mean to be Fair?**

The principals interviewed in this study had many different ideas on what equity meant to them. One of the main themes was the idea of fairness or being fair. Principal C explained how equity is about fairness to him, “When the teacher’s truly being equitable, there’s none of this ‘Well, I’m not being treated fairly’ because the teachers know that person so well. So, I know exactly what you need and this is what you’re getting.”

In this case, Principal C used the students’ perspectives to explain how they may feel when they are not getting what they need. My analyses suggest that the term “fair” means something different to each participant. As Principal C explained, “being fair is giving every student what he or she needs.” I interpret this as meaning that if a child needs an accommodation or medication so that s/he can access the curriculum and succeed academically, then that is “fair.” Principal C also expressed that many of his students come from families that may not have had a fair starting
Principal C stated that it is not only the school’s job to be fair by giving every student what s/he needs, but schools must also “add value of education” to this particular population in order to make sure every student has the opportunity to attain high levels of academic achievement.

Principal D illustrated a similar perspective of these concepts by saying that equity and fairness are giving students what they need in order to achieve academically at similar levels: “Fair does not mean that everyone gets the same thing. Fair is what the person needs to be successful.” He went on to make the connection between the terms ‘equity’ and “giving students what they need” by explaining his progression from a classroom of equality to a classroom of equity based on students’ individual needs. He explained this process:

I am a firm believer that “fair” does not mean everybody gets the same thing. Fair is what that person needs to succeed. But in order to be equitable, you can't lay that out there for everybody to know. Oh, I am going to treat this half of the room different from others, you are not judging people based on where they live or what their ethnicity is or anything like that. So it's simply going in there and treating everybody the same as far as instructionally and how you are laying out your classroom. And once you figure out those individual needs of the students that come with the relationship building, that's where you might need to change what you're doing for individuals even if they don't have an IEP or something like that.
Principal D explained that at first one wants to provide the same type of instruction to everyone in order to provide equity. He then suggested that teachers use relationships in order to identify differences across students and address students’ needs. While this principal did explain that he does not expect teachers to judge students based on generic ethnic stereotypes or deficit perspectives, he felt teachers should hold all students to the same high expectations. Principal D’s emphasis was on the timing in regard to when teachers should be on the lookout for students’ individual differences. Interestingly, Principal D suggested that relationships, not test scores, are the vehicle to access this information. Principal D acknowledged in our interview that many of his students come from poverty-stricken neighborhoods with drug issues. This outlook and understanding could have contributed to his interpretation of what fairness means to him.

When I asked about the concept of being fair, which for most participants meant being equal, these discussions often centered around some basic differences on what students need to be successful. Some principals aligned their meaning of equity with giving every student what s/he needs to be successful.

Principal E differentiated how fair and equal are not the same by succinctly explaining the difference: “Being fair is not being equal. Equity is giving every student what they need to be the best they can be.” He believed that giving every student the same thing is not fair, and in turn, is not equity.

Based on these principals’ responses, it is clear they believed that being equitable and fair is not giving students the same thing, but instead giving students
what they need. In a similar way, Principal A illustrated some commonalities with Principal E’s interpretation of fairness:

Equity is about giving every student what they need and at the core understanding what is good for all students. The disposition component is the unwavering commitment and drive to always be thinking about the results of whether or not all students learn in an equitable way and if they didn’t what did you do or not do to affect the result.

Here Principal A expressed the idea of looking at the results to determine if a student is learning, and to understand if all students are getting access to the curriculum so that students achieve at high levels. In other words, this principal equates “fair” teaching to mean that the conditions in the classroom are such that they do not contribute to an achievement gap on the basis of race, socioeconomic status, gender, and/or ability. Principal A also brought up the concept of self-reflection when addressing whether each student did in fact learn. This principal seems to believe that, at his school, teachers are expected to hold themselves accountable for all students’ success. I interpret Principal A’s implication that success for all needs to be addressed by giving every student what s/he needs in order to accomplish this goal. If a teacher does not have the self-reflection piece in order to see if he or she is part of the issue, then giving the student what s/he needed would be an afterthought.

Principal A also spoke the most about the Professional Learning Community (PLC) process and how it contributes to teacher self-reflection in regard to teachers’
data. Principal F, like Principal A, believed that providing equity means to give every student what he or she needs. However, in contrast to Principal A, Principal F talked more specifically about the challenges students might face in their individual home lives, along with psychosocial issues. Principal F talked about relating academic instruction to students’ needs and viewing these needs as holes that may need to be filled with different types of additional academic and social services:

It really is trying to do whatever you can do in 15, or 17, or 25 different ways to reach your child, and it could be dealing with psychosocial issues, it could be dealing with struggles at home, it could be dealing with missing content. You know, maybe they didn’t catch something in an earlier grade level, and so they have holes in their education, and they need that little intervention, or a little re-teaching, or a little extra something that gets them up to snuff, or a lot of something, or maybe even an intervention class, you know.

Here Principal F expressed a multitude of ways teachers give a student what s/he needs, including attention to academic, home, or psychosocial issues. The teacher’s intention to be equitable requires the teacher and school to provide the student what s/he needs in order to be successful. It is worthy to state that the principal could have a role in this process, especially if it requires exploring academic, home, and psychosocial issues as previously explained. What the student needs can vary, from academic factors to more medical ones, such as a psychological
issue, or perhaps a more personal issue occurring at home. Principal E more specifically defined what she meant by giving students what they need in explaining the gaps that need to be filled psychosocially, academically, or with the student’s home life. This makes sense as Principal E talked more than the other principals about the idea of addressing the “whole child.” The lens that each principal has in regard to equity is important when looking at what teachers need to know or do, or in having the disposition to teach all students equitably. I would argue that this is true when looking at identifying areas of student need, communicating those needs to teachers, and being able to apply certain resources either academically, medically, or socioemotionally.

**Principals’ Idea of Equal Access/Opportunity from Education**

Some principals defined fairness as providing equal access to all, or providing opportunity for educational access to all. Access and opportunity were used in relation to programs on the school campus. It is important to acknowledge that the participants are high school principals, meaning that their schools have a large variety of programs both academically and socially. These programs could include sports, yearbook, cheerleading, counseling, specialized AP courses, and field trips, to list a few. When explaining equal access to programs, classes, and all academics, Principal D stated:

But every student should have the opportunity to do anything they want on campus. It should be open access to all programs, all classes,
and all academics. As far as – I mean it doesn't matter socio-economic status, ethnicity, anything, everything is open access to everyone.

Principal D explained “opportunity” in the terms of open access to academic programs for all students. Principal F expanded on this idea of equal access by stating the idea of an “end point”: “…essentially, that everybody has an equal opportunity to get to the same end point.” I would argue that this principal is using the term *equal opportunity* in a way that paints that picture that if everyone gets the same resources, then the school is doing what they need to in order to be fair. Therefore, according to Principal D, the focus is just providing the access for everyone, while Principal F combined the access with some type of outcome, i.e., an end point. Using the example of high school graduation, this thought process seems to make more sense. Principal F explained that providing equal access to programs implies that the school is doing what it needs to in order to provide an equal opportunity toward graduation, college attainment, or IB access, etc. When looked at in this way, the act of opportunity/equal access is not the same as equity.

This sort of interpretation could lead to the feelings Principal B expressed when he stated “People who associate equal access with equity do not truly understand what equity means.” Equal opportunity or access is addressed more specifically by Principal I:

Opportunity to do whatever it is that you are… equal opportunity so… you know, and that’s… and we battle that often here with a lot of students and their likes, students that want to become involved in
everything and trying to ensure that they have every opportunity to do that, whether it gets to a point where there is just not enough time in the day, so those are the very students... very motivated students I am speaking about. Then on the other hand, the other students that we spoke about, you know, they are quiet, they are shy or timid... How can we get them involved? How can we give them equal access to all of the opportunities? And that’s part of the facets of life here; whatever you do on this campus, whether you teach the students in the classroom or we provide opportunities to all students.

Rarely discussed among these 11 principals was the concept of what effect race, gender, or socioeconomic status has on opportunity. After each initial question regarding the know, do, and disposition, I would define what “all students” meant by stating it included all races, socioeconomic statuses, and genders. However, even with this explanation, participants seemed unwilling to specifically single out students from specific racial backgrounds when discussing these types of opportunities or access. For example, in the previous quote Principal I described the students with terms associated with their personalities such as “motivated,” “quiet,” “shy,” or “timid” when discussing strategies on how to enhance opportunities to programs.

The principals’ conceptual understandings of equity seemed to form the lens through which they answered all the interview questions. In my study, the principals ranged in conceptual understandings of equity. In fact, the range was wide with some
believing that equity was to give students everything they needed, while others stating that equity was equal access. These differing lenses lend themselves to principals looking at each of the interview questions in regard to the knowledge of content, teaching skills, and teacher dispositions needed to teach students equitably in various ways.

**Knowledge of Content**

The participants’ knowledge component seemed to consist of content knowledge that teachers should have in order to teach all students equitably. I used the initial question to elicit responses from participants related to what teachers should know. I asked, “What kind of content knowledge base do you think teachers should have in order to teach all students equitably?” I followed this question with certain probes, depending on the principal’s responses. The results demonstrated that the principals expressed three themes in response to this questioning: *content knowledge as a pre-requisite, content knowledge versus content delivery,* and lastly the *concept of knowledge construction.*

**Content Knowledge as a Prerequisite for All Teachers**

Some principals stated that *knowledge of content* is really not all that important in order to teach all students equitably. Principal F expressed this notion:

Well, I think that their knowledge and content – I would say I don’t think it is knowledge and content that reaches all students. So, that would be my answer. It is a whole lot of everything else. I don’t care what your knowledge and content is as long as it is above average, as a
teacher. My expectation is that your knowledge and your content are above average, as a teacher. But your knowledge and content does not do diddly for students who have a struggle in their learning ability or have some kind of barrier that blocks them from learning for five-thousand different reasons.

I interpret Principal F’s quote as saying that a teacher’s content knowledge does not have to be at a high level in order to teach high school students. Furthermore, I believe she was saying that if a teacher has to help a struggling student, then the content knowledge is not the avenue that’s going to help the students the most.

