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Effective Educational Leadership Attributes of Indiana High School Principals

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EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES
OF INDIANA HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

A Dissertation

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Department of Educational Leadership

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to gain insight about high school principals who are considered effective by organizations and institutions in the state of Indiana. Through a qualitative study, five Indiana high school principals participated in an interview with 26 structured questions. The participants were selected based on recommendations from major Indiana universities granting administrative licensure and the Indiana Association of School Principals. The participants could serve in rural, urban, or suburban districts in Indiana. Gender, race, or ethnic differences were not considered. State and federal test results were not a deciding factor for selection.

There were five conclusions as a result of this study:

1. The preparation program establishes a solid base for aspiring principals regardless of program or internship. In addition, new principals benefit from an informal mentor.
2. Increased accountability is seen as a positive rather than a negative by effective principals.
3. Effective Indiana high school principals adapt their leadership skills to meet the demands necessary to lead successful schools.
4. Effective Indiana high school principals are optimistic people.
5. Stress is an accepted part of the job for Indiana high school principals.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

School leaders have never faced more scrutiny than they face in the changing educational arena of the 21st century. In order for principals to thrive in the new environment, research centered on the principal and the value he or she brings to student and school success must be conducted. There are those who suggest that there has been too little research done in the area of principal leadership and its effect on student outcomes (Marzano, Walters, & McNulty, 2005). The skillset that a principal develops can impact teachers and the students he or she teaches. A meta-analysis performed on 35 years of research concluded, “The research indicates that school leadership has a substantial effect on student achievement and provides guidance for experienced and aspiring administrators alike” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 12). Great leaders will not develop what they lack in leadership skills. Instead, they develop leadership teams that complement their own skills strengthening the organization (Reeves, 2006). Good principals surround themselves with highly capable people who influence student learning. The school principal has the ability to be the catalyst for increased student achievement and successful schools.

Even with strong leadership skills and a supporting team of highly capable people, the leader faces new educational challenges in the 21st century. Leaders are faced with legislation that requires student and school growth with penalties that have the ability to end careers. The public has more choice and voice in their local schools, making competition for students the new

norm. With the changing landscape of school competition, leaders are faced with new decisions they are not prepared to address. “No educational system in the history of the world has ever accomplished what American educators are now called upon to do” (DuFour & Marzano, 2011, p. 6). The demands are to raise academic levels that past practitioners would find unimaginable. School principals often know what direction they should take but will not act out of fear. The practices of the past are also familiar to stakeholders, and they push back against change. Leaders who know what to do are often still reluctant to take action due to being familiar with what has worked in the past (Blankstein, 2004). Leaders who are successful continually assess performance (Collins, 2001). Principals must lead schools ensuring that every child achieves and the achievement gap disappears in conjunction with continued decline in funding (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

Schools are tasked by legislation to leave no student behind, but they are not given the resources to meet such a challenge (Blankstein, 2004). The legislation faced by schools requires success for all children and leads schools in trying multiple approaches that actually prolong the issues at hand (Blankstein, 2004).

What distinguishes great schools from good schools? Fullan (2008) identified, “The two greatest failures of leaders are indecisiveness in times of urgent need for action and dead certainty they are right in times of complexity” (p. 6). School leaders develop two common approaches. Leaders avoid facing the challenges or embrace every possible solution thereby losing focus (Blankstein, 2004). Leaders who do not fit into one of the two previous categories often fall into one of the following: they look outside for reasons of student failure, seek the easy solution, ignore the data, shoot the messenger, or face burnout and collapse (Blankstein, 2004).

Change is difficult for any individual and leaders are no different. There is usually a gap between knowing what should be changed and implementing what should be changed (Blankstein, 2004). Blankstein (2004) identified four common barriers to change in schools and their success:

1. Schools do not know what they want, need, or the difference between the two.
2. The schools do not have the time to connect in meaningful ways for change.
3. There are often members of faculty and staff who are resistant to change.
4. Finally, schools wait for the program of the person who can create meaningful change. (pp. 44-47)

Schools have many innovations but little time for what matters (Fullan, 2001). School leaders spend hours looking for or developing professional development to meet the needs of the staff. There is much time invested in workshops and coursework with little time devoted to learning the work (Fullan, 2008). Learning the work in balance with outside development is a deeper learning (Fullan, 2008).

Schools that are unsuccessful are often lead by principals with little ability to lead. Poor teachers and poor schools are usually the result of one another (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). Principals are responsible for developing and encouraging good teaching practice. Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) developed guidelines for principals to lead teachers in their professional growth. Principals should understand their culture, value their teachers, express what they value, extend what they value, promote collaboration, refrain from mandates, and facilitate and connect with the whole (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996).

School leaders have a responsibility of academic leadership while managing the daily issues of the school. There is an overlap between the two missions, and principals are placed in

those positions every day (Fullan, 2001). Educational leaders intend to make a difference in the lives of students, but if they are unable to lead in a way that fails to upset individuals, the leaders will have no followers (Fullan, 2001). The principal's job is a job too big to do alone. A challenge is engaging and promoting the staff in decision making and leadership while letting go of control (Blankstein, 2004). Educational leadership that leads to success and not personal gain includes acting with the heart, doing what needs to be done because it is valued, due to the young people principals are charged to develop (Blankstein, 2004).

Fullan (2005) established the need for principals to relate to teachers, students, parents, community, and within and outside their district. New leaders are dealing with the ability to mix their leadership communication skills in both technical and adaptive work (Fullan, 2005). Technical work is the work of teaching students various educational skills. Adaptive work is more difficult because leaders as a whole do not have the answers to issues in this area (Fullan, 2005). Principals and schools must work in conjunction with one another to solve adaptive style issues of our educational system (Fullan, 2005). Blankstein (2004) found "those administrators who hold an unshakable belief in the ultimate success of their staff and students have far better results than those who do not hold such a belief" (p. 18).

School systems neglect to develop the next generation of leadership, often leaving the task to outside agencies to provide coursework and licensure for the next generation of leader. School corporations should understand that investment in leadership is crucial to maintain effective leadership. Collins (2001) noted in his research that great companies develop CEOs from within their rank and file. School leaders must develop confidence in their ability to lead in times of difficulty. Great leaders "maintain unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties" (Collins, 2001, p. 13). The best leaders remain true to basic

principles in an unwavering manner (Collins, 2001). Collins (2001) described the best leaders as a Level 5 leader who “blends extreme personal humility with intense professional will” (p. 21). “There is frequently a chasm between what we know to be the best action and what we do; the connecting tissue is often the courage to act” (Blankstein, 2004, p. 29).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to gain insight about high school principals who are considered effective by organizations and institutions in the state of Indiana. High school principals have been trained in many ways by many institutions with little local-level training before assuming their positions. The model has been a sink-or-swim mentality with the high school principal’s main function as building-level manager. The implications of No Child Left Behind, PL 221, Common Core State Standards, and data-driven instruction have changed the role of the building-level leader. Through a qualitative study of high school principals, I sought to discover similarities in the way effective high school principals led their staffs and students. I also sought to determine the characteristics of a successful high school principal that are observable and can be placed into practice by current and future building leaders. The criteria for selection did not include high standardized-test scores nor did it dismiss high test scores. Effective high school principals may be leading schools in change but have not seen test score success. There are other leadership pieces that lead to successful schools and effective leadership goes beyond the standardized test score.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to define with confidence the following research questions.

