

The Role of Instructional Supervision in Crisis Management: A Content Analysis of Supervisory Practices at Brockten Public Schools

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Abstract

This study examines how instructional supervision is adapted during crises in a large, urban school district, using Brockten Public Schools as a case. Through a qualitative content analysis of 60 district documents—including principal meeting agendas, supervision manuals, strategic plans, and annual school plans—the research investigates how supervisory practices are conceptualized and implemented to maintain instructional quality and support educators amid ongoing disruptions. Findings reveal that operational demands frequently overshadow instructional supervision and equity initiatives during crises, with principal meetings prioritizing logistics and compliance over leadership development and equity-focused actions. The study highlights the need for supervision models that are both adaptive and equity-driven, integrating reflective practice, stakeholder collaboration, and crisis-specific protocols into daily leadership routines. Implications suggest that for supervision to serve as both a stabilizing force and a catalyst for systemic resilience, it must be embedded in the daily work of school leaders and explicitly supported by district structures and resources.

Keywords

instructional supervision; crisis management; equity; crisis leadership; content analysis; district leadership

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Introduction

Schools are foundational institutions designed to foster student learning, exploration, and self-development, yet they increasingly operate amid recurring crises that disrupt educational continuity and jeopardize student well-being (Virella, 2025). In many large, urban-intensive, under-resourced districts, leaders navigate overlapping challenges such as pandemic recovery, severe weather events, organizational restructuring, and persistent poverty at the same time. In the Northeast, U.S., Brockten Public Schools, for example, COVID-19 impacts, Hurricane Ida-related flooding, high rates of homelessness, and middle school restructuring converged to create sustained pressure on school systems, staff, and students. Within this landscape, instructional supervision becomes a potentially powerful lever for sustaining instructional quality and advancing equity during and after disruptive events.

During crises, immediate safety and logistical concerns often take precedence. However, emerging research highlights the importance of robust instructional supervision as a critical mechanism not only for sustaining instructional quality but also for promoting equity amid profound disruptions (Glickman et al., 2023). Effective supervision provides educators with the guidance, feedback, and emotional support necessary to adapt to novel challenges and to address the needs of historically marginalized students. Despite this recognition, empirical research remains limited on how supervisory practices are enacted in real-world crisis contexts, particularly within large, resource-constrained school districts where overlapping challenges are most acute.

This gap in the literature is significant. While prior studies have examined crisis management and instructional leadership separately, few have explored the dynamic interplay between these domains or considered how supervisory practices can simultaneously advance instructional quality and equity under conditions of systemic disruption (Grissom & Condon, 2021). Moreover, most existing models lack specificity for under-resourced settings, and there is a lack of empirical evidence on how supervisors adapt their roles and strategies to promote resilience and justice during crises. Addressing these gaps is essential for developing supervision models that are both crisis-responsive and equity-driven.

This study responded to these needs by conducting a content analysis of 60 supervisory documents from Brockten Public Schools, a large urban district in the northeastern United States, to examine how instructional supervision was conceptualized and implemented during recent crises. Specifically, the research questions guiding this inquiry were:

1. How were supervisory practices adapted to maintain instructional quality and educator support during crises?
2. Which supervisory protocols and strategies most effectively promoted resilience and equity in a resource-constrained context?
3. How can insights from these practices inform the development of more robust crisis-responsive supervision models for K–12 education?

By addressing these questions, this study advances understanding of the critical role of instructional supervision in crisis management and provides actionable insights for future policy

and practice in educational leadership. The following literature review situates this inquiry within the broader field, tracing the evolution of supervision theory and highlighting key findings from prior research at the intersection of instructional leadership, crisis management, and equity.

Literature Review

Instructional supervision differentiates between formative processes that promote teacher growth and summative evaluations for accountability (Mette et al., 2023). Today's supervision emphasizes collaboration, mentorship, and partnership rather than compliance (Chen, 2018; Glickman et al., 2023), aligning with trends in professional learning communities, peer coaching, and action research. In resource-limited districts, supervision must tackle ongoing inequities and disruptions, necessitating adaptive, equity-focused approaches (Brock et al., 2021). Collaborative practices and formative feedback are vital for supporting teachers and students, especially during crises (Chen, 2018; Glanz, 2018). Modern supervision often incorporates action research, individualized coaching, group development, and curriculum alignment to promote real-time instructional improvements (Chen, 2018; Ebele & Olofu, 2017). Models like the Reflective Practice Model by Sergiovanni and Starratt (2023) stress cyclical improvement through collaborative goal-setting and reflective practices, connecting immediate classroom needs with long-term professional development. These frameworks effectively address both organizational and pedagogical aspects of supervision.

Culturally Responsive Supervision in Crisis Contexts

In crisis contexts, promoting equity and supporting diverse learning communities requires adaptive, justice-oriented supervision. Current research emphasizes culturally responsive supervision, characterized by collaborative, empathetic, and reflective practices as essential for acknowledging the diverse backgrounds and experiences of students and educators (Guerra et al., 2022; Mette et al., 2024). This approach moves beyond compliance-driven models, fostering inclusive environments that address the needs of every student. For example, equity audits are one concrete tool supervisors can use to operationalize culturally responsive supervision, particularly in resource-constrained districts (Guerra et al., 2022). In Brockton, equity audits involved systematic reviews of student achievement data, discipline records, program access, and staffing patterns, disaggregated by race, language status, disability, and socioeconomic status. Supervisors and school teams used these data to identify patterns of exclusion; set equity-focused goals; and monitor the impact of interventions such as targeted tutoring, program access, or attendance initiatives. When embedded into crisis planning, equity audits help ensure that responses to disruption do not inadvertently widen opportunity gaps for students who already experience systemic marginalization.