Principal C shared this idea that knowledge of content is not the main focus: “Knowledge base is not the key; all teachers have that. The relationship piece is the key.” Here Principal C expressed that the relationship piece is more important than the content knowledge. Specifically, the principals I interviewed expect that teachers at their school must have the content knowledge, and the “difference maker” in reaching all students is the relationship piece. These principals thus seemed to imply that all teachers do not have the relationship piece, or, perhaps, that the expectation that all teachers have that component is not present.

Earlier in this chapter, Principal F expressed his expectation that teachers have “above average” content knowledge. The majority of principals in this study looked at the knowledge of content as a non-negotiable item and something that all teachers should have. For example, Principal C stated:

You know, I kind of say that the knowledge base isn’t the key there,
because it’s high school knowledge. It’s not college knowledge. It’s not
doctor level, advanced degree level. It’s high school degree
knowledge level. So, the teachers are pretty much… as a teaching
body… have that across the board and I would say that’s just the
standard.

Like Principal F, Principal C expressed that the level of expertise in high school does
not need to be at a college level and that teachers should come with this knowledge.
Principal E added to the idea that knowledge of content is a prerequisite, “I think you
have to have the knowledge and content. I think… I think that is not part of it. I think
that is a requirement of the position, you know; you can’t come without it.”
Principal E believed that all teachers need to have content knowledge. Secondly,
Principal E implied that the expertise that separates the great teachers from the
average teachers is not related to their content knowledge. It seems these principals
believe that a teacher with the right disposition without the content knowledge is a
recipe for failure when trying to reach all students. Principal J added to this when he
said:

You have to know your assignment, their subject area, you know, as
simple as that sounds. You have got to have the subject matter
competence, you know… you looking at the course outline and
pacing guides and all those things, so that’s the standard canned
answer.
Knowledge of Content versus Knowledge of Content Delivery

A variety of principals expressed the view that the more important type of content knowledge is the ability to transfer that knowledge to students. Schulman (1986) addresses the dichotomy between knowledge of content and knowledge of content delivery by coining the term “pedagogical content knowledge” (PCK). Schulman (1986) believes that knowledge of content and knowledge of content delivery should be taught in teacher credentialing programs as a single item. His remedy for this was PCK which focuses on structuring content, understanding student difficulties and misconceptions, and utilizing specific teaching strategies in response.

Principal A expressed this notion of a dichotomy in his interview, stating “Knowledge of content is important but not as important as knowledge of pedagogy.” Principal B made almost the same exact statement: “Knowledge [content] is not as important as pedagogy.” Principals E and H explained the concept of content delivery in a unique way, given their backgrounds as former high school coaches. For example, Principal E stated, “Teachers can have the playbook, but they must know how to execute the plays.” In this example, “playbook” references the content knowledge and “execution” of the plays is the content delivery. It is worth noting here that the overall lens of these interview was based on equity, and as a former coach myself, I had not thought about these concepts in this way until I interviewed Principals E and H. I was not expecting such an analogy, but I think it is a unique way to look at the concept nonetheless.
Using this analogy of the playbook as content knowledge and execution of the plays as content delivery, then the overall game is providing an equitable education to all students. Therefore, understanding the game that is being played is of major importance. Principal H stated something very similar to what Principal E said in regard to knowledge of content: “Just because you were a good athlete does not mean you can coach.” Here Principal H explains that just because one has knowledge of one’s content does not mean one has the ability to transfer it to someone else. This idea of transferring the content to the students was also expressed by Principal K:

Any specific teacher… they have the content knowledge because they have the degree. So, they have the content knowledge. I think what is more critical is how do you transfer the content knowledge to the students. Because I have seen teachers in the past… where I have had teachers, they are extremely smart individuals but they cannot transfer the knowledge to the students.

Here Principal K expressed that the importance lies in how the information is “transferred” from the teacher’s brain to the student’s brain. This “transfer” can be referred to as pedagogy, or the do. “Transfer the knowledge” stood out to me in Principal K’s interview. Throughout the interview, this person consistently communicated the idea that learning is a passive process and is not reciprocal.

Principal D focused on the idea of adding value for the students, thus revealing that he thought learning is a reciprocal process:
Well, the first thing that comes to mind for me, for those teachers who are extremely knowledgeable in their content area, is that they need to first have an understanding that most of the kids are not going to care as much about their content area as they do. Sometimes – not all the time – sometimes those teachers struggle being teachers or reaching all kids because they get frustrated or upset when half the class doesn't care when they are teaching. There needs to be an understanding that “I have the knowledge and I am going to give it out, but [I’ve] got to figure out how to make it – make this knowledge obtainable for the kids who don't want to obtain it.”

The data suggests that, in order to reach all students equitably, teachers cannot focus on transferring their knowledge to students in a non-reciprocal, passive way. Like Principal D suggested, in order to reach all students, the teacher’s role should be to “add value” and make the content meaningful and relevant to students. One way to add value and relevancy to all students’ educational experience is through knowledge construction. In the literature, knowledge construction is a means for diverse youth to find value in the educational process by extracting relevancy. Unfortunately, even though a large part of the literature reiterates that knowledge construction can be effective for equitable teaching, it was not often brought up during my study’s interviews.
The Absence of Knowledge Construction

Only one principal (Principal K) addressed the concept of knowledge construction when speaking about the knowledge all teachers must have in order to teach all students equitably. The concept of knowledge construction is that high-level teaching involves not only the transfer of knowledge, but also the act of critical thinking in regard to knowledge. This is a student-centered approach that embraces the student’s cultural background and abilities.

The concept of knowledge construction varies from what principals stated in the previous quotes in that it does not look at the teacher as the sole keeper of knowledge. Secondly, the act of knowledge construction is reciprocal in that the student is not involved in a passive process of just accepting knowledge from the teacher. Principal K talked about this idea:

And you have to actually involve the students in the process. One of the things that we’ve done pretty well here, I want to say in the last three years, is that we’ve kind of moved away from teacher-centric class to more student-centric class. So, really, when I go into classrooms, I observe students in their actions. In the past we used to look at teachers: “Oh what is the teacher doing?” We don’t do that. We observe student interaction and we pretty much base it on that. You know… how much are the students interacting? How many times do these students get to speak in their lesson?
It is worth noting that this is the only minority principal of the 11 in my participant group. It is widely known that textbooks and curricula have been ethnocentric to Whites in schools (Loewen, 2007), so this tendency could very well have given this particular principal a different lens when thinking about content knowledge and what’s important. Secondly, this principal’s school is a “continuation high school,” meaning that many students are older and at the risk of not graduating. Perhaps this unique setting has led him to have unconventional or creative views on how to motivate students and give them access to content knowledge.

The knowledge of content, the transfer of the knowledge, and knowledge construction all consist of aspects pertaining to the know. The next section dives more specifically into the do. This consists of the actual acts the teacher is doing in the classroom. More specifically, the next section looks at the principals’ perceptions of what it takes to teach all students equitably within the classroom.

**High-Leverage Teaching Skills**

While the previous section looked at what principals believe the teacher must know to teach all students effectively, this section looks at what principals believe the teacher must do. The operational definition presented in Chapter III for the action of doing, or the do, involves the actual pedagogy or activities that a teacher needs to demonstrate in order for all students to achieve equitably. In order to elicit responses related to this concept, I asked the question, “What type of teaching skills do teachers need utilize in the classroom in order to teach all students equitably?” I then used probes based on what the principals stated. All 11 interviews led to descriptions of
the principals’ current teachers. The principals explained how their most effective teachers with all students demonstrate their skill sets within the classroom. The principals expressed four main themes in the interviews: active students/engagement, flexibility, direct instruction, and checking for understanding.

**Active Students/Engagement**

One concept that arose many times during the interviews was that students must be “active learners” in the classroom in order to receive content knowledge most effectively. How to engage students was described in different ways among the principals, from a focus on the teacher, to encouraging “student talk,” to tapping into student interests. The most superficial aspects of spurring active student participation and engagement consisted of descriptions of the teacher being dynamic. Other principals took the focus off the teacher and talked more about having the students not be passive and having them speak. One principal in particular (Principal C) addressed the concept of creating student “buy-in.” Lastly, another principal expanded on this buy-in idea by noting the importance of capturing of student interests.

Principal A demonstrated one of the more superficial ways of discussing student activity within the classroom, explaining how important being engaging is as a prerequisite to reaching all students:

So, well, first of all, to me it starts with the teachers and whether or not they are dynamic and engaging. That is what I said in the beginning.

That’s the starting point. If you don’t have that, you can do it in other
ways, but I haven’t really seen it. You can’t say, “I have seen one of those star teachers who’s…” That’s not the first thing I say about them. If there is a spark, there is energy, they can just exude that they want to be there, they are character dynamic. So, if there is that one thing, that is the one thing I would choose.

Principal A spoke to the traits of teachers being “dynamic” and having “energy” as important concepts that create student activity in the classroom and engagement, and this is a fairly broad description of the skills necessary in order to teach all students equitably. Other principals were more specific; Principal J talked about what the teachers that create student activity and engagement actually do in that good teachers who can reach all students are able to hold students accountable and make students active:

Hold every student accountable. Don’t allow students to sit passively in the back invisible. Hold each student accountable. Make it uncomfortable for those students, in a very positive way of course, but just refuse to allow students to sit passively and that’s what you see with others – they refuse and it is not that they are going around to each and every student. They are… they have their soldiers, they have their kids helping. I mean it is a team effort, but just refusing to let the kids sit passively.
Principal J explained that the teacher should not let the student sit passively. A common theme in the interviews was that the principals looked at student activity as a positive attribute. Another aspect Principal J expressed is the idea of the teacher holding the student accountable, though he did not specifically state what that means besides describing that the teacher should not let the students be passive learners. Principal K shared the notions that a teacher should get students to be active and create a student-centered classroom. Principal K explained what the teacher should do more specifically than did Principal J by listing specific pedagogical techniques:

What I can tell you is there has to be lot of student involvement.

Students have to be active learners. You have to be in involved in the process. You have to get them to speak. You have to get them to discuss with each other. You have to get them to agree and disagree; to be able to compare, contrast the information we are providing. And my belief is, within a classroom, a very effective classroom, 80% of interaction is going to be done by students, 20% is going to be by teachers. We are not there yet. But, that is my belief. I believe that it has to be student-centered and students have to be the ones doing the participation, doing the discussion.