1. What are the traits of effective high school principals?

2. What are the values of effective high school principals?
3. What is the commitment of effective high school principals?
4. What are the preparation experiences of effective high school principals and the potential impact on their leadership?
5. What are the emotional coping mechanisms of effective high school principals?

Definition of Terms

Administrator, for the purpose of this study, is interchangeable with the identifier high school principal.

Educational leadership strives to find balance between school leadership and student academic achievement (Marzano et al., 2005). Educational leaders effect student performance through the influence they have on teachers (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Principals who want to lead change and student success can do so through interaction with teachers and students.

Effective leadership is a leader who does not believe he or she can accomplish great things alone (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). The effective leader is not effective based on standardized test scores alone but rather school improvement, growth, and his or her ability to influence others to perform at a high level. The effective leader leads school improvement while continuously reflecting on his or her leadership.

Emotional leadership comes from a leader who is able to balance the demands of a principalship while maintaining a healthy self and home life. The emotional leader is also able to understand emotional demands of staff and adjust as necessary to ensure a productive school environment.

High school, for the purpose of this study, has students enrolled in Grades 9-12 but may be configured as 7-12 or 10-12 and is a non-charter public high school in the state of Indiana.

Instructional leadership comes from a leader who understands the obstacles of various students including different learning styles, low social economic status, lack of English language skills at home, and family issues (Blankstein, 2004). The instructional leader has teachers engaged in continuous study of educational research to prevent failure and increase interventions (Blankstein, 2004). The instructional leader is capable of leading staff and students in the process of learning.

Leadership is defined as “the process of persuasion or example by which an individual or leadership team induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers” (Gardner, 1990, p. 3).

Principal. For the purpose of this study, a principal is a high school principal, either male or female, with a minimum three years’ experience in his or her current school. The school he or she leads is a public school serving all children.

Delimitations

1. The high schools were non-charter public schools. Those who practiced in charter settings or private schools were not included due to the lack of state control in their programming and practice.
2. There were only five to seven principals identified for research.
3. Principals had to be in their current position for three years minimum eliminating those who may have been successful principals in another high school previous to their current jobs.
4. The leaders were limited to practicing in the state of Indiana.
5. The study was limited to only those administrators who serve as high school principals.

Limitations

1. My own bias may have contributed to limitations of the study. Although every effort was made to ensure non-bias on my part, past experiences could have limited the study.
2. Due to the small number of identified subjects, there were possibilities that generalizing to principals as a whole is not supported.
3. The participants in the study may have struggled identifying the traits in themselves that made them an effective leader.
4. The term effective leader may have had different meanings and connotations to potential readers.
5. The study included only men due to lack of response from female candidates.

Significance of the Study

School administrators face challenges beyond managing the day-to-day activities of a public school. The landscape of education has changed significantly while the goal of educating all students has become more focused. Although the changes are significant, the importance of a strong building administrator has not diminished and, in fact, has become more important. This study sought to determine characteristics that separate effective from ineffective principals. In studying the difference between ineffective and effective high school principals, future building leaders can apply identified strengths to their practice and be better prepared for successful school administration.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The history of education is littered with failed leadership models and strategies. Principals have consistently sought answers to the best way to lead schools and the students they educate. The purpose of this review of literature is to seek informational details to develop leadership traits for principals to use in the practice of educational leadership. The literature can provide insight into the shaping of the beliefs of effective principals and the values that principals hold in times of change. Preparation of the principal cannot be ignored nor can the emotional coping with the stressors of the position. Perhaps most important, the leadership ability lies in the policies and procedures principals commit in leading schools.

Principals who will continue to serve as principals and those who will enter the field of educational leadership will face challenges of immense proportions. School accountability is both a political issue and moral issue that will continue to change the landscape of education and the way in which schools are led. Competitions that now exist for students from other corporations, the best staff members, and financial security will be a large component of principal leadership. How principals respond to those challenges will decide their future as a principal.

There are many authors from whom to draw leadership direction. A school leader can read information from the business community to inform his or her practice as well as

educational leadership literature. Some school corporations have taken on a more businesslike approach and have applied principles from the business community (Hess, 2008). In addition to business-related leadership work, numerous articles and educational research books exist from which to draw (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Foundations and research consortiums have become much more influential in the training of educational leaders (Hess, 2008). Five themes emerged as I reviewed the literature about educational leadership. These themes were general leadership, educational leadership, leadership preparation, instructional leadership and emotional leadership.

General Leadership

School leadership has never been more critical than in our current climate. The predominant role of a principal from 1920 until the 1970s was administrative manager (Valentine & Prater, 2011). In the new norm of education, educational leaders with instructional skills beyond simple management are being sought. School boards across the country are seeking the best and brightest to become their school leaders. Collins (2001) stated, “We don’t have great schools, principally because we have good schools” (p. 1). Leaders at the national, state, and local levels agree with his statements and are seeking ways to improve education from top to bottom. Education in the K-12 realm will have to seek talented leaders in ways they have not had to do in the past (Hess, 2008). “Educational leaders are as an important professional group of contributing members of our society as any” (Dubin, 2006, p. 87). Leaders have to address problems that are without readily apparent answers (Fullan, 2001).

School corporations have begun to develop models to improve schools that are more business oriented. Although educational leaders are important for schools, there is interest in running schools like businesses (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Schools were once joyful places of promise but have become mechanized factories based on test scores and results. “A U.S.

Department of Education employee remarked in 2007 if it can't be measured, we are not interested" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 4). Hess (2008) suggested that schools need entrepreneurs attracted to education. Educational entrepreneurs bring tendencies such as need for achievement, relentless problem solving, internal locus of control, tolerance for ambiguity, strategic influencing, and bias for action through organization building. "Foundations have invested millions over the past decade in New Leaders for New Schools, an organization that recruits nontraditional principals" (Branch, Rivkin, & Hanushek, 2013, p. 3). Hess (2008) identified two factors that keep entrepreneurs from entering educational leadership: "The educational system is a system of constraints in which change is always occurring with little impact on the classroom, and there is also a financial disincentive not to enter the educational setting" (pp. 50-51).