These audits involve reviewing policies and practices to ensure that all students can access quality learning environments equitably. By integrating equity audits into supervisory processes, leaders can monitor how crisis responses impact marginalized groups and then make necessary adjustments. Shifting to equity-focused supervision enables leaders to become change agents who challenge deficit ideologies and foster inclusive cultures (Guerra et al., 2022; Mette et al., 2024). In resource-limited districts, this approach is crucial as it ensures that crisis responses are

adaptive, just, and inclusive for all students. This paradigm is essential for resilient and effective educational leadership in diverse, global contexts.

Instructional Supervision in Crisis Contexts

Despite advancements, challenges in instructional supervision persist (Cansoy et al., 2025). Ambiguity about the supervisor's role can lead to teachers responding defensively instead of growing in their work (Allida et al., 2018). Inequitable resource distribution further strains relationships, particularly in low-income schools with limited access to trained personnel and support tools (Brock et al., 2021). As noted, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues by exposing technological divides and gaps in trauma-informed protocols (Prestiadi et al., 2021; Prestiadi et al., 2022).

Consequently, supervision now bears a “dual mandate” to ensure accountability while also supporting overwhelmed staff (Harris & Jones, 2020). Recent crises continue to highlight the need for adaptable supervisory practices (Virella, 2025). In districts like Brockten Public Schools, the supervisory focus must shift from oversight to crisis-responsive support (Prestiadi et al., 2021; Prestiadi et al., 2022). Supervisors are now tasked with enhancing both instructional quality and the well-being of teachers and students (Harris & Jones, 2020; Martin et al., 2022). This adjustment is crucial for achieving equitable outcomes during disruptions, particularly in resource-constrained environments (Brock et al., 2021; Fitria et al., 2021; Grissom & Condon, 2021). Innovative supervisory approaches have emerged in response to worldwide crises. For example, in post-earthquake Indonesia, hybrid supervision integrated WhatsApp mentorship with community assessments to address learning gaps (Pratiwi et al., 2023). Australian flood programs merged mental health support with instructional feedback (McPherson & Casanueva Baptista, 2024). Refugee camps adapted community-based models to incorporate indigenous knowledge into coaching for marginalized students (Ghamrawi & El-Khatib, 2019). These examples of “culturally mediated supervision” emphasize the need to balance local needs with rigorous pedagogical standards, particularly in areas of chronic crisis (Pratiwi et al., 2023).

The COVID-19 pandemic precipitated a global reevaluation of instructional supervision, exposing both vulnerabilities and adaptive innovations across educational systems. Research shows that crisis-era supervision has evolved into a hybrid practice that combines pedagogical oversight with psychosocial support, technological mediation, and equity advocacy (Mette et al., 2024). As a result, three dominant paradigm shifts have emerged: (a) the rise of “crisis-responsive supervision” that balances protocol adherence with real-time adaptation (Grissom & Condon 2021); (b) the normalization of distributed leadership models to address cascading responsibilities; and (c) the institutionalization of trauma-informed evaluation frameworks that prioritize educator well-being. These developments have occurred alongside persistent challenges, including technological inequities, confusion between evaluative and supportive roles, and inadequate preparation for hybrid instruction assessment (Prestiadi et al., 2021; Prestiadi et al., 2022).

While the COVID-19 pandemic did not create educational inequities, it clearly intensified and made more evident longstanding technological divides, gaps in trauma-informed supports, and uneven access to high-quality instruction (Virella, 2025). In many districts, including Brockten,

supervision took on the “dual mandate” that Harris and Jones (2020) described, whereby supervisors were expected to maintain accountability for instructional quality while also attending to their educators’ emotional strain and shifting working conditions. This dual mandate became more pronounced during remote and hybrid learning, when supervisors had to recalibrate expectations, adapt observation practices, and provide targeted support for teachers and students experiencing unprecedented times. Understanding how supervisors negotiated this expanded role in real time is central to examining supervision in crisis contexts.

Globally, supervisors are increasingly functioning as “cultural brokers,” translating crisis policies into classroom-level practices and mediating community partnerships (Fitria et al., 2021). This reconceptualization aligns with dynamic crisis life-cycle models that emphasize iterative learning and organizational flexibility (Liou, 2015), positioning supervision as both a stabilizing force during disruptions and a catalyst for systemic resilience. The pandemic was especially revealing of critical gaps in supervisory preparedness. While many leaders implemented blended professional development models, few felt adequately trained to assess trauma-informed practices in virtual settings. These challenges were particularly acute in special education and rural or low-income districts, where real-time supervisory support tended to be less accessible (Prestiadi et al., 2021; Prestiadi et al., 2022).

Gaps in the Literature

Based on the unprecedented surge in crises in this century, a critical gap in the literature is the insufficient focus on how instructional supervision can promote equity during crises (Virella, 2025; Cormier et al., 2024). Effective crisis equity leadership requires targeted interventions that prioritize distributive justice and culturally responsive communication (McDonough et al., 2023; Rudling et al., 2023). Moreover, although some research has begun to address these concerns, gaps remain in understanding the effectiveness of supervisory models in K–12 schools during crises (Cansoy et al., 2025; Sokol et al., 2021). Many models lack context-focused specificity and need to be adapted for resource-limited settings (Grissom & Condon, 2021). Clearer supervisory protocols for crisis team roles are also necessary (Basham et al., 2000).

Theoretical Framework

Effective school leadership during crises demands a sophisticated synthesis of crisis management theory and instructional supervision frameworks (Gurr, 2020). Traditionally, instructional supervision has prioritized teacher growth, instructional quality, and formative feedback (Zepeda, 2013), while crisis management offers a systematic, phase-based approach for navigating unpredictable and high-stakes disruptions. However, the realities of the contemporary educational landscape, marked by overlapping crises and persistent inequities, require leaders to transcend these silos (Virella, 2025). Integrating these domains enables supervisors to develop adaptive, context-sensitive practices that promise to respond to immediate disruptions and advance long-term goals.