Principal K not only stated that students need to be active, but explained the skills students need to demonstrate while being active; they must “agree and disagree,” “compare,” and “contrast.” He also discussed how being a facilitator is
important to creating a classroom in which students are actively engaged, and being engaging and creating a student-centered environment where students are actively participating was explained as an important component to the do component. Previously, Principal J did not describe the teacher as being the facilitator. Instead he explained the teacher’s role as holding the student accountable. Principal J seems to have explained a more teacher-centered approach with student activity incorporated at the lead of the teacher, while Principal K explained a more student-centered approach with the teacher acting as a facilitator. Principal C also explained how keeping students engaged should be the primary factor in the classroom, but he moved the focus of what the teacher actually does to looking at the needs of the students: “Yeah. Number one is that the students are engaged, that they are paying attention to the lesson, that they have buy in and that they are actively participating.” Here Principal C expresses how student buy-in is an important component in helping students be active and engaged.

This is different than what Principal K and Principal J were stating because the focus has moved from what the teacher is doing (Principal J), to what the student is doing (Principal K), to what the student needs (Principal C). Principal E talked more specifically about looking at students’ needs:

If you do not have engagement nothing else matters if the teacher can't capture the student interests and connect. They can have the best knowledge of their subject of anybody on campus, but the students can't access that knowledge whether it's through their song and dance
or the activity that they are doing, the structures that they have in place, the checking for understanding strategies. If those things aren't in place, then it's really not a good point. You are not making connections. So, that's what we talk about a lot. Are our kids engaged in that?

The ability to tap into students’ interests and make connections with students is something Principal E expressed as being important when trying to create student activity and engagement. Tapping into students’ needs and making connections is at the heart of equity. I would argue that, when working with a diverse student population, a teacher must tap into students’ interests in order to create engagement and student activity.

Principals expressed that they felt having the students be active participants is an important part for all students to be successful. The principals’ comments spanned from being teacher-centered, to student-centered, to being student-centered with the additional value of student interests

**Teacher Flexibility**

Another sub-theme listed as important by many principals was the need for the teacher to be flexible. *Flexibility* is a component discussed by principals as an important aspect for teachers to have in order to teach all students. This makes sense when considering the numerous changes in high schools over the past decade, from curricula to technology. The ability to be flexible allows the teacher to be able to
adapt to his/her context. Principals also felt the converse to be true: the inability to be flexible was something discussed many times by the principals when explaining their least effective teachers with all students. Principal B spoke to this concept of being flexible:

But I will say that even our veteran teachers, most of them are really…

really want to do what’s right for kids and that… if that means taking
them outside their comfort zone… so willing to strive them out of their comfort zones.

Here the principal acknowledged that even his veteran teachers are willing to take risks in order to reach all students. Principal H stated that “the ineffective teachers are rigid and do not change with the times.” Principal I explained that one must be able to change with the times:

I would say that education is not rigid, so it is ever changing, it is ever growing. You may think you know the students you are going to get, but it may not be so, so you need to come in with that open mind.

It was surprising to me that, in contrast to being flexible, some principals stated that direct instruction is still an important teaching tool in reaching all students.

**Direct Instruction in the Classroom**

Participants’ views of the do thus far have included the concepts of engagement, active student participation, and being flexible. It is important to note
that the terms “engagement,” “active,” and “flexible” are fairly broad. With that said, many principals did address some specific pedagogical skills.

Surprisingly, one of the most important teaching aspects principals said they discussed with teachers was direct instruction; education over the last decade has gradually moved away from direct instruction to the teacher being more of a facilitator as exemplified in the national shift from No Child Left Behind and rote learning to the Common Core and focus on 21st century learning skills (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015). Principal A expressed his focus on direct instruction when he said, “The most important aspect is fantastic, energetic, relevant direct instruction that leads to higher rigor.” Principal G spoke more in depth to the benefit of modified direct instruction:

I do believe that teachers sometimes need to stand and deliver, not for long periods of time and not every day. But even in the stand and deliver, the EDI, the delivery of direct instruction, I think that you can still have kids involved. You can be interactively lecturing and checking with [your] students for understanding by asking frequent questions as you are lecturing.

Principal A suggested mixing up the direct instruction with techniques requiring student activity with his focus on energy and relevance when describing direct instruction. In contrast, Principal G talked about time, interaction, checking for understanding, and having questions as important concepts in effective direct instruction. Principal G’s description of direct instruction implies that the teacher
should not just “stand and deliver,” but should balance lecture with student participation. Principal H also stated that there should be a balance between direct instruction and student activity:

In my opinion… and we are kind of actually shifting back toward this idea… is that it was kind of… direct instruction was devalued for a long time, where if a teacher was the one talking, then something must be wrong. I think it is a balance, you know, it is like I do feel like there is a point in time in your lesson where you really should be imparting direct instruction, and as soon as she is listening and learning how to listen and how to write, and there is a time for talking and a time for the teacher, time for students to talk and time for a teacher to talk, and I think that the teachers that do a really good job are balancing those two things, providing direct instructions [while] at the same time checking to make sure that the kids are understanding, allowing them opportunities to respond and interact around what you are trying to teach them.

Here Principal H delineates how important it is to have student responses, interaction, and checking for understanding interwoven with direct instruction in order to be successful.

**Checking for Understanding in the Classroom**

In the previous section, Principals G and H acknowledged that effective direct instruction should also include intermittent *checking for understanding* (CFU). This
section highlights the principals’ responses to the CFU techniques used by teachers. CFU is a technique that is considered valuable when principals were asked what things successful teachers do in order to reach all students. Principal A expressed how important CFU is when expressing the rate at which it should be used: “So, checking for understanding every few minutes in ways that are engaging for all students.” Principal B took the CFU concept a little further when explaining how to use CFU to increase equity within the classroom:

So, where I think a strategic teacher who understands what [s/he is] dealing with – he or she knows those kids – that the teacher needs to be present to hear what they are doing, needs to know when to prompt them a little bit. Maybe when they don’t have a language skill, to be able to give them a language skill, to be able to… you know the words that they need, preparing kids for those opportunities. So if you want them to use a particular word as their… And I think in pair-share, we could use sentence frames, although I think sentence frames are limiting for most kids. But if the teacher is giving them words, the academic vocabulary that they maybe don’t have or whatever, giving certain kids that academic vocabulary or making sure that those certain kids are using that academic vocabulary, that’s much more strategic than just having the kids doing I think pair-share.

Principal B’s perception is vitally important as it shows how teachers can utilize the aspects of CFU in order to differentiate instruction and therefore give students what
they need in order to be successful. More specifically, Principal B talked about how to differentiate CFU based on student needs. He specifically explained that, in order to tackle language barriers, one needs to “prepare students” for the CFU opportunity by utilizing sentence frames and/or academic vocabulary. Principal A talked more about timing and engagement, while Principal B explained specifically how to modify the language component of a particular CFU in order to reach all students.

**Teachers’ Dispositions**

The previous two sections addressed the know and the do in regard to what teachers need in order to reach all students. I argue that the know and the do are vital, but the conversation is incomplete without discussing the mindset of the teacher. The third important aspect of teaching all students equitably is disposition a teacher needs; all three components are needed to reach all students. The operational definition of disposition as introduced in Chapter III related to the concept of having an equity consciousness. The question used to derive principals’ perceptions of disposition was “What dispositions do you think teachers need to have in order to teach all students equitably?” This question was followed by probes that were dependent on the principal’s response. Most of the 11 principals did lead into discussions about their current teachers and the dispositions that they carried. The three concepts that resonated the most, and with the highest level of importance, were the *ability to form student relationships*, the *desire to care*, and *having a growth mindset* (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015).
Teacher and Student Relationships in the Classroom

The concept of building relationships was of huge importance according to the principals in regard to the disposition required to teach all students equitably. As principal C stated:

Yeah, it comes down to that relationship piece… [those teachers who are] willing to kind of extend themselves out and get to know their students in their class. If the teacher feels like a robot, “I don’t care who’s in front of me. I’m going to still say the same things,” students do the same things, and it doesn’t matter what the nuances of the kid or the changes of the class kind of chemistry from one class to another. If that teacher is not willing to kind of recognize that each class has its own personality and needs, then that teacher is less effective.

This concept of adapting classes based on knowing the student population also correlates with flexibility as discussed earlier. More specifically, the ability of the teacher to adapt his/her practices on the basis of student need is looked at as favorable by Principal C. Principal C explained that one of the important aspects to building student relationships is establishing the student’s needs. This is vital in an equitable classroom. Principal D also explained the importance of relationships: “If you are going to teach all students, you need to get to know all students. A mathematician is different than a math teacher.” Here Principal D made the connection that the difference between a math teacher and mathematician is getting to know the students and, hence, establishing a relationship with the students. He added to this sentiment
by saying, “I think the most important thing teachers can do is get to know their kids; each and every one of them.” Principal F added to the focus on relationships: “I think that relationship is probably the most important thing.” Principal I provided a broader tie between relationships and understanding people through explaining the interrelation of relationships with the ability and desire to acknowledge and work with diverse personalities:

I think you really just need to understand people; you need to understand the whole student in order to reach people equitably. So that’s what I would say; I would say understanding people, understanding how to work with different personalities is the most important piece in that case, which is hard for me to say because you won’t think there is any standards or there is any content, but that’s going to happen. That is going to be talked in the classroom that, you know, the whole child.

Principal I used a term used earlier by Principal E when explaining understanding the “whole child.” More specifically, he explained that it is important to understand people and the whole child in order to be able to build relationships. Principal K connected the idea of teacher beliefs about student success and student relationships:

Actually, you have to be able to connect to students, definitely. You have to be able to connect. You have to be able to believe, actually,
that they can be successful. If you don’t believe that they are going to be successful, the student can actually sense that. They can sense it. The student can sense… Even a kindergarten student can sense the teacher and know where [s/he is] coming from.

It is interesting that Principal K made the specific connection between what the teacher believes and what the student knows about what the teacher believes s/he knows about the student. This shows that the student may respond in a positive way when s/he knows that the teacher cares about her/him.