Leadership is not only a key component for the business community but it is crucial in any organization. "We must not confuse leadership with status" (Gardner, 1990, p. 4). There are many theories ascribed to various leadership styles. Regardless of the leadership style effective leadership has the most effect on successful organizations over time (Marzano et al., 2005). The best leaders are those who love their work, the purpose of their work, and the people they lead. Leaders think of their jobs' as a calling instead of a job (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Although many school principals will leave their position in the coming years, the issue of quality candidates can be more problematic in many parts of the country than those leaving the profession (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005).

Leadership is often about change in the organization. Educational leadership is no different. Research has shown that the more skilled a building principal is the higher the student achievement among students (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Collins (2001) found that results of

successful leadership come from good decisions, diligently executed and accumulated one on top of the other. “No generation of educators in the history of the United States has ever been asked to do so much for so many” (DuFour & Marzano, 2011, p. 4). Change is an integral part of building leadership and involves people. Principals must contend with how they work with staff in bringing about change (Crum & Sherman, 2008). Principals are often expected to be change agents in their organizations. When leaders try to initiate change, they are usually tinkering with behaviors that have become automatic, and changing those behaviors requires careful supervision (Heath & Heath, 2010).

Education is notorious for not making change and believing in the status quo. In order to change behaviors, a leader has to give people crystal clear directions (Heath & Heath, 2010). Change is often motivated by one or two conditions: a threat that requires change in order to survive or a change that is so attractive the status quo pales in comparison (Schlechty, 1997). A leader who promotes change must answer four key questions: “Why is change needed, what kind of change is needed and what it will mean, is the change possible, and how do schools do it” (Schlechty, 1997, p. 208). Marzano et al. (2005) identified change as first and second order. First order change is incremental and obvious whereas second order is a deep change that alters a system. The majority of leaders only participate in first order change.

Successful school leaders do not disregard school culture in their efforts. Leaders in schools with successful cultures know how important schools are to children and make schools the best they can be (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Great companies understand transformations do not come overnight; instead, it is through persistence of buildup and breakthroughs over time (Collins, 2001). “Effective school leaders are strong educators, anchoring their work on central

issues of learning and teaching and school improvement” (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 1996, p. 97).

Collins (2001) stated clearly that if leaders want to succeed they first have to get the right people on the bus and wrong people off the bus before figuring out where the bus going. Student success is dependent on having an effective teacher in every classroom and an effective principal in every school (Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 2009). “Successful principals and their staff respond to the challenges of continuing to focus upon engaging students in learning while planning for implementing an increasing number of changes related to external change or reform agendas reflect professionalism of a high order” (Day, 2007, p. 14).

Schools are actually doing what they were designed to do when they first began. The problem is that unfortunately what they were designed to do is no longer serving American students (Schlechty, 1997). Schools were originally designed to ensure basic literacy and ensure that a small percentage of the students would reach high academic standards. It is no longer good enough to ensure that a few are relatively well educated (Schlechty, 1997). Reeves (2006) suggested if we are to learn from our mistakes in education we must first admit that we have an educational problem.

Leadership in Education

There are various types of leadership that have been researched and presented to explain different leadership styles for principals. Servant leadership is the process of putting others before you, being part of the team with teachers, and providing resources without the expectation of acknowledgement (Black, 2010). Transformational leadership is one of the most studied leadership styles for educational purposes. Transformational leadership focuses on restructuring the schools through improving schools conditions (Stewart, 2006). Transformational leaders

develop the organization and its capacity to innovate through shared vision and commitment to school change (Hallinger, 2003). Instructional leadership studies the way in which leadership improves educational outcomes for students. The school leader works to increase the effectiveness of teachers, who in turn improve student achievement (Stewart, 2006). Transactional leaders are those who act based on organizational goals, structures, and systems (Lumpkin, 2008).

The National Policy Board for Educational Administration in conjunction with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) reviewed and updated the ISLLC standards for educational administration (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2008). The six standards identified for administrative success are listed as follows:

1. Standard #1—An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.
2. Standard #2—An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
3. Standard #3—An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
4. Standard #4—An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

5. Standard #5—An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
6. Standard # 6—An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. (CCSSO, 2008, pp. 20-21)

Principal leadership is a key component in student and school success. “Schools that serve largely affluent families may create the illusion that it has a great principal” (Branch et al., 2013). A school that operates effectively increases a student’s chance of academic success. Students in effective schools as opposed to ineffective schools have a 44% difference on their expected passing rate on a test that has a typical passing rate of 50% (Marzano et al., 2005). A highly effective principal can increase student learning between two and seven months in a single year (Branch et al., 2013). “Great schools have great leaders” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 2). “Yet finding effective leaders is not easy” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 2). The issue for finding principals is not about quantity it should be about quality. It takes an effective principal to make a successful school (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The first obligation of an instructional leader is to create a vision and standard of action to reach that vision (Reeves, 2006). The principal is able to shape not only the school but also develop leadership within the organization. Successful schools have leadership emanating from many people. Successful schools have leadership that maintains and supports learning for all students, as well as learning for all staff (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Principals today are successful by emphasizing student achievement (Valentine & Prater, 2011).

Marzano et al. (2005) identified 21 responsibilities specific to educational leadership. The list of qualities is research based and therefore is of greater importance.

The list of the 21 qualities include “Affirmation; Change Agent; Contingent Rewards; Communication; Culture; Discipline; Flexibility; Focus; Ideals/Beliefs; Input; Intellectual Stimulation; Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; Monitoring/Evaluating; Optimizer; Order; Outreach; Relationships; Resources; Situational Awareness; and Visibility” (Marzano et al., 2005, pp. 42-43).

Principal leaders have the responsibility to fulfill the public trust of encouraging students to act in respectable and responsible ways. Communities expect principals to display self-discipline and to have the fortitude to do what is right in all situations (Lumpkin, 2008). Outstanding principals understand their external environment and are able to attend to individual relationships, group relationships and relationships as a whole (Williams, 2008). Leaders cannot do it alone. The challenge for a leader is not attaining perfection but acknowledging imperfection. Leaders will magnify their own strengths and develop teams that provide different strengths for the organization (Reeves, 2006). Principals and their administrative teams need to be treated as leaders with autonomy to get things done while accepting individual accountability that things do get done (Hess, 2008).

When doing what is right requires change, too much analysis can doom the effort (Heath & Heath, 2010). People are a key to any organization and hiring the best people is essential. Three keys to making decisions on people are when in doubt do not hire, when you need a people change, act, and put your best people on the biggest opportunities not problems (Collins, 2001). Principals who are successful lead by giving direction, stimulating enthusiasm, and consistently present a clear mission and vision (Williams, 2008). Reeves (2006) asked what if

we fail to change. Change will be inconvenient for adults, but the risk is a lifetime of consequences for student failure (Reeves, 2006).