Polycrisis scholars argue that contemporary systems are increasingly shaped by multiple, interacting crises whose combined effects exceed the sum of their parts. Thus, disruptions cascade and heighten uncertainty for institutions such as schools (Virella, 2025; Lawrence et al.,

2024). In this study, I draw on that perspective to conceptualize Brockten Public Schools as operating within a polycrisis context in which acute events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Hurricane Ida, and other critical episodes/occurrences, intersect with longstanding structural inequities such as concentrated poverty, housing instability, and fiscal constraints. Rather than suggesting that schools or supervision are themselves in a permanent state of crisis, this framing distinguishes between the episodic crises and the broader polycrisis conditions that cause such events to overlap frequently and have drastic consequences for marginalized communities. Within this *polycrisis landscape*, crises are understood as time-bound disruptions that trigger shifts in routines and resource allocations, while the *polycrisis context* shapes who is most vulnerable, which issues are prioritized, and how quickly systems can recover (Grissom & Condon, 2021; Lawrence et al., 2024). This distinction clarifies the terrain for examining how instructional supervision functions as a mediating practice that either reproduces or disrupts inequities when schools confront multiple crises.

Grissom and Condon's (2021) five-phase cycle provided a structured sequence for organizational response, from prevention and preparedness to recovery and institutional learning. Their model is particularly salient for this study because it offers a clear, actionable structure for mapping supervisory practices throughout the arc of crisis response in K–12 settings. The five-phase cycle includes mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery, and learning. Each phase emphasizes continuous reflection, stakeholder collaboration, and iterative improvement, all essential for building organizational resilience and advancing equity (Grissom & Condon, 2021). Table 1 summarizes these phases and illustrates how instructional supervisors can operationalize them in schools.

Recent scholarship has highlighted the importance of culturally responsive supervision throughout all phases of crisis (Virella, 2024; Guerra et al., 2022). This approach is grounded in the understanding that culture influences how individuals and communities perceive, interpret, and respond to crises. Culturally responsive supervision involves ongoing self-reflection, critical consciousness, and a commitment to social justice, which ensure that supervisors address the power dynamics inherent in their roles and create more equitable, transparent relationships with educators and families (Cormier et al., 2024). By embedding equity audits and stakeholder engagement into crisis planning and resource allocation, supervisors can center the needs of marginalized students, such as English language learners, students with disabilities, and those from low-income backgrounds, at every stage of the crisis life cycle (Grissom & Condon, 2021; Guerra et al., 2022). For example, during the preparedness and recovery phases, supervisors might collaborate with multilingual families and community organizations to co-develop crisis response plans that ensure linguistic and cultural relevance. In the mitigation and response phases, supervisors can employ bias-reduction tools and reflective protocols during classroom observations to identify and address disparities in instruction and discipline (Grissom & Condon, 2021; Guerra et al., 2022). These strategies position supervision as both a stabilizing force and a catalyst for transformative change, blending organizational predictability with human-centered adaptability to guide districts through the “perpetual crisis mode” that characterizes much of contemporary school leadership (Grissom & Condon, 2021).

Table 1: *The Five Phases of Crisis Management and Examples of Supervisory Practice*

Phase	Definition	Example of Supervisory Practice in Schools
Mitigation	Proactive steps taken to reduce risk and prevent crises before they occur	Supervisors conduct equity audits to identify vulnerable student groups, update emergency plans, and ensure staff are trained in crisis prevention (Gurr, 2020).
Preparedness	Planning and preparation activities that ensure readiness for a crisis	Supervisors provide professional development on trauma-informed teaching, organize technology training for remote instruction, and conduct crisis drills (Harris & Jones, 2020).
Response	Immediate actions taken during a crisis to address its impact	Supervisors shift to offering real-time coaching and emotional support for teachers, adapting observation protocols, and maintaining communication with staff and families (Arar et al., 2024).
Recovery	Efforts to restore normalcy and support the school community after a crisis	Supervisors facilitate debriefing sessions, coordinate targeted interventions, and monitor the reintegration of instructional routines (Glickman et al., 2023).
Learning	Systematic reflection and institutionalization of lessons learned post-crisis	Supervisors revise protocols based on crisis experiences, update emergency response plans, and incorporate equity-focused practices into professional development (Grissom & Condon, 2021).

Effective school leadership during crises requires integrating crisis management and instructional supervision into adaptive, equity-driven practices (Grissom & Condon, 2021; Gurr, 2020). The five-phase crisis cycle structures supervisory actions across prevention, preparedness, response, recovery, and learning; however, their impact hinges on culturally responsive supervision that centers on culture, power, and justice (Cormier et al., 2024; Guerra et al., 2022). This approach stabilizes schools amid disruption and positions supervision as a catalyst for systemic, resilient, and just leadership.

In this study, the end goal of instructional supervision was understood as the development of equitable, high-quality teaching and learning environments that support the academic success and well-being of all students, particularly those who have been historically marginalized (Cormier et al., 2024; Mette & Cormier, 2026). This position builds on supervision scholarship that emphasizes formative feedback, professional growth, and shared responsibility for instructional improvement rather than narrow compliance or surveillance. In crisis contexts, this goal extends to sustaining instructional quality, protecting the well-being of educators and students while preventing crises from deepening existing inequities. Framing supervision in this

way differentiates the approach advanced here from models that focus primarily on evaluation or classroom management.

Methods

To study the role of instructional supervision in crisis management, I drew on data from a longitudinal case study of one urban-intensive (Milner, 2012) district in northeastern U.S. called Brockten Public Schools (the names of the district, schools, and all participants are pseudonyms). My research design capitalized on a multi-year university-district partnership that was maintained/conducted over the 2021-2023 school years.

Setting

Brockten Public School District (BPSD) serves over 25,000 students across 50 schools in a large urban area; more than 80% classify as qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch through the National School Lunch Program. The district's demographics include 70% Latino, 20% African American, 6% Asian, and 5% Caucasian, with a median household income of \$40,000, just above the poverty line. Since 2021, BPSD has contended with COVID-19 recovery, budget constraints, middle school restructuring, chronic absenteeism, discipline concerns, gang-related violence, and infrastructure damage, all exacerbated by high rates of poverty and homelessness. The district also experienced severe flooding from Hurricane Ida and subsequent winter storms, which damaged school facilities and displaced families. These overlapping crises make Brockten an analytically rich site for examining how instructional supervision operates at the intersection of crisis response and equity in an under-resourced urban-intensive context.

