Variables that positively impact student learning are abundant. The effectiveness of school leadership is one variable that supports positive student learning. Given this, support for elevating the effectiveness of school leadership is important as school principal’s influence these outcomes through instructional leadership. This qualitative study explored how 11 school principals described the conditions that support or inhibit their professional relationships and their professional learning in a district on a journey of organizational change. This study focused on the perceptions and experiences principals engaged in improving their instructional leadership skills by using a newly introduced principal coaching/evaluation model. This study was guided by the following research questions: (a) How do principals describe their professional relationships with supervisors? (b) What conditions do principals suggest support their professional learning? (c) What conditions do principals suggest develop communities of practice?

The study took place in a single district. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with school principals. What emerged were tensions represented as themes, resulting from deep organizational change taking place within an organization moving to become a more mature organization, focused on building systems and structures. The importance of trust, differentiated professional development, and time served as themes that represented the tensions among principals.