Principal effectiveness and commitment to excellence can be gauged through the hiring practices they implement. The school can increase with time as the length of tenure of the principal increases through hiring high performing teacher candidates. Principals impact the school through hiring practices as well as curricular decisions (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2009). Principals who are problem solvers committed to education and are able to conceptualize goals for their schools and implement necessary plans increase teacher retention (Mallory & Melton, 2009). Principals who hope to move their schools forward must recognize the importance of talent and investing in bold initiatives to attract, develop, and retain the best and brightest (Hess, 2008). Leaders who strive to have great organizations place weight on character, work ethic, basic intelligence, dedication to commitments, and values (Collins, 2001). The skills to perform the job can be taught (Collins, 2001). After hiring talented people, they must be developed (Hess, 2008). A good principal does not micromanage; rather he or she delegates responsibility to teachers and hold those teachers accountable for task completion (Lumpkin, 2008). One outcome of hiring practices that is often overlooked is the teachers who were hired by the former principal. Whether or not the effect is positive is dependent on whether the current principal's hiring practices are superior to the former principal (Branch et al., 2009). Crum and Sherman (2008) found that principals understand that securing the right staff is critical for successful schools. Teachers who leave an effective principal are more likely to have been under-performing teachers (Branch et al., 2013).

The quality teaching that goes on in classrooms is linked to the quality of leadership that is in the school (Havard, Morgan, & Patrick, 2010). Principals who have advanced course work

or advanced degrees increase the teacher's perception that the leader is more effective (Valentine & Prater, 2011). Principals and teachers often work in isolation, which leads to principals who resign themselves to managing rather than working with staff on instructional improvement (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Teachers believe that when principals serve as collaborative instructional leaders they feel supported, validated, and recognized as effective and their students learn (Lumpkin, 2008). When teachers and principals work in a collaborative approach, no one person is responsible for all the leadership skills necessary (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). High quality schools include teachers who model leadership understanding and skills and governance structures allowing opportunities for participation. Student leadership in high leadership capacity schools is considered vital for student performance (Lambert, 2006). Principals are expected to take an active role in ensuring staff opportunities to participate in decisions and actions that affect curriculum instruction development and planning (Pashiardis, 1993).

Schools moving towards high leadership capacity have noticeable internal cohesion. Professional development is often not what is done with teachers but what is done to teachers (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). The advent of the RISE evaluation model in Indiana will require teacher development and instructional feedback from principals for teachers (Indiana Department of Education, 2011). As leadership capacity grows, teachers experience a movement to self-organization and responsibility (Lambert, 2006). As principals lead teachers toward self-organization, they create groups, teams, or communities in which conversation stimulate critical thought (Lambert, 2006). If principals can be prepared to hold fast to values while letting go of power and authority, schools are more likely to attain lasting school improvement (Lambert, 2006). The principal who is not the primary source of expertise but instead uses teacher leadership and expertise develops success in school. The principal understands that collective

decision making solves larger non-routine problems (Valentine & Prater, 2011). There are people who are formally appointed leaders while others are informal leaders and still others who lead by example (Russell, 2008). Vision, beliefs, and values guide the development and implementation of initiatives that are congruent with the overall mission of the school (Lambert, 2006).

Leadership in education is becoming more diversified to the practicing building administrator. Davis et al. (2005) stated that the principal's job includes three aspects:

1. Developing a deep understanding of how to support teachers.
2. Managing curriculum to support student learning.
3. Developing the ability to transform schools into effective organizations that increase teacher quality and student learning. (p. 5)

Valentine and Prater (2011) performed a qualitative study that concluded principals who had effective managerial skills, developed rules and procedures, evaluated employees, communicated with staff and students, and understood curriculum and instruction reflected improved student achievement as a result. Lambert (2006) suggested that lasting leadership can lead to learning that is lasting and continues with sustainability. Effective leadership of key school personnel leads to effective planning and consideration of objectives to be met (Pashiardis, 1993).

Educational leaders must come to a common understanding of what they believe about school and life in schools (Schlechty, 1997). Schlechty (1997) believes leaders must build a consensus around the following questions:

1. What is the purpose of education?
2. Do all students have the ability to learn more than they are learning now?

3. What are the determinants of opportunities to learn?
4. What are the assumptions around the kind of society students will live in?
5. What is the role of community and family in learning?
6. What is the primary focus of school?
7. How should school be structured?
8. What obligations do systems have to employees? (pp. 101-103)

Schools seeking lasting improvement have leaders who are evolving in their careers. The demands of leadership exceed the capacity of one person to lead alone (Reeves, 2006).

Characteristics of principals in schools who have high leadership capacity or are moving in the right direction have similar features (Lambert, 2006). Lambert (2006) listed six characteristics of principals with high leadership skills: “Clarity of self and values, strong belief in democracy, school improvement through strategic thinking, deliberate and vulnerable persona, knowledge of teaching and learning, and the ability for developing capacity in others” (pp. 242-244). Morale in schools often suffers due to the pressure of succeeding on high-stakes testing or from a lack of quality leadership. Leaders influence the attitudes and results in their buildings. Work is more than output or results; it is also a process (Russell, 2008). People hope to find pleasure in the quality of their work. Work can lead a person to growth and opportunities. One central feature can be collaboration (Russell, 2008). Leaders who collaborate find more enjoyment in their work. Leaders should strive to structure the work so that individuals can find enthusiasm for the benefit of all (Russell, 2008). The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (2005) identified traits for building the collective capacity of professional learning in schools. The professional learning characteristics required include sustained rather than episodic learning; job-embedded

development, not an after school activity; professional development aligned to school and district goals; focus on improvement; and a collective and collaborative task, not an individual task.

Principals directly shape and mold a school's culture. The culture includes beliefs, traditions, and norms that impact attitudes, motivation, and performance (Lumpkin, 2008). Teachers hope to be led by principals who have integrity as their priority and make decisions based on that integrity (Lumpkin, 2008). The assumption that is held by leaders is that educators have the ability to assist all students in learning, but lack the motivation to put forth the effort to improve learning for students (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Ervay (2006) indicated that the trick is to find a principal who is an effective manager with good human relations skills, scholarly skills, and can convey those traits to others. There is no argument that the educational leader's largest responsibility is to work with others to achieve the goal of student learning, which happens to be the main purpose of school (Ervay, 2006).