**Beyond the Classroom: Teachers Caring for Students**

The idea of caring emerged from the data and is something I did not quite think about before. I thought about relationships and loved the merit behind fostering relationships, but never really placed much thought on the actual concept of caring in regard to teaching all students equitably. Noddings (2013) shone some light on the concept of caring within education by explaining the concept of “confirmation.” She explained in her book, *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, that confirmation is that act of finding out why a student was engaged in an undesirable behavior instead of just punishing or shaming the student. She went on to explain that in order to practice confirmation that leads to caring, a teacher must know his/her students. In this vein, Principal A explained his outlook on caring for students:
So, you know, it sounds non-academic, but it’s caring. It’s a huge heart for kids. I mean, it’s the nurturing sign of education. It’s probably underrated. And that is probably because it’s hard to quantify, but I bet you if you could do a study where you could somehow quantify nurturing and caring at any level, I would… If you could do that I think you could have a bigger impact at what most people would think.

It is interesting how Principal A explained that he feels it is “non-academic” to think of caring as a way to reach all students. I say this because one of the key criteria for having an equity consciousness, according to Skrla, Scheurich, and McKenzie (2009), is to care for your students. Principal C explained this aspect of caring by stating how his staff will not allow excuses from their students. He explained: “It’s like they care enough to expect a lot of the kids and to say: ’Look, I’m not let you get away with telling me a sad sob story and that I accept that and you just sit there and wallow in your suffering.’” This example from Principal C closely aligns with Noddings’s (2013) idea of confirmation in that Principal C is finding the “why” in order to find a solution to the problem. Principal C explained the idea of caring by explaining the hard line a teacher must show with a student, while Principal A showed the nurturing side. Within this continuum of the term “care,” Principal J succinctly stated that, “They do not care what you know until they know that you care.” This statement implies that the student will probably not work to her/his potential unless s/he knows you care.
Teachers’ Equity Consciousness/Growth Mindset in the Classroom

The concept of having a consciousness, or growth mindset, resonates loud and clear as a required disposition element in order for teacher to reach all students equitably. Principal A expressed this mindset:

Then, the next thing is that it’s a general mindset… before we get into the specifics of pedagogy. There is a general mindset that my goal here is to specifically ensure and set up the conditions so that every single student in this room will be successful and will get what he or she needs.

He went on to say, “Just the overall mindset about students’ ability to achieve.” Here Principal A did not state specifically what the having this “mindset” means, but he does say that it is ensuring success for all students which, in turn, implies the application of equity. Further, Principal A was acknowledging that the educator has a responsibility to set up the conditions for success. Principal H added to this concept by also addressing the idea of motivating students:

What is critical for them is this growth mindset and teachers having that growth mindset too, and giving them the extra time and support they need to be successful because some of those kids have significant gaps or deficiencies that maybe in a regular classroom you don’t have time to address… But basically believing that kids can do it and helping kids believe that they can do it. I always laugh when I hear “growth mindset.” I am like, “I don’t care what growth mindset I
would have, I still wouldn’t have got calculus!” But, you know… but this idea that you believe in students and you help them believe in themselves… I think that is truly a great trait of our best teachers.

This expression shines light on the importance that this principal felt teachers must have a belief that students can be successful, added with the idea that they must help students see this ability in themselves in order for them to achieve academically. The belief that students can succeed leads to a positive rapport and relationship with those students. Principals A and H made statements that have connections in regard to practical application. I argue that in order to set up the conditions illustrated by Principal A, one would have to have the desire and belief that all students can learn, as expressed by Principal H.

This chapter looked to showcase the findings from the interviews conducted with 11 principals in a northern California region and their perceptions on what teachers need to know and do, and what dispositions they should have in order to teach all students equitably. A description of the principals’ understanding of equity was followed by what they perceived to be of importance in regard to the interrelation between teachers’ abilities to teach all students and the three themes related to the know, the do, and the disposition. Many sub-themes demonstrate the complex layers of information extracted from the interviews. Encompassing all the layers was a larger theme/lens of equity. The perceptions of the principals in this study create a combination of highly-relevant themes to be explored as to how they relate to student
achievement for all regardless of race, socioeconomic status, gender, income, and/or ability level. Even more intriguing was analyzing how the principals’ perceptions of equitable teaching aligned with each others’ perceptions. Secondly, it was interesting to compare the principals’ perceptions of what is effective in regard to the *know, do,* and the *disposition* in comparison with what the literature review states. To gain understanding of the similarities and differences between the principals and those of the literature review, I created a continuum, which will be explored in the next section.

**Principals’ Continuum of Understanding**

My analyses suggest that the principals in this study shared many of their perceptions in regard to the research question. I argue that what was most interesting was the variance in belief systems in regard to what teachers need to know, do, and the dispositions to teach all students equitably. In fact, the most significant information I received was that the principals shared some major differences in the way they saw the world, and hence, the world of education.

This section explores the differences between the principals in regard to their equity conceptual understanding, and is followed by their beliefs about what teachers need to be able to know, do and have the dispositions for in order to teach all students equitably. The description of these differences is based on a continuum that emerged from the data. Table 5 illustrates this continuum from an area of limited equity understanding, to emerging understanding, and finally to full equity understanding. The continuum looks at the equity conceptual understanding, the knowledge of
content, the do, and the disposition based on a direction from a lens that is less focused on equity to a lens that is more focused on equity.

Table 5

Continuum of Equity Understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LIMITED Understanding</th>
<th>EMERGING Understanding</th>
<th>FULL Understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equity Understanding</strong></td>
<td>Mistake equality for equity, defined as open access, equal access, and equal opportunity.</td>
<td>Understand that equity and equality are different and know the concept of equity by definition.</td>
<td>Can identify and define equity in a number of different situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge of Content</strong></td>
<td>The teacher is the knower and giver of content knowledge. Student is passive.</td>
<td>More student-centered approach where there is an exchange between teacher and student. Student is active.</td>
<td>Knowledge construction. Teacher works with student to create knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do/Doing</strong></td>
<td>Teacher instructs class with little to no thought about differentiation or tapping into student's interest.</td>
<td>Teacher adjusts delivery and curriculum to meet the needs of individual students.</td>
<td>Teacher adjusts delivery and curriculum to meet the needs of individual students. Additionally, teacher embraces diversity and works to develop a critical consciousness with students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disposition</strong></td>
<td>Relationships are the key with no talk about race, gender, or ability level.</td>
<td>Recognition of the growth mindset. Students are looked at as being able to succeed at high levels regardless of differences. Race, gender or ability level is not addressed.</td>
<td>Teacher has an equity consciousness. They live it, breathe it and live it out on a daily basis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note that the continuum is created through my lens and perspective as a secondary school principal and doctoral student. My experience as an educator, combined with my coursework and analysis of the topic of equity, have
given me a critical awareness of equity issues within education. The column title “Full Understanding” is directly extracted from the literature review. According to the literature review, these are the skills and characteristics necessary for a teacher to have the capacity to create the environment necessary for equity to take place in school. The characteristics listed in the columns titled “Limited Understanding” and “Emerging Understanding” were likewise created through my lens as an analysis to gauge where the particular principals in this study were located within a movement toward a fuller understanding of the skills necessary for teachers to teach all students as the research suggests (Banks & Banks, 1995; Beyer, 2001; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Cochran-Smith, 2008; Freire, 1970; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Skrla, McKenzie, & Schuerich, 2009). The continuum of equity of understanding is seen by directly looking through the lens each principal used when answering the interview questions. If the lens – or worldview – the principal has is more equity–related, a fuller understanding results because the principal recognized the particular characteristics teachers needed in order to have an equitable classroom.

It is also important to note that a principal could have straddled two different areas horizontally. For example, one principal could fall between Emerging and having a Full Understanding of equity, while another principal could have a Limited equity understanding in one category vertically and have a fuller understanding in another. A principal could have an Emerging Understanding in Knowledge of Content, but a Full Understanding in regard to Disposition. The main premise of the continuum, however, is that if a principal has a Full Understanding, then s/he is able
to identify all the teacher characteristics listed in the far right-hand column of Table 5. Lastly, few of the principals I interviewed “made it” to the Full Understanding column based on their responses in the interview; this phenomenon will be further explored later in this chapter when discussing the items from the literature review that were not demonstrated in the interviews.

Table 6

*Principals’ Alignment with Equity Understanding*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equity Understanding</th>
<th>Limited Understanding</th>
<th>Emerging Understanding</th>
<th>Full Understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know</td>
<td>C, D, G, H, I, J, K</td>
<td>A, B, E</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do</td>
<td>A, B, C, E, F, G, H,</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I, J</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposition</td>
<td>B, C, D, E, F, G, I, J</td>
<td>A, H, K</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Understanding of Equity Continuum**

To begin looking at continuums or differences in thought in regard to equity, it is important to look at how the principals viewed the idea of equity and what “equity” means to them. This is important because the overall lens of the research question concerned equity *ipso facto*. More importantly, the perceptions of the principals in regard to their perceptions of what teachers need to know, do, or have as dispositions to teach all students equitably were greatly influenced by their understanding of equity. This, in turn, greatly influenced the principal’s responses to
all of the interview questions.

The main dichotomy in how the principals expressed their views on equity concerned the issue of *equality vs. equity*. When I asked about what equity meant to these principals, there were diverse responses, but they generally surrounded the theme of equality vs. equity. Three (3) principals described equity as open access, equal access, or equal opportunity, all terms associated with the concept of equality, not equity. Their combined interview statements directly correlate with a Limited Understanding on the continuum. In order to move horizontally on the continuum, these principals would first have to understand and acknowledge the differences between equality and equity. For example, Principal E simply stated, “Fair is not equal,” and Principal B stated, “Equal access is not equity.” In contrast, two principals expressed sentiments that suggested a shared understanding that equal was not equitable. These principals’ statements align with an Emerging Understanding according to the continuum.

Given these viewpoints, two other principals went a step further by bypassing consideration of what equity meant and instead offered descriptions of what needed to be done by teachers in order to gain equitable classrooms. Principal A and Principal F both explained equity as “giving every student what they need,” Principal A having explained the concept in terms of “providing academic support.” Principal F was even more detailed, delineating the need to give every student social, home, and academic support. For their perceptions, both Principal A and Principal F could be considered as having a Full Understanding on the continuum as they both identified a clear
equitable concept which embraces the idea of giving students what they need. One could also place Principal A as straddling the line between Emerging and Full because he did not explain giving students what they need in multiple arenas. Principal F did do this by identifying that the task of giving students what they need includes the multiple areas of social, home, and academic support. Therefore, out of the 11 principals, Principal F is the only one I could clearly place in the Full Understanding range. Like equity, the descriptions by the principals in regard to Knowledge of Content could also be expressed on a continuum.