Data Collection

To address the research questions, I analyzed a purposeful sample of 60 district documents selected for their relevance to supervisory practices during crises. The sample included principal meeting agendas, district supervision manuals, strategic action plans, equity SMART goals, and annual school plans, capturing both formal policy and routine practice (see Table 2). I chose these documents because they referenced crisis events (e.g., COVID-19, Hurricane Ida, restructuring) or articulated expectations for supervision, which allowed for an examination of supervisory sensemaking before, during, and after disruptions. I continued sampling and analysis until no new themes related to crisis management or supervision emerged across document types, indicating thematic saturation at the level of documentary evidence.

This approach grounded the document analysis in the realities of the school leaders and reflected the diversity of challenges they faced. The analysis continued until thematic saturation was reached, ensuring the findings were credible and reflective of the district's supervisory landscape during crises (Elo et al., 2014).

Table 2: *Data Source, Contribution and Role of Dataset, and Amount Collected*

<i>Data Source</i>	<i>Contribution/Role of Dataset</i>	<i>Pieces of Data</i>
<i>School Level Equity Action Plans</i>	Document school-specific strategies, SMART goals, and progress monitoring plans that operationalize district policies and adapt them at the school level to advance equity and instructional improvement	25
<i>Instructional Supervision Documents</i>	Outline formal supervisory expectations, evaluation protocols, and professional development requirements to anchor the understanding of district-wide supervisory frameworks and their intended impact on instructional quality	3
<i>District-wide Monthly Principal Meeting Agenda</i>	Reveal ongoing priorities, communication patterns, and collaborative problem-solving among district leaders, showing how supervisory and crisis management strategies are discussed and refined in real-time.	14
<i>District Strategic Plan 2019–2024</i>	Articulate the district’s long-term vision, mission, and priorities, providing a framework for policy implementation, resource allocation, and accountability to evaluate the alignment between school actions and district objectives.	1
<i>Sample Annual School Plans (Representing 10% of schools in district)</i>	Offer examples of how individual schools interpret and implement district policies and initiatives, highlighting variations in priorities, resource use, and approaches to instructional improvement at the school level.	5

Data Analysis

I conducted a qualitative content analysis to examine patterns systematically within 60 district documents (Neuendorf & Kumar, 2015). This approach struck a balance between reliability and flexibility, enabling me to identify both explicit and implicit themes related to crisis management and instructional supervision. I began with a holistic reading to familiarize myself with the documents and lay the groundwork for deeper analysis and identification of recurring ideas. I developed a coding scheme based on Grissom and Condon’s (2021) five-phase crisis management cycle. This framework was useful because of its practical alignment with K–12 crisis response and its utility for mapping supervisory practices (see Table 3 for the codebook). I created additional codes inductively as the analysis unfolded, thereby capturing emergent themes. All coding was performed using Atlas.ti software, which organized coded excerpts systematically. I coded each document for explicit references to crisis management phases and supervisory practices, along with implicit cues that illustrated how these concepts

were enacted in practice. Coding refined iteratively to maintain consistency and clarify category boundaries as new insights emerged.

Table 3: *Codebook of Application of Crisis Management Phases from Grissom and Condon (2021)*

Crisis Phase	Supervisory Action Examples
Mitigation	Audit lesson plans for crisis adaptability (e.g., tech integration)
Preparedness	Train staff on alternative observation methods (video submissions, virtual walkthroughs)
Response	Implement “light-touch” formative assessments to reduce teacher stress
Recovery	Conduct re-entry classroom walkthroughs with social-emotional learning focus
Learning	Revise evaluation rubrics to include crisis-responsive teaching strategies

Researcher Reflexivity

Throughout this study, I maintained a reflexive stance as a university-based researcher engaged in a multi-year partnership with Brockten Public Schools, with prior experience as an educational leader in urban districts. I documented my assumptions about crisis leadership and equity-focused supervision through analytic memos, revisited coding decisions with these assumptions in mind, and consulted with colleagues who had not worked with the district to interrogate my interpretations. These strategies were intended to reduce the risk of over-privileging familiar narratives, to surface tensions between district rhetoric and practice, and to ensure that the analysis remained grounded in the language and priorities evident in the documents themselves. I recognized, however, that the findings still reflected my interpretive lens and that other researchers might emphasize different aspects of the same data.

During my coding process, I looked for explicit and implicit references to these themes, noting both the presence of these elements and how they were conceptualized or operationalized within each data piece and across data sets (i.e., policy documents and observations).

Trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility and validity of my findings, I utilized the “checklist for researchers attempting to improve the trustworthiness of a content analysis study” developed by Elo et al. (2014, p. 3). This checklist prompts reflection after every phase of the study, posing such questions as “Is this method the best available to answer the target research questions?” and “How adequately do the categories capture the data?” (p. 3). Consequently, after each data collection and analysis stage, I referred to the checklist to evaluate my findings. This process allowed me to establish strong trustworthiness in my data while recognizing that any research study ultimately reflects the author’s interpretation (Elo et al., 2014).

Findings

These findings resulted from a content analysis of supervisory documents at Brockten Public Schools, focusing on how instructional supervision was adapted during crisis events. The findings are organized around themes that emerged from the data and directly addressed the study's research questions.

Crisis Triage Leadership: Operational Priorities over Instructional Supervision at Brockten Public Schools

My analysis of principal meeting agendas at Brockten Public Schools showed that immediate operational concerns consistently overshadowed instructional supervision and equity initiatives. Across 14 meetings (totaling 42 hours), only one meeting included substantive principal evaluation training, despite district policies emphasizing leadership development (Brockten Principal of Operations Practice Rubric, 2023). District narratives and crisis protocols further framed crisis management as a procedural approach, focusing on checklists and updates rather than adaptive leadership or instructional capacity-building. While understandable during crises, this operational focus, or crisis triage, risks deepening inequities and stalling systemic improvement. The findings highlighted the need for supervision models that balance operational demands with ongoing instructional and equity leadership, ensuring that crises drive adaptive, equity-centered change rather than act as barriers. Table 4 synthesizes key aspects of crisis triage leadership at Brockten Public Schools, illustrating how operational priorities predominated the instructional supervision and equity-focused practices during periods of acute crisis.