Leadership Preparation

There is much debate around how to best prepare principals for the leadership roles they will obtain. While K-12 schools are feeling the focus of educational accountability, schools of administrative preparation are seeking improved methods of educational leadership development. Levine (2005) stated, "The majority of programs range from inadequate to appalling, even at some of the country's leading universities" (p. 23). A 2005 study concluded that more than 40% of school principals in the U.S. would leave their jobs within a decade and school corporations would need to seek replacements (Hess, 2008). The development of principal knowledge, skills, and dispositions lacks a strong research background. Programs are experimenting with curriculum, methods, and structure with little research around what the design should be in the end (Davis et al., 2005). Davis et al. (2005) also stated that programs should be based on current

research and include the program's philosophy, solid courses, and internships based on those criteria. School leadership preparation programs continue to produce certified school administrators, but they are often unprepared (Davis et al., 2005).

There are many entrepreneurial agencies such as New Leaders for New Schools that have entered the market to develop school leadership. These agencies have adopted a talent mindset and developed an array of ways to attract, develop, retain, and measure expected success. In 1998, only 27% of school districts had developed a plan to recruit and prepare new principals (Hess, 2008). Every member of society has experienced school in some capacity as a student, parent, or community member; however, few have assumed a leadership role in a school and therefore do not realize the difficulty of being a school principal (Dubin, 2006).

The lack of candidates for principal programs has led local and state school systems to create non-traditional leadership programs. Militello, Gajda, and Bowers (2009) found there were advantages to the non-traditional approach. Those advantages included the following:

1. Cost to the candidate can be favorable.
2. Accessibility in scheduling and location of courses can be closer to students.
3. Objectives are clear.
4. Internships are more meaningful.
5. Alternative programs incorporate staff from universities and local leaders.
6. Cohorts create a sense of belonging and support. (Militello et al., 2009, p. 47)

While non-traditional programs have grown in numbers, traditional university settings schools have begun to overhaul their programs. Auburn University stopped accepting students and completely redesigned their program using an advisory council, updated admissions process, redesigned delivery system, and instituted an ongoing evaluation process (Reed & Llanes, 2010).

The principalship has long been seen as a role for a strong leader. Lazaridou (2009) suggested that is part of the problem. The principal's role has been largely promoted as one strong leader. Lazaridou (2009) went on to say that many preparation programs focus on strong management and instructional leadership while the new principal leader needs skills for negotiating the tensions between bureaucratic press for efficiency and pressure from colleagues and outside stakeholders. The first year principal struggles with providing quality leadership for schools (Adams, 1999). Simply recruiting potential principals to a position that appears to be unmanageable and undesirable to our current programs will not ensure quality successful candidates (Militello et al., 2009).

The course content and readings offered at traditional administrator preparation programs leave candidates unprepared for school leadership while the programs remain impervious to change (Archer, 2005). Much of what is taught in administration programs revolves around law, finance, and facilities with little instruction on classroom instruction (Hess & Kelly, 2006). Militello et al. (2009) found that more than 70% of the programs they reviewed included courses in finance, leadership, evaluation, and law, but the course least taken was accountability. Principal preparation programs must incorporate skills and cognitive training. The standards identified by ISLLC state that a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students (Lazaridou, 2009).

School leaders often receive little time in the role of an administrator in their preparation program. Programs vary on the amount of time spent participating in an internship as well as amount of course preparation (Havard et al., 2010). Programs designed in the future should include not only practical coursework but also internships that provide experiences for the candidate. The internship or field experience is one of the most critiqued areas within a principal

preparation program (Havard et al., 2010). A study by the Stanford Educational Leadership Institute identified key components for a successful preparation program (Branch et al., 2013). A program should have content that is research based with curricular coherence. It should include methods that include field-based internships and problem-based learning with mentors for the students. Finally, the structure of the program must have collaboration between schools and the university (Davis et al., 2005). The field internship was one of the most helpful pieces of the leadership preparation program for 50% of the respondents in a study conducted in Massachusetts (Militello et al., 2009).

Principals often participate in a field experience under the guidance of a practicing school administrator before taking their first positions. The mentor is usually the leader of the building in which the candidate teaches with little priority given to candidate development. The selection and training of mentor principals is a crucial element for the success or failure of preservice administrators (Havard et al., 2010). Principals who are left to their own devices sometimes are successful but many fail. New principals need support and guidance as they grow into the role of school leader (Eller, 2010). Principals are seldom trained in their preparation programs to hire, terminate, or evaluate teachers (Hess & Kelly, 2006).

The preparation program in which a candidate participates can influence the way in which they perform as a practicing administrator. There is no document, blueprint, or formula that provides a roadmap to develop effective educational leadership for all situations (Dubin, 2006). Duffrin (2001) identified seven items to include in an administration preparation program. The seven pieces are as follows:

1. Develop understanding of human relations skills needed as a principal.
2. Participate in acquired theories and real world applications.

3. Observe supervision principal on a daily basis.
4. Recognize difference between manager and leader aspect of principal.
5. Complete both simple and complex tasks of the principalship.
6. Learn to build relationships with staff, students, and parents.
7. Reflect on progress towards becoming a principal. (p. 44)

Trying to create leadership preparation programs that better meet the needs of the community while creating graduates who have a strong grasp of theory, research, and what leadership really looks like takes planning and a commitment to collaboration (Havard et al., 2010). Eller (2010) suggested programs should be organized around the themes of knowledge, skills, and applications. This format allows students to sort through their learning. Principals who were prepared under new guidelines are reportedly more prepared for accountability and climate issues (Militello et al., 2009). The learning that takes place for becoming a principal often takes place on the job, but it should have occurred during the graduate study experience (Havard et al., 2010).

The advent of strict accountability has affected the number of people willing to consider the role of principal. A lack of applicants, retirements, and retaining school principals based on high-stakes accountability have created conditions that are unfavorable for principals (Militello et al., 2009). Changing policy will not necessarily improve principal preparation programs. Militello et al. (2009) suggested four standards to improve preparation programs: recruitment and succession, improved program curriculum, accreditation and licensing standards, and current performance indicators. Lazaridou (2009) stated in his study that principals need three knowledge categories: knowledge of organization, knowledge of people, and knowledge of task.

Principal candidates are often unprepared for the issues that arise from accountability to the community. The principal's power base can be reduced due to pressure from community, unions, school boards, and many other factors (Lazaridou, 2009). The high level of complexity creates difficulty in new principals' adjusting to the role of school principal. "The public looks to schools and their leaders to be able to work through the chaos and operate in a focused and effective manner" (Eller, 2010, p. 957). A principal's day is often so chaotic with multiple demands that learning on the job is stressful and unproductive (Havard et al., 2010). The principal's leadership affects every aspect of school culture (Deal & Peterson, 1999). High school principals ranked their number one priority as interpersonal skills. They also believe that accountability from the community was important for sustaining achievement (Garcia, 2005). Culture building, community relations, and communications are important aspects of an effective leader that should be included in preparation programs (Militello et al., 2009).