**Knowledge of Content Continuum**

The knowledge findings referred to what principals believed teachers need to know content wise in order to teach all students equitably. The principals expressed two subthemes which included the idea that the knowledge of content is really not important, followed by the concept that knowledge is a prerequisite to teaching. Many principals stated that knowledge of content was really not important nor should be the focus when trying to teach all students. This was surprising to me given that so much emphasis is placed on content knowledge within the high school environment. However, the principals’ beliefs began to make more sense when I analyzed the possibilities as to why they were saying knowledge of content is not important. The principals’ belief that knowledge of content is not that important may also be due to thinking that the do and the disposition are more important than is the knowledge of content because with those factors, students could be motivated to want to access the content.
That the do and or disposition may be more important to student achievement does have some legitimacy according to some research. Hattie (2009) conducted a synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses on student achievement. Based on the analysis, he created a continuum of items that schools do in regard to teaching, school, and curriculum. Hattie’s (2009) continuum is ranked based on effect size, with .40 being the hinge point that means one can see real world change in student achievement. Based on this scale, relationships are listed at number 11 with an effect size of 0.72. Furthermore, six of the top ten items on this list are associated with the teaching category, which can be related to the do. What is particularly interesting is that teacher content knowledge is ranked 125th out of 138 with an effect size of .09 (Hattie, 2009). Based on Hattie’s research, I argue that there is some validity to principals’ perceptions that content knowledge is not the most important factor when looking at academic achievement for all students.

The next theme expressed by the principals was that teachers’ content knowledge is a prerequisite to entering the teaching profession. I interpreted this to mean that a teacher couldn’t effectively utilize the do or the disposition without first understanding the content knowledge, in contrast to the first theme that knowledge of content is not important. That principals had mixed feelings about the importance of content knowledge is an important finding. This difference in philosophy can be expressed on a continuum from an area of Limited or no equity understanding, to a Full equity understanding.
Many principals expressed that teachers should have knowledge of content as a prerequisite. Principal C stated that teachers “have this across the board” when referring to knowledge of content. Principal J explained, “You have to have it.” Principal E further expressed, “It is a requirement for the position.” Principals C, J, and E all affirmed that teachers need to have knowledge of their content. Some went on to say that not only should a teacher have knowledge of content as a pre-requisite, but that it’s not that difficult to attain. Principal C expressed this by stating “It’s just high school knowledge and not doctoral.” Principal F added, “You just need to be above average.” Principal K stated that “if [a teacher has] the degree, then [s/her had] the content knowledge.” Based on these quotes, I would argue that principals feel knowledge of content is not only easy to attain, but is also a non-negotiable item in regard to being a teacher. These principals’ statements align under the Limited Understanding column on Table 5 because their statements are strictly teacher-centered, a lens that does not take a diverse student population into account. This creates a situation wherein the teacher is the knower of all knowledge and the student is expected to be the passive recipient.

Some principals revealed a more student-centered approach when addressing the concept of content knowledge. More specifically, these principals placed more importance on the transfer of content knowledge to students. Principals A, B, E, and H all expressed that they thought transfer of knowledge was more important than merely having content knowledge.
Clearly, movement on the continuum from merely containing the knowledge toward transferring the knowledge to a student is an important requirement for any teacher. The statements of Principals A, B, E, and H differ from those of C, E, F, J, and K in that they express that content delivery is more important in teaching equitably than is the teacher simply having the knowledge. However, I argue that the transfer of knowledge is still aligned under the Limited Understanding column because the student is passive. In order to move toward the Emerging column on the continuum, these principals’ statements should provide consideration to an exchange of knowledge between the teacher and the student per the current literature. In this way, teaching becomes more student-centered.

The literature review on knowledge of content needed to teach all students equitably differs from merely knowing content information or transferring knowledge. Principal D led in this direction by stating that the key aspect in the knowledge of content is to “add value” for the students. It is possible to place Principal D’s understandings under the Emerging column in that he is soliciting student interest, a much more student-centered approach. However, based on this statement alone, Principal D’s information is still superficial in regard to an equity understanding of the knowledge needed to teach all students because he did not define what “adding value” means. To him, value may be placing all Hispanic students in hands-on courses and taking them out of college prep – undoubtedly this would be a limited understanding of equity. However, movement toward a fuller understanding could be derived if he had gone on to say that adding value meant
allowing the students to utilize past and present cultural experiences to create knowledge through critical thinking.

As expressed earlier in this paper, equity looks to give all students what they need to be successful. “All” encompasses genders, races, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, etc. However, when a teacher utilizes only the content s/he pulls from the curriculum, or from the standards, or from personal past experiences, s/he is limiting exposure of content to students. Furthermore, this approach is more likely to be less relevant to a diverse student population due to two key aspects. Current U.S. public school curriculum is often Eurocentric; Loewen (2007) makes this argument in that history books often portray false representations of history and are used to promote “blind patriotism.” Secondly, an added layer to this Eurocentrism is that most teachers in the U.S., in California, and the region where this study was conducted, are Caucasian (DataQuest, 2015). This is relevant because the majority of students in the region of this study are not Caucasian (DataQuest, 2015). More specifically, 70% of the students are students of color in the region where this study took place (DataQuest, 2015). Therefore, the knowledge of content of White teachers, and the transfer of it to primarily students of color inherently could place them with a limited understanding of equity in regards to a diverse student population. This combination of a narrow curriculum and a limited equity lens would inevitably place an educator in the limited column.

**Continuum in Regard to Doing**

The next important finding consisted of the concept of the *do*, or what can be
referred as the pedagogy or high-leverage teaching skills needed to teach all students equitably. The concept of do within the principals’ answers had some subthemes in regard to pedagogy. These subthemes included having active participation along with student engagement, checking for understanding, direct instruction, and flexibility. Like knowledge, the principals were placed on the continuum based on their perceptions of what they feel teachers need to be able to do in order to reach all students equitably.

The principals had many similarities when discussing what teachers should be able to do in order to teach all students equitably. Principals B, H, and I discussed aspects of being flexible as a teacher. Principals A, G, and H discussed some similarities in regard to how they thought direct instruction was an effective way to reach all students. Principals A and B discussed some similar aspects on checking for understanding. The subtheme of having active students or engagement was an area where principals most differed about what they thought was important in regards to what teachers need to know, do, or have the dispositions to teach all students equitably.

Being active or engaging had a continuum that spanned from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered approach. The approach that was most teacher-centered focused on the teacher being “dynamic or engaging,” as expressed by Principal A. Principal J was a little more specific as he talked about “holding students accountable and getting them to talk.” Principal K was even more specific than both Principals A and J in stating that teachers need to get students to “speak,
discuss, agree, disagree, compare, and contrast.” The last three examples still address a teacher-centered approach which is looking at what the teacher will do, enforce, or be able to frame in order to reach all students. Based on these responses, these principals would align with the Limited understanding column on the continuum due to this teacher-centered approach. This is not to say that student talk or comparing and contrasting or not valid teaching techniques. Also, if given more information, these statements could have revealed a more Emerging or Full understanding. For example, if the principal gave a description of how the students compared and contrasted, then more information pertaining to the principal’s equity lens would be available. This information was not provided in this way, so the statements are thus aligned with a Limited Understanding.

However, the next two examples look at a more student-centered approach. More specifically, these principals looked to embrace what types of competencies the students brought to the table. For example, Principal C used the term “buy-in” when talking about what students need to do in order to be reached. This is a different lens because it focuses on how the teacher can adapt his/her instruction in order to meet students’ needs based on their unique perspectives. It is important to note that Principal D did state something similar to the idea of “buy-in” when he stated “adding value.” Like previously stated, the concepts would have to be defined further in order to truly understand the level of equity understanding. Nonetheless, it is interesting that the concept of looking at student interests or motivation was brought up in both the knowledge of content section and the act of doing section. Principal E was more
specific than was Principal C in explaining what a teacher needs to do in order to reach all students. Principal E stated that teachers who are effective at reaching all students equitably “capture students’ interests and connect.” The act of connecting makes this statement unique as it moves toward blurring the lines between the act of doing and the disposition required to teach all students. Principals C and E did express the needs of the students when considering instructional options that would align them with the Emerging column on the continuum. However, in order for the principals to move more toward a Full understanding, statements addressing embracing diversity, along with the formation of a critical consciousness, would need to be made. No principal talked specifically about embracing differences and having an asset mindset in order to bring about positive student outcomes. Furthermore, no principal talked about having students be critical or challenging concepts provided from the status quo majority.

Equity conceptual understandings, knowledge of content and the do or the doing in the classroom can all be placed on a continuum of more equitable-related statements based on research when looking at principals’ statements. When looking at principal perceptions of teacher dispositions needed to teach all students equitably, there is a continuum as well from more equity-orientated to less equity-orientated.

**Continuum in Regard to Disposition**

The concept of disposition was a main theme within the research. More specifically, the idea of how the teacher’s disposition influenced equity, and thus an equity consciousness, was crucial. The subthemes associated with the main theme of
disposition include relationships, care, and having a growth mindset. Like the know and the do, the principals could be placed on the continuum in regard to their beliefs on what types of dispositions a teacher would need to have in order to teach all students equitably.

The continuum also existed on how the principals responded to the dispositions teachers needed to have in order to teach all students equitably. Even though all continuums were similar in regard to the movement toward more equity, the continuum on the principals’ responses on teacher dispositions differed from the continuum of the know and the do in how the movement provided more equitable outcomes. The differing views in regards to the know and the do had to do with a movement from a teacher-centered approach to a more student-centered approach, while the continuum in regard to disposition had more to do with specificity in regards to equity.

Many principals discussed the importance of forming relationships as an important disposition needed to teach all students equitably. Principal F even expressed that “relationships” were the most important thing. Principal C and D stated the importance of “getting to know” one’s students when discussing relationships. Principal I expanded further by explaining that the importance of forming relationships with students was to “understand people.” Relationships between student and teacher are indeed important, as substantiated by the research (Hattie, 2009). However, when looking specifically at equity, it is hard to imagine
finding solutions for equity without discussing race. Therefore, the statements in this paragraph are aligned under the Limited Understanding column.