Supervision Manuals: Preparation, Documentation, and Accountability

My analysis of Brockten's evaluation protocols revealed a system that prioritizes both stability and adaptability, crucial elements for effective crisis management. The Administrator Evaluation Training and Guidebook establishes clear expectations for standards-based assessment, annual goal setting, ongoing professional development, and data-driven decision-making. Supervisors participate in regular training and calibration to ensure consistency and fairness in their work. Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) and reflective practice cycles provide accountability and support, enabling leaders to address emergent challenges with agility, which is a multi-level approach essential during crises.

The system emphasizes collaborative goal setting, multiple data sources, and SMART goals which enable administrators to be accountable and revise priorities as needed. The guide specifies, "Achievement data from multiple sources are used to determine program/department starting points and to show evidence of consistent growth toward the District's learning goals" (p. 4), with requirements to "thoroughly address subsets/subgroups of the student population that are identified to close achievement gaps" (p. 2). This subgroup analysis is vital during crises when inequities may intensify and cause disproportionate harm to marginalized populations.

Table 4: *Summary Table: Key Aspects of Crisis Triage Leadership*

Aspect	Evidence	Implication for Supervision
Operational Focus	Logistics, compliance, and state assessments dominate meeting agendas	Instructional supervision is sidelined
Leadership Reduction Impact	Unstable systems and practices...student achievement continues to deteriorate	Missed opportunities for systemic change
Crisis Management Approach	Procedural updates, checklists, and briefings	Reactive, not adaptive or reflective
Equity Impact	Deferred systemic improvements for marginalized students	Risks perpetuating inequities

Reflective practice is evident throughout evaluation documents, in pre- and post-observation conferences, annual summative conferences, and designated “moments of reflection” in training. Administrators are prompted to consider “What is our core business? What is my brand?” and to provide evidence of their impact on professional practice. This evidence-based reflection supports continual assessment and adjustment, which are key for crisis management.

Robust accountability mechanisms are detailed in the manuals. For administrators rated as “Ineffective” or “Partially Effective,” CAPs provide targeted professional development for the following year, stabilizing school operations and maintaining instructional quality during crises.

Despite these strengths, the supervision manuals do not explicitly address crisis-specific scenarios such as remote observations, trauma-informed supervision, or emergency response protocols. While ongoing training, data use, and reflective practice position the district to adapt, the absence of explicit crisis response modules or trauma-informed practices remains a gap. Integrating these elements further strengthens resilience and responsiveness (see table 5).

Brockten’s supervision manuals create a stable, data-driven, and growth-oriented environment that supports effective crisis response and management. The emphasis on training, evaluation, goal setting, and remediation provides a backbone for adaptability, while reflective practice and collaboration foster responsive leadership. However, for maximum crisis resilience, the district should integrate explicit crisis management protocols and trauma-informed supervisory practices into its existing framework. This would better equip leaders to address the complex needs of students and staff during times of disruption.

Table 5: Key Features and Gaps in Brockten’s Supervision Manuals

Feature/Gap	Evidence/Illustration	Implication for Crisis Management
Structured supervision	Annual training, goal-setting, CAPs, reflective practice cycles	Provides stability and adaptability
Data-driven goals and equity focus	Subgroup analysis, targeted action, SMART goals	Mitigates inequities during crises
Reflective practice	Pre-/post-observation, summative conferences, reflection prompts	Fosters continuous improvement
Accountability and remediation	CAPs for underperforming administrators	Stabilizes leadership and instruction
Crisis-specific and trauma protocols	Absent or underdeveloped	Limits crisis resilience and equity

Planning for Equity, Supervision, and Crisis Resilience

The Five-Year Strategic Action Plan for Brockten Public Schools exemplifies a robust, equity-driven vision for systemic improvement underpinned by broad stakeholder engagement and measurable outcomes. The planning process was intentionally inclusive, as evidenced by the collaborative participation of community members, parents, educators, and administrators in shaping the plan’s direction. This participatory approach ensures that community priorities directly inform the district’s goals and that equity is operationalized through concrete objectives and universal support. The plan’s four core goal areas such as Teaching and Learning, Facilities, Communications and Connections, and Social-Emotional Learning which are each structured to advance equitable access and foster an inclusive, supportive environment for all students. Notably, the district’s linguistic and cultural diversity is framed as an “educational asset,” with comprehensive services for students who speak more than 40 languages and those requiring special education or bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL) support.

Instructional supervision is positioned as foundational within this framework. The Teaching and Learning goal calls for high-quality, research-based professional development and differentiated instruction, while objectives to empower families and strengthen community partnerships reflect a commitment to shared leadership and accountability. The plan’s emphasis on tracking graduation rates, attendance, and test scores and its alignment with state benchmarks demonstrates a data-driven approach to continuous improvement. Furthermore, the plan explicitly recognizes crises as both challenges and catalysts for resilience and renewal, highlighting the importance of social-emotional learning and restorative justice in fostering positive school climates. However, while the strategic plan articulates a clear and ambitious vision for equity and instructional excellence, the findings suggested a persistent gap between policy-level commitments and daily supervisory practice, particularly during periods of crisis. This gap is especially evident in the prioritization of operational demands over instructional supervision and equity-focused leadership, as underscored by other data sources within the district. The challenge, then, is not in setting the vision but in translating it into consistent,

adaptive supervisory actions that center equity and instructional quality, especially when crises threaten to divert attention and resources.