Leading schools and their staffs in the use of data is often an area in which new principals are uncomfortable. Principals are taught little in preparation programs on the effective use of data (Hess & Kelly, 2006). Principals can learn to be more effective in data leadership. Principals can model for staff how to disaggregate data. Conversations with teachers and parents can revolve around data that are at hand. Using techniques such as these, stakeholders can learn to make informed decisions based on data (Storms & Gordon, 2005). Data can be intimidating, and it is a leadership challenge to reduce staff fear of using data to inform instruction (Storms & Gordon, 2005).

Seldom are principals prepared in their preparation or internships to deal with political issues such as closing the achievement gap. Principals are often unprepared to deal with leading staff in the improvement of students with minority heritage who often lag behind on high-stakes

exams. The equity agenda is the goal of improving student outcomes for racial groups, specifically students with African and Hispanic cultural backgrounds (Barbara & Krovetz, 2005). Barbara and Krovetz (2005) pointed out that if resources continue to be distributed evenly, uneven outcomes will continue. Improving the quality of principals and teachers will create greater equity in the workforce (Baker & Cooper, 2005). Principals are placed into their positions without the skills needed to address the issue of equity. The goal of equity is placed on the unprepared principal's shoulders rather than becoming a part of the entire organization's goal. Principals should not expect to do the work by themselves, but instead it should be district wide work (Barbara & Krovetz, 2005). It is estimated that closing the achievement gap would contribute an estimated 500 billion dollars to the gross domestic product of the United States yearly (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). Principals who are recruited and selected from the most selective institutions may have a higher opportunity to reform underperforming poverty schools (Baker & Cooper, 2005).

Instructional Leadership

Principal leadership has experienced a shift in priorities from management to academic instruction and practice. A principal must have a solid background in curriculum and instruction. The principal must now be able to lead the school in areas of academic improvement in addition to the daily task of management. Instructional leadership is considered one of the key components of the principal's position (Noonan & Renihan, 2006). Principals may not coordinate everything in their buildings but are ultimately accountable for everything that occurs in their buildings (Crum & Sherman, 2008). In the past, the principal's work day was filled with managerial duties (Ervay, 2006). The one thing that has changed the most is the move toward academic leadership. The emphasis on academic leadership and student achievement

accountability has grown in countries around the world. Principals have begun to focus on the areas of large scale assessment and classroom assessment strategies (Noonan & Renihan, 2006). Results of standards-based, high-stakes tests can determine the future of teachers and principals. Many principals are not prepared to juggle the traditional managerial role with the less understood world of academic leadership (Ervay, 2006). There is more to leadership than intimidating students and teachers for short term test score gains (Reeves, 2006).

Hallinger (2003) studied both the instructional leadership model and transformational models of leadership. In his work, he found that by blending both models principals would focus on five areas. The five areas are listed as follows:

1. Create a shared sense of purpose in the school.
2. Focus a climate of high expectations and a school culture that is focused on improving teaching and learning.
3. Shape the schools reward structure to reflect the goals of the staff and students.
4. Organize and provide activities that are aimed at intellectual stimulation and staff development.
5. Be a visible presence in the school and model school values. (Hallinger, 2003, p. 343)

There are more things happening in schools than the pursuit of educational goals. Focused leaders must learn to manage the constant distractions that undermine the pursuit of goals (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008).

High school principals are managing schools that are moving from traditional core curriculum and incorporating mandated advanced placement courses in addition to less traditional forms for instruction such as online courses. The landscape of education has been changing on the national and state levels with the addition of legislation designed to bring about

academic progress for students. Dinham (2005) said that research leaves little doubt that leadership is important in developing effective, innovative schools and in facilitating quality teaching and learning. State and national government have begun the *naming and shaming* of schools based on test results (Day, 2007). New accreditation policies have added compliance and academic standards to the job description for principals. The high-stakes testing mandates based on standards is the deciding factor for teachers and principals as to their success in meeting benchmarks for progress (Ervay, 2006).

Principals play a large role in a teacher's success by their contributions to professional and scholastic growth. Classroom instruction time must be protected and improved. For principals, "protection of teaching time from administrative and student disruption is a critical aspect" (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 667). The trick for school corporations is to find an effective manager with human relation skills and scholarly enough to pass on this information to teachers (Ervay, 2006). A key theme is how to create a link on how to bring practice from the classroom to the job in the field (Havard et al., 2010) Leadership is second only to classroom instruction in factors that affect student learning and is a key factor in differences for success in school that foster student learning (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Educational leadership involves building collegial teams with a focus on relationships on pedagogical work (Robinson et al., 2008). Principals who try to lead change and improvement on their own are a major impediment to effective leadership (Hallinger, 2003). Principals must be prepared to lead teachers in the pursuit of academic success.

Baker and Cooper (2005) found in their study that principals who came from academic institutions that trained the best administrators and teachers were more successful in leading schools. They also found that those same principals were more likely to seek teachers from

institutions that develop the best teachers with similar backgrounds to the principal. School leaders who share leadership responsibility are less subject to burnout than those who try to lead alone (Hallinger, 2003). The more closely those educational leaders get to the core business of schools, which is teaching and learning, the more likely they are to have positive impacts on student outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008).

Principals are not only working with staffs but communities for student success. Principals who are successful combine work within the school with commitment and skill and work with groups of parents and other stakeholders from outside the school in partnership and networks to share resources (Day, 2007). Dinham (2005) found six attributes of successful principals while focusing on students and learning. The six attributes are as follows: “external awareness and engagement, bias towards innovation and action, personal qualities and relationships, vision, expectations and a culture of success, teacher learning, responsibility and trust, and student support, common purpose and collaboration” (Dinham, 2005, p. 343). Crum and Sherman (2008) found traits principals shared as core leadership principles while dealing with increased accountability: developing personnel and facilitating leadership, responsible delegation, recognizing ultimate accountability, communicating, facilitating instruction, and managing change. Principals understood their staff, encouraged them, and empowered individuals. Principals who hope to be successful change agents must be able to discuss issues without fear of violating ingrained practice or appearing inadequate (Barth, 1990).

Principals are often unprepared to lead staff in high stakes test interpretation. No Child Left Behind has developed the idea that the best way for students to learn and achieve is through high-stakes testing and to reward and penalize students, teachers, administrators, schools, and districts (Amrein-Beardsley, 2009). Assessment literacy for principals is critical. Principals

need to keep current on assessment research and practice in addition to leading professional development on new developments and skills (Noonan & Renihan, 2006). The results of high-stakes test pressure have led many teachers and principals to seek ways to circumvent the system. Amrein-Beardsley (2009) provided a list of seven items that desperate leaders have attempted in order to improve test scores. The seven items are as follows:

1. Teach the test to students.
2. Narrow the curriculum to include only items on the test.
3. Exclude those students who have poor academic performance.
4. Borderline students receive additional support to pass the test.
5. Cheat on the test in various ways.
6. Administrative manipulation by instructing teachers on what will be on the test.
7. Dumb down the state test over time to increase scores for the public. (Amrein-Beardsley, 2009, pp. 3-5)

People will try any angle necessary in order to survive and prosper in the test climate (Amrein-Beardsley, 2009). It is much faster to improve test scores by removing underperforming students rather than developing effective intervention plans. Improving teaching and learning should be the goal (Reeves, 2006).