One concept that the principals felt has importance when moving toward an equitable disposition for teachers was the idea of the *growth mindset*, i.e., that knowledge is not fixed and one can actually become more intelligent or grow in regard to cognition (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015). This mindset predisposes a teacher or principal to see students of all races, genders, and socioeconomics as having potential. Conversely, having a *fixed mindset* lends a principal or teacher to be more likely to place limits on student’s achievement. Principal K stated this very clearly when talking about teachers’ beliefs of students’ ability levels: “Teachers need to have the belief that [the students] can be successful.” Principal H expressed this concept further in stating that “believing kids can do it and then helping them” was greatly important. The statement by Principal H was slightly more detailed when adding in the concept of not only identification, but also the desire to help after identifying. Lastly, Principal A made the statement that what is important is that the teacher have the “mindset that all students will be successful”.

When combining the sentiments of Principal A, H, and K, the next phase in the continuum comes to light. I argue that these principals’ statements more closely align with the Emerging column. All three principals expressed the belief that all students can be successful. This is more specific than the Limited Understanding of simply focusing on the general term “relationship.” However, these principals’ statements are not specific enough to warrant an equity consciousness, the main issue
being that none acknowledged inequities or acting on inequities in regard to race, gender, ability level, or socioeconomic status. The belief that all students can learn, combined with the desire to do something about it, is a disposition expressed in the literature review shown to be effective in reaching all students equitably (Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich, 2009). As Skrla, McKenzie, and Scheurich (2009) stated, a person with an authentic equity conscious “has it, understands it, and lives it out on a daily basis” (p.84). This ability to not only recognize the inequities but also act on them moves an individual into the Full Understanding column.

A continuum existed between conceptual understandings of equity, knowledge of content, the act of doing in the classroom, and the disposition of teachers in regard to what principals perceived teachers need to know, do, or have as a disposition in order to teach all students equitably. As previously stated, the continuum moved from statements that were not as equity-orientated to a more equity focus. It is worth noting that the principals in this study did show some similarities in their responses as expressed in the subthemes earlier. However, when looking at the responses specifically associated with equity, some differences did emerge.

The continuum of perceptions illustrated in this section demonstrates differences when analyzing them under an equity umbrella. This umbrella was based on the research in focused on the teaching skills needed to reach all students equitably. The literature review also focused on the connection between the principal and the teachers, and how that affects student achievement. By being able to
recognize where principals and teachers fall on an equity continuum, one can create strategies to build an equity consciousness throughout a school.
CHAPTER V
IMPLICATIONS

In Chapter IV, I discussed the findings from interviews with the 11 principals. Four main themes emerged from the principals’ responses: 1) equity understanding, 2) knowledge of content, 3) the “do,” or doing; and, 4) the disposition of the teacher. I explained some of the similarities and differences among the principals’ responses, and presented a continuum of principals’ understandings of the themes and their connection to equity (see Table 5). The continuum ranged from Limited Understanding, to Emerging Understanding, to Full Understanding of equity in classroom teaching. A Full Understanding aligned directly to what was stated in the literature as being necessary in order to be equitable in regard to the know, do, and disposition. Only one (1) principal mentioned any of the concepts located in the Full Understanding column.

In this chapter I discuss why these concepts did not come up as themes in the interviews. Then I make recommendations to teacher and administration programs, professional development, and school site adaptations in order to move toward a more equitable school system. Lastly, I recommend some additional studies, reflect on the limitations of this study, and consider the trustworthiness of this study.
Discussion

Many schools are not providing an equitable education for all students as shown by the ongoing achievement gap (California Department of Education, 2016). Changing this outcome will require a labor intensive transformational process. I argue that principals and teachers are the main players in this transformational change. Because principals are those who hire, fire, and evaluate teachers, they need to be able to understand what creates an equitable teacher. This is precisely why this study looked to answer what principals believe teachers need to know and do, as well as what disposition they need to have, in order to teach students equitably.

The data collected from the principals did not corroborate with the theories of the literature review, among them, concepts that have shown to be effective in creating a social justice focus within schools. There are a number of possibilities as to why the principals were not talking about concepts found in the literature review. One possibility could be traced to the interview questions. The formulation of the questions may have prevented responses aligned with items discussed in the literature review. Another possibility is that the principal’s scope of practice is so large that they are doing so many other tasks besides classroom visitations. This would make it difficult for them to know if, in fact, teachers are providing an equitable education. Particular national, state, and district mandates may also focus the principals’ attention on items other than equity. Lastly, it could be that the principals lack an equity consciousness and therefore cannot recognize equitable teaching, even if it is occurring. This poses the question as to whether the absence of an equity
conversation within the interviews was an act of willing omission or due to a lack of equity consciousness. However, capacity can be built to a point wherein equity is at the forefront of the conversation when discussing teaching practices and positive student outcomes. By creating awareness about high-leverage equitable teaching, it will be more likely that the conversation of equity will take place on a regular basis and therefore be a natural conversational piece in regard to teaching students.

I argue that, by incorporating knowledge construction, critical consciousness, embracing diversity, culturally relevant pedagogy, and equity consciousness in administrative preparation programs, administrative professional development, and school site evaluations, more principals can move to developing an equity understanding as shown in the continuum in Table 5 and thus be more able to discuss equitable outcomes. In this section, I discuss the six concepts the literature review considers as the tools needed to create a social justice-minded school that reaches all students regardless of race, gender, ability, or socioeconomic status. Additionally, I hypothesize why these particular concepts did not come up more frequently as important in the principals’ responses.

**Knowledge Construction**

The concept of *knowledge construction* was discussed in the literature review, but was not often brought up by the principals during our interviews. Knowledge construction occurs when the teacher guides or facilitates students to be critical thinkers and create their own knowledge and understanding in the learning process. In fact, only one (1) principal of the 11 I interviewed mentioned the concept of
knowledge construction. Knowledge construction requires students to think critically about what knowledge is, how it is developed, and where it comes from (Giroux, 1992). Minority students may benefit from this approach, as many U.S. textbooks and curricula are considered Eurocentric (Loewen, 2007). When considering the degree of diversity within the region where the study took place, as well as the history of academic underachievement of students of color, the concept of knowledge construction has merit as a viable option when proving equitable access to the subject’s content.

Principal D talks about tapping into what students “value,” which is a start toward equity. However, to achieve equity for all students is to move from a “transfer” of knowledge toward students being critical and creating their own knowledge based on their unique cultural experiences and backgrounds (Banks & Banks, 1995).

For many educators, it is a paradigm shift to dive into the concept of knowledge construction. Many educators operate under a paradigm known as “positivism” (Lather, 1991) which works under the assumption that reality is objective and sound and that there is one truth. This view controls how principals and teachers view what is important in regard to knowledge of content and pedagogy. This, in turn, influences the educators’ dispositions. This lens is detrimental to a diverse student population due to limited sharing of multiple truths based on unique cultural experiences. I hypothesize that the positivistic view on education is partly
due to the implementation of NCLB which focused on the discovery of only one truth or one answer.

In contrast to this positivism, “constructivism” is a paradigm that values multiple truths. Kincheloe (2008) addresses this specifically by stating “constructivism is an attempt to escape the hot lead enema of fixed meanings” (p.47).

Common Core, along with 21st century skills, is intended to promote thinking that will be transferrable to the global marketplace. If the intentions of Common Core and 21st century skills are implemented with fidelity, then consideration of the merits of students exploring multiple truths must be considered. If we do not prepare students for this type of thinking, then we are setting them up for failure due to their inability to be critical thinkers.

**Critical Consciousness**

None of the principals in my study talked about developing a *critical consciousness* with the students. This was a bit of a surprise given the amount of research given to this concept in regard to eliminating marginalization combined with the continuous focus on closing the achievement gap. Having a critical consciousness is the concept wherein the teacher teaches the students to be critical of systems, organizations, and/or policies that lead to marginalization or oppression of people based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, or ability (Beyer, 2001). When working to provide equity in the classroom, and when trying to close the achievement gap, it is important that students are taught to be critical of systems of oppression. The ability to recognize and have awareness of the equity issues surrounding them is the first step
toward battling equity issues (Cochran-Smith, 2004). This concept needs to be an integral part of the do, as well as a “whole school” approach, when trying to provide equity for all students.

It is important to consider that just because critical consciousness was not discussed in the interviews does not mean that it is not happening in schools. More probing and questioning about whole school efforts and initiatives might have brought up some concepts about critical consciousness. Secondly, I hypothesize that the daily tasks of the principals’ studies lend them to focus on other areas of concern, thus critical consciousness is not a focal point of their daily tasks. Examples of these tasks are district initiatives, managerial concerns, and a focus on technical skills. The omission of critical consciousness could be unintentional or intentional, depending on the particular principal’s situation. For example, the principals in this study might understand that the development of a critical consciousness is important, but may not have the time to focus on it because of all their other expansive initiatives and duties, or, as stated earlier, did not take place because it is not a area of focus for that principal.

Not having students become critical and not developing the critical consciousness among students may be an unconscious act by principals. One explanation to consider when discussing the omission of a discussion about fostering a critical consciousness revolves around race. McIntosh (1990) describes this unconscious act as “white privilege.” More specifically, she characterizes white privilege as an unconscious entitlement of “unearned assets.” This entitlement leads
many White educators to not view their success in education as a privilege granted to them, but as merit based on their hard work, determination, and ability to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps. This lens may create a mindset wherein a critical view on education may not be considered or even recognized as important, for why would it be important to be critical of a system that has benefited one so greatly? For example, in order to become a principal, one experiences promotions and successes that lead to heading a school. A White principal may view his/her success based on merits of his/her hard work and determination; for this principal, the system may not be unjust and the need to examine possible flaws may not even be considered. In contrast, a minority principal who has had to battle numerous incidents of racism in order to achieve his/her position might view the educational system as unjust and flawed.

If educators are able to view the educational system as inequitable based on race, then it is important to teach students to be critical. This is especially true for our diverse student population. By teaching students to be critical, we open up the possibility that our educational system is created with some major flaws in regard to providing and equitable system for everyone.

**Embracing Diversity**

*Embracing diversity* is another concept that was listed many times in the literature review as a critical component of equitable teaching practice, especially using cultural differences as an asset (Brown-Jeffy & Capper, 2011). This concept was not brought up by the participants in this study. Race did not emerge in the
conversations as a consideration when looking at the do, and how to modify the do so that all students are successful.