These findings closely aligned with the five-phase crisis management cycle—mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery, and learning, and provide a structured approach for ensuring that equity and instructional quality remain central throughout crisis response. Brockten’s strategic plan effectively addresses the preparedness and mitigation phases by embedding equity audits, stakeholder engagement, and data-driven decision-making into its core objectives. However, the persistent implementation gap highlights the ongoing challenge of maintaining these priorities during the response and recovery phases, when operational demands often overshadow instructional leadership. My analysis directly addressed the study’s research questions by illustrating how supervisory practices are adapted to maintain instructional quality and educator support during crises. It also shed light on the protocols and strategies that most effectively promote resilience and equity in resource-constrained contexts while underscoring the need for more robust, crisis-responsive supervision models. The findings also suggested that while Brockten’s strategic plan provides a strong foundation for equity and instructional excellence, the ultimate test of crisis resilience lies in the district’s ability to operationalize these principles in daily supervisory routines, especially under conditions of disruption. Thus, the strategic plan’s inclusive, equity-driven vision and its positioning of instructional supervision as foundational are consistent with the best practices outlined in supervision practices. However, the ongoing challenge of implementation, particularly during crises, points to the necessity of embedding crisis-responsive, equity-focused supervision into the daily work of school leaders, ensuring that crises serve as opportunities for adaptive change rather than as barriers to systemic improvement. Table 6 summarizes how equity, data-driven decision-making, and the gap between vision and practice are emphasized across major document types, highlighting both firm policy-level commitments and ongoing implementation challenges during crises.

Table 6: *District Strategic Priorities and Implementation Challenges in Equity and Supervision*

Theme/Area	District Plan Highlights	Implementation Challenges
Stakeholder Engagement	Inclusive planning with community, parents, educators, and administrators	Limited school-level stakeholder voice
Equity and Access	Universal supports, bilingual/ESL, special education, differentiated instruction	Equity often reduced to compliance
Instructional Supervision	Research-based strategies, differentiated instruction, community engagement	Supervision sidelined during crises
Accountability and Progress	Tracking graduation, attendance, test scores, QSAC benchmarks	Data use sometimes superficial
Crisis and Resilience	Social-emotional learning, restorative justice, transformation narrative	Vision-practice gaps during crises

Taken together, these findings illustrated that while Brockten Public Schools has articulated a robust and adaptive equity agenda at the district level, a significant implementation gap persists at the level of instructional supervision and school leadership. For the district's ambitious equity vision to be realized, equity must become an integrated, non-negotiable focus of daily supervisory practice, not merely a compliance item or periodic training. Bridging this gap is essential for advancing crisis resilience as well as systemic improvement.

Annual School Plans: Operationalizing Equity and Improvement at the School Level

My analysis of five annual school plans from Brockten Public Schools revealed a concerted effort to translate district-wide equity and instructional priorities into concrete, site-specific actions. Each plan systematically leverages multiple data sources including state test scores, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), a computer-adaptive assessment, percentiles, attendance rates, and subgroup analyses, to pinpoint achievement gaps and set measurable improvement goals. For example, one school plan explicitly noted that "achievement and growth by subgroup, including ELL, economically disadvantaged, and students with disabilities, are tracked and reported" (p. 1), ensuring targeted interventions to address the needs of historically underserved student populations.

Schools implemented a range of interventions, such as extended day/Saturday academy programs and enhanced STEM/STEAM labs, with effectiveness measured through improvements in standardized assessments. Resource allocation was explicitly tied to equity, with additional supports directed toward students from low socioeconomic backgrounds or those requiring individualized learning plans. This deliberate focus on data-driven decision-making and targeted resource distribution exemplifies the district's commitment to closing opportunity gaps and advancing educational equity.

Collaborative and distributed leadership structures were evident in the composition of planning teams, which included principals, teachers, parent coordinators, and support staff. These teams met regularly to review data, analyze root causes, and adjust instructional strategies in response to emerging challenges. As one plan stated, "The ASP team met monthly to review benchmark data and adjust instructional strategies" (p. 1). Plans also reflected ongoing adaptations to contextual challenges, such as the impact of remote learning on student engagement and the need to address chronic absenteeism. For instance, funding was allocated to diversify staff roles, improve attendance systems, and support individualized learning plans, further embedding equity into daily school operations.

Student voice and community engagement were prioritized through initiatives like the Youth Equity Stewardship (Y.E.S.) program, which brought together students and faculty from multiple schools for student-led projects and professional development. This approach not only empowered students and families as partners in school improvement; it also ensured that the lived experiences of those most affected by systemic disparities informed the equity work. To illuminate these patterns and tensions, Table 7 summarizes how the district's core themes were emphasized across major document types. This synthesis highlighted both the district's strong rhetorical and policy-level commitment to equity and data-driven accountability as well as the

persistent implementation gaps at the operational level, especially during crises when compliance and logistics frequently overshadowed instructional and equity-focused leadership.

Table 7: Key Features of Annual School Plans

Feature	Evidence/Illustration	Implication for Equity and Supervision
Data-driven equity strategies	Subgroup tracking, targeted interventions, measurable goals	Ensures interventions address equity gaps
Resource allocation	Equity loading, funding for individualized supports	Supports students with greatest need
Collaborative leadership	Monthly team meetings, root-cause analysis, progress monitoring	Fosters continuous improvement
Student and community voice	Y.E.S. program, student-led projects, family engagement	Empowers stakeholders, informs equity work

These findings aligned with crisis management theory and instructional supervision to promote adaptive, equity-driven leadership. The use of data-driven strategies, targeted resource allocation, and collaborative leadership aligned with the crisis-responsive supervision model, which emphasized continuous reflection, stakeholder engagement, and iterative improvement throughout all phases of crisis response. By embedding equity audits, subgroup analyses, and community partnerships into annual school plans, Brockten Public Schools operationalizes the district's equity vision at the school level, ensuring that the needs of marginalized students remain central, even as operational demands and crises threaten to divert attention elsewhere.