The goal of principals is to lead schools to academic success. Blankstein (2004) identified six principles that are necessary for high-performing school:

1. Common mission, vision, values, and goals. (p. 65)
2. Ensuring achievement for all students: systems for prevention and intervention. (p. 97)
3. Collaborative teaming focused on teaching and learning. (p. 127)

4. Using data to guide decision making and continuous improvement. (p. 141)
5. Gaining active engagement from family and community. (p. 167)
6. Building sustainable leadership capacity. (p. 189)

The best leaders understand that leadership is more than noble intentions; leadership is action and doing. The best leaders do not let vision, planning, and rhetoric substitute for doing. The best leaders clarify and take the necessary steps to reach the real purpose they serve (DuFour & Marzano, 2011).

Emotional Leadership

It is evident that the many pressures of the position as school principal are leading many principals to reconsider their lives and leave the profession. While some may be leaving, potential candidates do not enter the field due to the demands of the position. Leaders who are leaving the field of education are doing so due to the emotional price they must pay to be successful leaders (Beatty, 2000). When leaders ignore their feelings and discomfort, they lose sight of the work that they do and what really matters in the positions they hold (Murphy, 2011). Emotional health can lead to sustained and effective leadership in schools but if absent can lead to leadership that does more harm than good (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowki, 2004). The idea of emotions and management coming together is a relatively new process. Intelligence is more a matter of reason and has left out the process of emotion for leaders (Hartley, 2004).

Positions of power, such as a principal, have been seen to require strict emotional control and suppression (Beatty, 2000). Effective school leaders are always on the lookout for issues that may be developing in the undercurrent of professional staff (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Educational leaders today must develop a well-rounded sense of self (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004). Principals can use emotional information to build trust, display empathy with

employees, display social awareness, collaborate, understand the feelings of loss during change, and address issues and problem solve (Moore, 2009).

The difficulty of educational leadership leads to stress in everyday life (Murphy, 2011). Leaders eventually find that their feelings cannot be denied or ignored (Johnson, Aiken, & Steggerda, 2005). Leaders are often socialized into how to deal with feelings in the correct or appropriate manner (Johnson et al., 2005). Educational leaders have reported that in their training and development they learned that emotions have no place in the leadership environment (Johnson et al., 2005). The educational leader who retains professional decorum regularly through denial and suppression may be creating a life that is unhealthy and energy depleting (Beatty, 2000). However, Murphy (2011) suggested that leaders can learn how to accept their emotional discomfort and focus energy on improving their wellbeing by changing their behavior and their feelings that are not consistent with the values held. Educational leaders can effectively learn to manage emotions through the management of distressing moods, impulse control, motivation, and remaining hopeful and optimistic during adversity (Hackett & Hortman, 2008).

In educational leadership, the benefits of collaboration and emotional skills often seem to be taken for granted. Collaboration is a successful anxiety reducer and an optimizing strategy (Beatty, 2000). The human emotions have been consistently marginalized in educational leadership. In theory and research, emotions of educational leaders have not been addressed but rather seen as an intruder on leadership (Beatty, 2000). In a study of emotional intelligences, Johnson et al. (2005) found that many educational leaders had feelings of not wanting to go to work and a general malaise or simply no desire to deal with the situations that arose in their days. Leaders who are insecure about their own emotions and identity create organizational settings that deprive others (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004). Emotions can be intense, disruptive,

demotivating, motivating, exhilarating, positive, or negative and challenge a person's leadership. Those educational leaders who are able to deal with emotions are considered to have high emotional intelligence (Moore, 2009).

School accountability leaves principals with a feeling of inadequacy. The accountability mandate presents challenges to principals in urban schools where 50% of students do not graduate and 66% or more of students do not pass high-stakes test (Williams, 2008). In Williams's (2008) study, principals with emotional intelligence competencies were better able to deal with school improvement issues and remain focused on the goals while making decisions. Principals who are outstanding have high self-confidence and display three traits: they (a) stand up for what they believe in, (b) present themselves with self-assurance, and (c) are able to act independently (Williams, 2008). Effective high school principals will need to manage emotions as they lead their schools through reform. Principals leading a change in the focus from teaching to student learning and isolation to collaboration will elicit significant emotions for staff (Moore, 2009). The funding for professional development, feedback, and coaching for school leaders is limited and scarce (Moore, 2009). This lack of funding contributes to the pressure principals face while trying move their staffs and students forward.

Leaders, like many in the general public, have a tendency to focus on the negative rather than the positive. Heath and Heath (2010) referenced 24 emotion words in the English language, and six of those in the list provided a positive reaction. A more indepth study of the English language found 558 emotion words, and of those 62% were found to be negative (Heath & Heath, 2010). They suggested that focus should instead be placed on the bright spots to seek change. Beatty (2000) found themes for principals to deal with the stress and understanding the emotions of educational leadership. The five themes are listed as follows:

1. Leadership is a matter of mixed emotions.
2. Control of self and other and learning to share responsibility.
3. Internal emotional management is important in sustaining confidence and commitment.
4. Emotional support contributes to the emotional quality of organizational life.
5. Emotional conflict of interest. (Heath & Heath, 2010, p. 346)

The need to control others is not possible and leads to insecurity and anxiety.

Leading in an urban, poverty-stricken district has challenges that are often unique to the staff, students, and administrators who live and work in such a district. Hipp and Weber (2008) studied principals who became part of a cohort through a Wallace foundation grant to come together to learn from and support one another in student learning. The magnitude of leading an urban district that deals with social issues of achievement is different than those who lead in other settings (Hipp & Weber, 2008). In an effort to support one another in leading demanding schools, the participants bonded together to share values and vision, share supportive leadership, share learning and application, and personal practice (Hipp & Weber, 2008). A principal in a disadvantaged school may in fact be a strong leader but produce poor results (Branch et al., 2013).

There are simple strategies that can assist a person in dealing with his or her emotions such as writing, quiet time, or speaking with a colleague (Johnson et al., 2005). Leaders who hope to address the stress of the job are advised to develop a process of accepting discomfort, allowing thoughts to be taken less personally, and taking care of their physical needs (Murphy, 2011). Principal preparation programs can better prepare candidates for the emotional toll of an educational leader by incorporating four strategies. Candidates should understand what they

believe, embed emotional awareness into the curriculum, develop mentors, and develop a body of literature on the topic (Johnson et al., 2005).