Embracing differences may not be as important to many educators due to a worldview on the necessity to treat people the same regardless of race. Many educators claim to be “colorblind” and treat everyone the same, regardless of their race. Skrla, McKenzie, and Schuerich (2009) coined the term “racial erasure” when addressing this worldview. More specifically, racial erasure is the idea that if race is ignored, then racism will cease to exist. This mindset is dangerous in diverse school systems because it causes educators to not see racism as a problem in schools. Educators are more likely to blame things like poverty for the achievement gap instead of addressing the fact that achievement levels are striated based on race. By doing this, educators can place the blame on outside entities they cannot control. By viewing race as a non–issue, educators often fail to see celebrating diversity within the classroom as a valuable aspect to closing the achievement gap.

The absence of a discussion about race by principals in this study may suggest that race is not a high priority item to these principals when considering equitable outcomes. If this is the case, then the leadership style of the principal is not about focusing on power divisions within schools. Without this focus, the principal cannot directly address the achievement gap with initiatives and professional development for teachers. There should be a stronger focus on race and why gaps exist based on race within districts when considering student outcomes.
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

*Culturally relevant pedagogy*, being culturally proficient, and/or having cultural competence were not mentioned once by the principals as things teachers should be able to know or do in order to be effective with all students. Research emphasizes the importance of cultural competency for educators when trying to provide an equitable education for all students (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The region in which the study took place is very culturally diverse, and it would be hard to imagine how schools here would work to close the achievement gap without a focus on cultural competence.

With the wide array of shifts currently occurring within education, it is not entirely surprising that cultural competency was not an item brought up during the interviews with the principals. The shift to Common Core, 21st century thinking skills, and one-to-one devices are some examples of time-consuming initiatives that are demanding public school principals’ attention. This may be one reason why principals are simply not looking through a lens of cultural competence and thus do not recognize or value cultural competency in the classroom.

Even if principals felt they had the time and resources to address cultural competency, they would have to value the assets various cultures bring to U.S. schools. Unfortunately, as the literature has pointed out many educators have a deficit view toward various cultures, thus they do not look at them as an asset (Clycq, Nouwen, and Vandenbroucke, 2014; Ryan, 2003). Many educators do not have the internal belief that “all” students can achieve at high levels regardless of race, gender,
ability level or socioeconomic status. An asset-minded view among educators is vital in order for diverse populations to thrive. Having this asset-minded lens would allow educators to not only identify inequities, but be willing to act on them. In having this action mindset, U.S. educators can move toward being advocates for the “others” (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillae, 2004; Flessa, 2009; Ryan, 2003; Skrla, Schuerich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004).

**Advocacy**

Being an advocate or providing *advocacy* was not a topic addressed in the interviews even though it is emphasized in the literature. Cochran-Smith (2004) argues that this should not be a surprise because teachers are not taught to be advocates. More specifically, teachers are not taught to recognize inequalities. Students of Color need teachers who are able to identify achievement gaps within their classrooms and have the internal motivation to do something about it. In order for educators to teach advocacy, they need to be advocates themselves, specifically, advocates of equity.

It is important to state that just because advocacy was not brought up in the interviews does not mean it is not taking place by teachers within the schools that were studied – principals could have been thinking of other items of importance in regard to equity. Principal training in regard to developing into an equity-orientated change agent could help principals develop into advocates and thus be able to recognize the act of being an advocate.
In the literature review, I highlighted the work done by Skrla, McKenzie, and Scheurich, (2009) on the concept of being an equity-orientated change agent (EOCA). A specific aspect of being an EOCA is understanding that “inequity is embedded and institutionalized” (Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich, 2009, p. 70). In order to attack these inequities, educators need to take on the role of an advocate for marginalized students and teach them how to advocate for themselves. Therefore, more equity-orientated change agents within our schools are sure to bring about more advocacy, and thus more alterations of inequities within our schools.

Principals and teachers are the two most compounding forces that influence educational outcomes. Furthermore, one of the principal’s roles is to teach teachers or provide the professional development for them to be empowered to be advocates and equity-orientated change agents. This sort of leadership provided by the principal would lead to more educators on campus moving toward the development of an equity consciousness.

**Equity Consciousness**

Having an *equity consciousness* did not come up in my interviews but was a large aspect in the research. *Equity consciousness* is a disposition that is advantageous in providing an equitable education (Skrla, McKenzie & Scheurich, 2009). The principals in my study did talk about forming relationships, caring, and having a growth mindset. However, like the concept of advocacy, they did not talk about the teachers needing the ability to identify inequities. Equity in and of itself was not something brought up by principals unless directly probed.
That equity consciousness was not brought up is not surprising given that the literature frequently mentions a lack of equity focus in the classroom. Instead, a focus on testing, technical skills, and learning styles were prominent. The research shows that educators may have their competence questioned if they choose to make equity a focus area (Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001). This is compounded by the deliberate exclusion of an equity focus within the CPSEL and the CSTP. Inequity concerns in education cannot be addressed without a deliberate focus on equity (Angus, 1994; Glass, 2013; Pinto et al., 2012; Tochton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001).

That these critical components of developing an educational experience that works for all students were emphasized in the research literature but were absent in the interviews, provokes me to explore why not. One of the reasons might be related to the history of race relations in America. Race did not emerge as a topic during the interviews in regard to what a teacher needs to know or do or have the disposition to teach all students equitably. The literature review items of embracing diversity, culturally relevant pedagogy, and having an equity consciousness are all directly related to race. Secondly, knowledge construction, critical consciousness, and being an advocate share a common relationship because these characteristics are associated with power. By being able to recognize inequalities and act on them, power relations can be deliberately addressed and corrected.

Recognizing race and power and their interrelation in our school system is vital for educators to close the achievement gap. By not recognizing race and power – and the inequities that follow – schools will not be able to move away from
systematic inequities and toward an equitable school system. Recognition of these inequities is not enough because identification by itself is not action. Lastly, identification and action cannot be done solely by the teacher or the principal. In the literature review I highlighted research that looks at not only how important the teacher is (Sanders & Rivers, 2009), but how important the principal is to student achievement (Marzano et al., 2005). The partnership between the principal and the teacher is vital in order provide equity. The principal is responsible for providing structures, practices, and training so that teachers can recognize race and power relations within schools. In turn, principals’ training and evaluation processes need to reflect a focus on equity, power, and race related issues.

**Recommendations**

The interrelationship between the principal and the teacher is extremely important to any action plan required to elicit change within a school system. However, it is vital to acknowledge that many of the items discussed in regard to recommendations also require a policy instrument for implementation with fidelity and for long-term change. McDonnell and Elmore (1987) analyzed the assumptions and consequences of various policy instruments. *Mandates* and *capacity building* as explained by McDonnell and Elmore (1987) are two policy instruments that would be potentially successful to make the changes I suggest. Implementation needs to be done with a balance between mandates and capacity building. One should not require coercion outright without building some kind of knowledge surrounding the issue. Before change can occur, it is important to understand the “why” as it is self-
reflective. By understanding the why, educators can tap into their moral imperative and the importance of their daily work toward providing an equitable education. Therefore, it should be understood that my recommendations are not a quick fix and would take time to change hearts and minds.

I describe the implementation of my recommendations by utilizing the high-leverage policy framework (HLP) created by Cobb, Donaldson, and Mayer (2013). The high-leverage policy framework consists of six key components:

1. **Leverage Points**: The objective of an educational policy.
2. **Design Features**: The predetermined features of the policy.
3. **Implementation Contingencies**: The contextual factors that may come up during the implementation.
4. **Systems Change**: The change that leads to positive outcomes in student learning.
5. **Positive Student Outcomes**: The goal of the policy change.
6. **Theory of Action**: The logic behind what the policy will produce and how it will produce that outcome.

The target of the educational policy consists of, as the HLP framework suggests, the leverage points in equitable teaching. This is at the heart of the research question at hand and is a primary outcome. The design features consist of mandates and capacity building. The key to the implementation of the design features is to ensure a balance between mandates and capacity building. I also argue that capacity building should come before mandates; a top-down approach to providing an equity
based education is sure to fail due to not being able to “make” people have a moral imperative, be an advocate, or quite frankly care about equity. The implementation contingencies include more self-reflective educators with an equity consciousness. By including more educators who understand equity, schools are more likely to improve educational outcomes in regard to equity. The system change would include a shift in administration and teacher preparation programs, professional development, and school site practices. This shift would be toward a more equity-based system designed to produce equitable outcomes for all students; the positive student outcomes would then be measurable growth in the elimination of achievement gaps based on race. Lastly, the theory of action would occur when the educator preparation programs, the professional development in schools, and the school site policies become devoted to equity – then equitable practices in the classrooms will occur, which will lead to equitable outcomes for students, which will add to closing the achievement gap.

Chapter II discussed the current educational situation and what it can be. In this section I discuss how this research can have application in the environments of administrative education, professional development, and within schools. Following this information is a recommendation about other studies that could complement and further extend the information gathered from this study.

Earlier in this section I discussed the need for mandates and capacity building in order to elicit change. I stated how capacity building needs to come before mandates in order to substantiate long lasting change. In the following sections, I
make recommendations in regard to administrative prep programs, professional
development, and school site changes. Changes to administrative preparatory
programs and professional development represent capacity building. Even though
mandates may be involved in the alteration of CSEP’s within administrative
preparatory programs, the end result is capacity building for principals. The changes
to hiring practices and the principal evaluation process suggested under school site
changes are mandates; therefore, alterations to administrative preparatory programs
and professional development should precede the changes to principal evaluation.
This will ensure that the change process is focused on influencing the hearts and
minds of principals in regard to equity and not focused on a top-down approach. I
argue that this strategy would be the most beneficial for long-lasting change. The
organization of the following three sections represents the focus on capacity building
before mandates, with the discussion starting off with administrative preparation
programs, followed by professional development, and concluding with
recommendations based on the school site.

**Administration Preparation Programs**

Teacher education and administrator education show some direct similarities
in regard to the type of content and curriculum needed to prepare principals and
teachers to provide equity for all students. The three main categories that emerged
numerous times when analyzing the literature concerning teacher and administrative
education were *social justice curriculum integration, critical consciousness,* and
*advocate development.* It is important to note that, even though it may be of
importance to address changes in teacher preparatory programs, it is not suitable for this paper. This paper addressed principal perceptions and therefore the focus is on changes to administrative preparatory programs.