The findings also directly addressed the study's research questions. First, they demonstrated how supervisory practices are adapted to maintain instructional quality and educator support during crises, particularly through ongoing data review, targeted interventions, and collaborative planning. Second, they highlighted the supervisory protocols and strategies such as subgroup tracking, resource allocation, and inclusive leadership structures that most effectively promote resilience and equity. Finally, these insights informed the development of more robust crisis-responsive supervision models by illustrating how equity and continuous improvement can be embedded into the daily work of school leaders, even in the face of persistent challenges.

Cross-Document Patterns: Integrating Findings Across District Data

To understand fully how Brockten Public Schools navigated the complex interplay between equity, accountability, and crisis management, it was essential to examine not only individual documents but also the patterns that emerged across multiple levels of district policy and practice. By systematically comparing strategic plans, equity action plans, annual school plans, supervision manuals, and principal meeting agendas, a more nuanced picture emerged that revealed both consistencies and gaps in the district's approach to instructional supervision and equity during crises. Table 8 synthesizes these findings, highlighting how key themes were

emphasized or diminished across document types and illuminating the persistent challenges of translating ambitious equity goals into daily supervisory routines, particularly when crisis conditions heighten operational demands.

Table 8: *Emphasis of Core Themes Across District Document Types*

Document Type	Equity as a Stated and Operational Priority	Data-Driven Decision-Making and Accountability	Gaps Between Vision, Policy, and Practice
Strategic Plan	Explicit core value; measurable objectives; targeted supports for marginalized groups	Strong emphasis; clear metrics and benchmarks	Vision is clear, but implementation strategies are broad; limited detail on crisis adaptation
Equity Action Plan	Central focus; detailed action steps; stakeholder engagement	Data disaggregation by subgroup; equity audits	Strong vision, but limited evidence of follow-through in supervision protocols
Annual School Plans	Operationalized through school-level goals and strategies	School-specific data targets and monitoring	Alignment with district vision, but variability in enactment and resource allocation
Administrative Supervision Manual	References equity and accountability, but primarily procedural	Focus on compliance, timelines, and documentation	Emphasis on logistics over instructional leadership; limited guidance for crisis contexts
Principal Meeting Agendas	Occasional mention of equity; often implicit	Frequent data review and compliance checks	Logistical focus dominates; equity and instructional leadership not consistently foregrounded

Table 8 reveals an uneven translation of Brockten Public Schools' equity commitments into the daily work of supervision, with notable gaps emerging most acutely during crises.

While the district's Strategic Plan and Equity Action Plans articulated strong equity objectives supported by data and measurable outcomes, these priorities were often diluted as they moved from policy to daily supervisory practice. Annual School Plans attempt to operationalize these goals, but supervisory implementation varies across sites, reflecting both local capacity and the challenges of maintaining equity-focused leadership under pressure.

A key divergence emerged in the supervision manuals, which primarily frame equity as a matter of compliance and procedural documentation. These manuals guide supervisors in data review,

corrective action, and accountability but offer limited direction for embedding equity-driven supervision into everyday routines, especially in crisis contexts. As a result, when crises intensify operational demands, supervision often defaults to logistical management and compliance, as evidenced by principal meetings that prioritize immediate concerns over instructional leadership and equity initiatives. This pattern illustrated how supervisory routines, even those intended to promote equity, can be altered by crisis triage, with supervisors struggling to maintain a focus on instructional quality and equitable support for marginalized students.

These findings aligned with Grissom and Condon's (2021) crisis management cycle, highlighting a critical gap during the response phase: When operational pressures peak, equity-oriented supervision is most at risk of being sidelined. The data underscored that robust policy frameworks are necessary but not sufficient; truly effective supervision requires adaptive, equity-focused leadership that is embedded in daily practice and protected during times of crisis.

Discussion

This study examined how instructional supervision was adapted during crises at Brockten Public Schools. The findings illuminated both the strengths and persistent challenges of supervisory practice when schools face ongoing disruptions. Moreover, the cross-document analysis revealed that while district-wide plans articulated a strong equity vision, supervision manuals, and principal meeting agendas often defaulted to compliance and logistics, especially during crises. This pattern underscored the need for supervision models that are not only adaptive and equity-driven but also explicitly supported by district-wide structures and resources. Next, I address each core research question, connecting empirical insights with relevant literature and the theoretical framework of crisis management and instructional supervision.

Sustaining Instruction and Support in Crisis

The first research question explored, how were supervisory practices adapted to maintain instructional quality and educator support during crises? The evidence from Brockten Public Schools underscored the complexity of sustaining instructional supervision when crises place overwhelming demands on school leaders. As documented across principal meeting agendas and district protocols, operational concerns frequently overshadowed instructional leadership priorities during periods of acute crisis. This pattern aligned with prior research, which described how crises often trigger a shift toward "crisis triage leadership," where leaders focused on short-term stability at the expense of longer-term instructional improvement (Grissom & Condon, 2021; Harris & Jones, 2020).

However, the literature also highlighted the critical role of adaptive, reflective supervision in maintaining instructional quality and supporting educators' well-being (Brock et al., 2021). Brockten's supervision manuals and evaluation protocols, though robust in promoting accountability and professional growth, were not explicitly designed to address crisis-specific challenges such as remote observation or trauma-informed supervision. This gap aligned with findings from other urban districts, where crises have highlighted the limitations of traditional supervisory models and underscored the need for more flexible, context-sensitive approaches (Mette et al., 2024; Prestiadi et al., 2021).

While crises at Brockten Public Schools often relegated instructional supervision to the background in favor of operational demands, the findings also revealed that supervision can serve as a critical buffer against the erosion of instructional quality and educator support. Supervisors' ability to maintain a focus on teaching and learning remains a key determinant of resilience. This insight sets the stage for understanding how specific supervisory protocols and strategies might be leveraged to promote both instructional and equity outcomes in resource-constrained contexts.

Promoting Resilience and Equity in Supervision

The second research question examined which supervisory protocols and strategies most effectively promote resilience and equity in the face of resource constraints. At Brockten, district-wide equity action plans and annual school plans demonstrated a strong rhetorical commitment to equity, with measurable goals, targeted resource allocation, and systematic progress monitoring. These practices aligned with emerging models of crisis equity leadership, which advocate for proactive, justice-oriented supervision addressing the distinct needs of marginalized students and staff (Grissom & Condon, 2021; McDonough et al., 2023).

However, the data also revealed a persistent gap between policy and practice. While equity was a stated priority in strategic documents, it was often relegated to a compliance item or periodic training in daily supervisory routines. This finding was consistent with broader critiques of equity initiatives that lack systemic integration. The most resilient schools were those where supervisors fostered collaborative inquiry, reflective practice, and distributed leadership practices that enabled adaptive responses to rapidly changing needs. These approaches aligned with the theoretical framework of crisis-responsive supervision, which emphasized real-time reflection, stakeholder engagement, and iterative learning (Grissom & Condon, 2021; Liou, 2015).

The data suggested that when supervision is anchored in collaborative inquiry, reflective practice, and distributed leadership, it can foster adaptive, equity-driven responses even as crises intensify. However, the persistent gap between policy and practice underscored the challenge of integrating these strategies into daily supervisory routines. This tension highlighted the need for models that not only prioritize equity but also ensure its implementation throughout the supervisory cycle. The findings also complicated expectations that supervisors can simultaneously address all operational demands and realize ambitious equity goals in the midst of resource shortages. In Brockten, principals and central office leaders frequently prioritized buses, food distribution, technology deployment, and compliance reporting during acute crises, leaving limited time and capacity for supervision focused on instruction and equity. In this context, running buses and distributing devices were not merely logistical tasks; they were visible efforts to meet basic needs in communities that were experiencing deep material deprivation. These choices raise critical questions about what it means to keep equity at the forefront when leaders are doing "the best they can" with constrained resources. The analysis suggested that crisis-responsive, equity-oriented supervision is more realistic when districts redesign roles, protect time for instructional leadership, and provide additional supports so that equity work does not become one more expectation layered onto already overextended supervisors.

Building Crisis-Responsive Supervision Models

The third research question considered how insights from Brockten's experience can inform the development of more robust, crisis-responsive supervision models. The findings suggested that effective crisis leadership requires more than procedural checklists or compliance routines. Instead, it demands a dynamic, equity-driven approach that embeds reflective practice, data-informed decision-making, and stakeholder collaboration into the core of daily supervision.

Brockten's experience illustrated the potential for crises to serve as inflection points for reimagining the supervisory role. When supervision is reduced to logistics and compliance, opportunities for instructional innovation and equity-driven change are lost often to the detriment of students who need the most support. Conversely, when supervision is adaptive, reflective, and grounded in equity, it catalyzes resilience, professional growth, and systemic improvement (Virella, 2025). This aligned with the crisis management cycle (Grissom & Condon, 2021), which positioned supervision as both a stabilizing force during disruption and a catalyst for long-term organizational learning.

Taken together, these findings underscored the need to integrate crisis management theory with instructional supervision frameworks, ensuring that equity and instructional leadership are not compromised during periods of disruption. The Brockten case demonstrated that supervision models must be dynamic, reflective, and deeply embedded in the daily work of school leaders if they are to serve as both stabilizing forces and catalysts for systemic change. This synthesis of insights from across the study's research questions highlighted the broader imperative for supervision that is both crisis-responsive and equity-driven.

Toward Crisis-Responsive, Equity-Driven Supervision

The Brockten documents pointed to a supervision system that oscillates between equity-oriented aspirations and crisis triage. Strategic and equity action plans articulated a robust vision of data-driven, collaborative, and inclusive supervision, while supervision manuals and principal meeting agendas revealed how operational pressures frequently pushed instructional leadership to the margins during crises. This tension underscored the need for models of supervision that are explicitly designed to be crisis-responsive and equity-driven rather than assuming that equity will naturally remain central under stress.

The synthesis of culturally responsive supervision and crisis management presented in the present study offers one such model. By aligning supervisory actions with crisis phases and embedding equity tools such as equity audits, subgroup analyses, and community partnerships in each phase, supervisors can position supervision as both a stabilizing force during disruption and a catalyst for more just systems over time. Importantly, this model does not cast supervision as a panacea for all schooling problems. Instead, it identifies a set of supervisory routines, collaborative inquiry, reflective practice, and targeted resource allocation that can be protected and strengthened so that crises do not routinely displace instructional and equity priorities.

Implications

The findings underscored the urgent need for districts and schools to rethink their approach to leadership development and support, particularly in times of crisis. This research pointed to several promising directions for future inquiry. First, longitudinal studies can provide deeper insight into how supervisory practices evolve in response to recurring crises and how sustained changes in leadership routines impact both instructional quality and equity outcomes. Second, comparative case studies across different types of districts, such as rural, suburban, and charter settings, can help identify context-specific adaptations and best practices for crisis-responsive supervision. Such research can also explore how varying levels of resource allocation, community engagement, and policy support shape the capacity of school leaders to maintain instructional and equity priorities during disruptions.

Moreover, there is a clear need to restructure principal supervision and district support systems. By intentionally protecting time and resources for instructional and equity-focused leadership, even amid pressing operational demands, schools can ensure that these priorities remain central rather than peripheral. This may involve reimagining leadership roles, streamlining administrative tasks, or providing additional support staff to relieve principals of non-instructional burdens during crises.

Additionally, leadership preparation programs and ongoing professional learning should integrate modules on crisis management and equity. Embedding these topics in both initial certification and in-service training will better prepare leaders to respond adaptively and justly to future disruptions. Policymakers and district leaders must advocate for these changes, recognizing that resilient educational systems are built on leaders who are both crisis-ready and equity-minded.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of instructional supervision during crises hinges on leaders being adaptive, equity-driven, and data-informed. Recent challenges have underscored the need for instructional and equity leadership to be integrated into every decision. The future of resilient, high-quality education relies on leaders who bridge the gap between policy and practice. Equity should be actively enacted daily, particularly in challenging situations.

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