Social justice integrated throughout the curriculum is a huge shift from the technical aspects to a more social justice mindset. The focus is that principals would then be better able to work toward the elimination of marginalization based on race, socioeconomic status, ability level, and gender. In order to develop this focus, principals would need to be taught how to develop a critical consciousness. This is important since that aim would teach the principal to be self-reflective and, in turn, check his/her possible bias. Lastly, the principal must be able to not only identify a possible equity issue, but also address it. I argue that, based on the literature review and this study, principals would benefit from advocate development training. Inclusion of social justice integration, developing critical consciousness, and training principals on advocate development aligns with the literature review and the aspects that participants did not discuss in this particular study.

Professional Development

In order to build capacity among principals in regard to equity, there must be ongoing professional development support on the issues of equity, race and power relations. Due to the fact that a majority of principals are not new, changes to principal preparatory programs alone would not directly benefit principals because they are already in the field and not in an administrator prep program. Furthermore, as new administrators leave the preparatory programs and enter the field, they will
need ongoing training in equity dynamics specific to their particular region. I believe that in order to create schools that provide an equitable education, principals need professional development on the subjects of social justice, critical consciousness, and advocate development.

Secondly, this study shows that principals have differing views on what “equity” means and what implementing it in schools looks like. With that said, I believe that principals would benefit from professional development that clearly explains what equity means. This should also include items associated with self-reflection and introspective looks on individual worldviews.

The challenge with providing professional development in regard to equity is not strictly technical. This sort of professional development requires a change in hearts and minds, and it would take significant time commitment to change long-invested worldviews. School districts could benefit from an equity department devoted to providing district-wide professional development on topics related to equity. This could even lead to each school having an equity advocate on campus. This position could manage book studies regarding equity for staff; the book studies could lead to the first step in developing an equity consciousness, i.e., self-reflection. Secondly, an equity committee made up of educators and equity advocates could conduct equity audits on schools in order to help principals see where their inequities were (Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich, 2009). This awareness would, in turn, create capacity amongst principals.
School Site

Based on this study, I assert some specific recommendations about hiring and evaluation. I argue that hiring and evaluation protocols should be modified in order to bring out qualities in candidates and professionals that contribute to equity among all students. The interview process should be able to identify a social justice mindset, a critical consciousness, and a desire for advocacy for all students. If this is done, more schools would create principals who understand equity issues and are willing to act on them.

The evaluation process should be modified as well in order to create equitable schools for all students. The evaluation process for principals and teachers should more directly address equity issues and subgroups. For example, in the California Standards for the teaching profession, the term “all” should be broken down into clear, definitive language so that principals and teachers understand that “all” means all students regardless of race, socioeconomics, gender, and/or ability level. By addressing the overall lens of the evaluation, the focus would be in the right direction. However, the actual structure would need to change as well in order to provide more self-reflection and formative evaluation. Self-reflection is necessary as it allows educators to address some possible internal biases and worldviews that could be limiting when teaching students with diverse backgrounds. Secondly, by being formative, the evaluation process would lend itself to having the educator change his/her current practice in an ongoing effort of growth. By being summative, the educator would not be required to reevaluate his/her practice as much. This is an
issue when changing worldviews are created over long periods of times. By evaluating a teacher or a principal once or twice a year in a summative way, failure in regard to long-term change looms eminent because doing so lacks constant self-reflection.

I argue that, for principals and teachers, the evaluation process in California must undergo dramatic changes if we are to develop equitable outcomes for all students. The principals’ responses in regard to equity within this study were wide-ranged, stretching from a limited understanding to an emerging understanding in regard to equity. Furthermore, none of the 11 principals interviewed in this study expressed a full understanding of equity when compared to the research on equity. Therefore, by creating an evaluation system that is better focused on equity, more principals may focus their attention toward equity-related matters.

For the purpose of this paper, I make two recommendations for modification. The first modification is to shift the principal evaluation to include multiple perspectives and a focus on equity. Multiple perspectives include the input from teachers, principals, and district office administrators in order to rate the principals’ performances. By allowing multiple perspectives and including an equity focus, more educators may then develop a more complete equity understanding. This exposure to equity by multiple people would be conducted through the evaluation process and not solely on the outcome. I believe multiple perspectives are important because they require more exposure through everyone, including the evaluators, about what a quality principal should do.
This concept is even more relevant to the topic in this paper when the discussion involves an equity piece. Porter et al. (2010) developed a 360-degree evaluation for principals. The Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED) utilizes an online evaluation tool taken by teachers, the principal, and the principal’s supervisor. Table 5.1 describes the six main components and the six key processes, all of which are directly related to learning. I would add one more core component in order to address the equity piece, *equity consciousness*, so that the principal can reflect on how s/he utilizes an equity consciousness when addressing all of the key processes listed (see Table 3). The evaluators would likewise benefit from the conversational piece and analysis of an equity consciousness throughout the six key processes. The end goal would be a formative evaluation tool that uses multiple perspectives to create a self-reflective piece about how the principal utilizes equity within daily practice. In turn, this mandate would create capacity as well by allowing the equity conversation to take place between the principal, teachers, and district office administrators. If this was done, then it would be more likely that a principal would discuss topics related to equity when considering what teachers should be able to know or do, or have the dispositions to teach all students equitably.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

With the perceptions of my study’s principals recorded, it is of interest to find out teachers’ perspectives on what they believe teachers should know, do, and understand in order to teach students equitably. This is of primary importance due to the relationship between principals and teachers in regard to student achievement.
(Hattie, 2009). Secondly, a unique consideration is that both administrators and teachers were guided by the same three themes in regard to preparation, consistent with equitable schooling in the literature review. The three themes included 1) a social justice curriculum integration, 2) formation of a critical consciousness, and 3) advocate development. These themes could be further explored in future research.

More specific to this study is the fact that principals did not address the issues of knowledge construction, formation of a critical consciousness, advocate development, or the development of an equity consciousness. Future research could look at principals’ perceptions on the kind of administrative training they received in regard to the recognition on what teachers need to know, do, or have as dispositions to teach all students equitably within their preparation programs. The research question could state: What are principals’ perceptions of their pre-service preparation in regard to what teachers need to know, do, or have as dispositions in order to teach all students equitably. The findings about this research question could shine some light on the possible gaps in administrator preparatory training in regard to the identification of high-quality equity-related teaching practices.

**Limitations**

The first limitation of my study is the sample size. Although the study did look at principals from three different districts, the findings are indeed not universal. The intention is not to say that the findings should be generalized for all principals across all school districts in the nation. The second limitation is that the principals in my study did not have diverse racial backgrounds. In fact, all but one (1) of the 11
principals I interviewed were White. It should be noted that I did not get to pick the districts I studied, and I interviewed the majority of high school principals from each district.

**Conclusion**

I pursued this topic due to the personal interest I had in equity and teaching. The pursuit of this topic also fulfilled the gap in the research pertaining to principals’ perceptions of what teachers need to know, do, or have as a disposition in order to teach all students equitably. The gap is even more apparent when considering that this research focused on a particular region of northern California. Furthermore, the specificity of the participants chosen added to the uniqueness of this study in that they were high school principals. Filling the gap in the research pertaining to this topic is of high significance. As I expressed previously, this particular region is challenged by poverty, unemployment, and lower educational levels than state averages. Furthermore, this particular area has an achievement gap that is stratified by race. By analyzing the results of this study, my hope is that the “what is” is clear, and the “what it could be” will emerge.

My professional practice is affected by my participation in this study as well. As a school principal, it was beneficial for me to analyze research pertaining to what teachers need to do in order to produce equitable outcomes. I now have a clear lens as to how to help my teachers grow within this area. Furthermore, analyzing research on what principals need to be able to understand in order to be equitable leaders broadens my practice and relevance for my equitable conceptual understanding. I am
going to work with my staff in developing knowledge construction and critical consciousnesses within their classrooms. Furthermore, embracing diversity will be more of a focus at my school. Lastly, I am going to seek out professional development opportunities directly related to equity so that my teachers and I can share the equity lens. By applying these concepts to my professional practice, I can assure that equitable student outcomes can be achieved.
REFERENCES


Merriam, S. B. (2002). Introduction to qualitative research. *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis, 1*, 1-17.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

School Information
1. What do we need to know in order to understand your school?
2. Tell me about the teachers at your school?
3. Describe a typical week as a principal at this school.
4. What are some of your considerations in regards to the master schedule?

Teacher Characteristics General
1. What strategies or techniques do you hope your teachers will use in the classroom?
2. How often do you hire new teachers?
3. What does being a good teacher look like to you?

Know
1. What kind of knowledge base do you think new teachers should have?
2. How could you tell if a new teacher has a good knowledge base?

Do
1. What type of teaching skills do you feel new teachers need?
2. How do you know if a teacher is effective in the classroom?
   3. What does it look like when you have a teacher who knows their teaching skills?

Disposition/Equity-Based
1. How well do you think your teachers are able to reach all students?
2. How do you know they are effective at reaching all students?
3. What does it look like when you have a teacher who can reach all students?
4. How much time do you spend on professional development regarding eliminating equity barriers?
5. I know when trying to close the achievement gap there is a strong focus on achievement for all, in other words equity. People talk about equitable practices…how would you define equity?
6. How do you lead with equity in mind?
7. How can a teacher teach with equity in mind?
8. Can you provide examples or evidence of classroom practices that prepare teachers for teaching with equity in mind?
9. When a new teacher goes out to begin teaching what skills do they need have to teach equitably?
10. What do new teachers need to know about equity?
**APPENDIX B: PRINCIPAL INFORMATION SHEET**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Name:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell Phone:</td>
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<td>Email:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent address:</td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the best time to contact you?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your race or ethnicity?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your gender?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What languages do you speak with your family?</td>
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<td>What is your current position?</td>
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**APPENDIX C: ORIGINAL TIMELINE**

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<td>4/9/16</td>
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<td>5/21/16</td>
<td>Defending the Proposal</td>
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<td>Obtaining Human Subjects Approval</td>
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<td>Writing the findings Chapter IV</td>
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<td>1/2017-2/2017</td>
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