Leaders, through the process of reflection, come to recognize they need to adapt and expand their emotional capacity (Johnson et al., 2005). The revelation that leaders can experience emotional experiences opens new territory for leaders. The leaders begin to realize emotional feelings cannot be denied or ignored (Johnson et al., 2005). School administrators can benefit from learning how to deal with emotions of others and their own. Educational leaders who have high emotional intelligence will have stronger relationships with colleagues, teachers, parents, and students (Moore, 2009).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to gain insight about high school principals who are considered effective by organizations and institutions in the state of Indiana. High school principals have been trained in many ways by many institutions with little local-level training before assuming their positions. The model has been a sink or swim mentality with the high school principals' main function as building level manager. Through a qualitative study of high school principals, similarities were sought to discover the way effective high school principals lead their staff and students. What are the characteristics of a successful high school principal that are observable and can be placed into practice by current and future building leaders?

Research Questions

The purpose of this research sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the traits of effective high school principals?
2. What are the values of effective high school principals?
3. What is the commitment of effective high school principals?
4. What are the preparation experiences of effective high school principals and the potential impact on their leadership?
5. What are the emotional coping mechanisms of effective high school principals?

Methodology

“Qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that helps us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (Merriam, 1997, p. 5). Qualitative research is the study of a problem in which the researcher hopes to find common connections or themes (Creswell, 2007). In this study, common connections and themes were sought to determine the types of leadership skills and strategies used to successfully lead schools to high levels of achievement. The researcher “collects data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). Merriam (2009) indicated that the researcher must recognize that there is no guideline for qualitative research and the researcher must recognize the best way to proceed. In this study, a case study approach was selected as the best way to collect and analyze the data.

Method of Inquiry

Qualitative research is done to study groups or populations (Creswell, 2007). In a case study, multiple sites are selected to show varied perspectives on the case with replication for each subject studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). I will be looking to understand the traits each subject has in common by virtue of site visits with in-depth interviews.

The qualitative approach is particularly useful for the goals of this study. I was interested in human traits that can be replicated by colleagues and aspiring school leaders. “A key concern is understanding the phenomenon of interest coming from the participant’s perspective and not the researcher’s” (Merriam, 1997, p. 6). “Rigor comes from extensive data collection in the field” (Creswell, 2007, p. 46). Twenty-six questions developed from the review of literature were used to interview the participants.

Participant Selection

In case study analysis, the researcher is the primary means of data collection and it involves field work (Merriam, 1997). The participants were selected for consideration by polling state agencies and university personnel. The state association and licensing institutions were chosen to ensure a deep pool of candidates from the state of Indiana. The Indiana Association of School Principals (IASP) was asked to provide a list of 10 high school principals considered effective from the state of Indiana. Major academic institutions that grant licensure to high school principals were asked to provide a list of those 10 high school principals considered effective. The following institutions were asked to provide a list of highly effective high school principals: Ball State University, Butler University, Indiana State University, Indiana University, Purdue University, and University of Indianapolis,. The institutions and IASP were provided a recruitment form with pertinent information regarding the study (Appendix A). The 10 participants recommended by IASP and Indiana universities were alphabetized before being entered in Randomize.org to ensure random selection of participants.

Participants

The five participants who agreed to participate needed to be in their current roles for a minimum of three years overall as a building leader. Those with less time as building principals were not selected as they had not had time to demonstrate effective leadership on a continuing basis. The schools in which they served could be rural, urban, or suburban in setting. Participants were not eliminated based on gender, race, or ethnic differences. The deciding factor in selection was not based on state or federal test score data. Participants were sent a recruitment form to allow for participation (Appendix B). They received and signed a document of consent to participate form prior to interviews taking place after they agreed to participate

(Appendix C). Candidates received an initial mailing requesting participation in the study and informed consent material. The potential participants received a follow-up email 10 days after the original letter was sent requesting participation. The follow-up email included the original documentation sent in the letter. Participants who agreed to an interview received a telephone call to establish a convenient interview date and time. During the initial phone conference, participants were asked for an email address they considered secure to ensure confidentiality.

Data Collection

Good questions that are hypothetical, devil's advocate, ideal position, or interpretive are important in case study data collection (Creswell, 2007). A full day was spent at each participant's school interviewing participants. The interviews were required for consistency and to allow validation upon transcription of the data. The interviews included notes of the general setting and observations of the school environment. Twenty-six structured interview questions were used to ensure each subject was asked the same questions as part of the interview process. The questions were validated by five principals prior to use in the study (Appendix D). The responses to the questions and all discussion were recorded via multiple recorders for transcription at a later date to ensure that participant intellectual material was properly represented (Appendix E). The recordings were coded so that the identity of each participant was known only to me. The recordings were stored at my home only accessible by me for three years prior to destruction. The notes and transcriptions on the computer were coded so that the identity of the participants was guarded.

Data Analysis

Case study data comes from direct interpretation drawing meaning from the data collected, establishing patterns, and developing generalizations from analyzing the data (Denzin

& Lincoln, 2005). The information was read before coding to allow for a sense of the overall theme regarding each participant's interview. The interviews were transcribed and credited to each participant using pseudonyms to allow for coding information into themes. The notes collected pertaining to school environment were typed to allow for coding for each source.

Coding the context and description with advanced codes for themes and finally codes for assertions and generalizations will allow for proper data presentation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). "Researchers bring their own world view paradigms or sets of beliefs to research projects" (Creswell, 2007, p. 15). "Good research requires you to be aware of those issues and that they influence the conduct of inquiry" (Creswell, 2007, p. 15). The information obtained from the on-site visits were coded into themes and the themes divided into categories: (a) themes I expected, (b) themes that each participant shared, (c) themes that are unique to a participant, and (d) themes that are unique and potentially applicable to new school leaders. Themes that arose during the process of review were included to ensure proper representation of the information obtained.

Case studies need to be particularistic, descriptive—rich with description, and heuristic where the reader understands the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2007). The information was written into a narrative format for presentation. "We cannot understand one case without knowing other cases" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 237). A researcher must also be careful not to try to understand everything about the data or the data could be deflated (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Establishing Validity and Reliability

The researcher must collect data and try to adequately summarize the findings (Creswell, 2007). Merriam (2009) stated that "all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable

knowledge in an ethical manner” (p. 209). The researcher’s approach is to present accurate and relevant research.

Validity is a process of establishing whether the research findings actually occur in reality (Merriam, 2009). Validity can be established through the triangulation of data (Creswell, 1994). In this study, triangulation was achieved through interviews, data analysis, and member checking. Member checking is a process whereby the researcher solicits the participant’s view of the credibility of the findings and interpretations allowing the participants to read drafts and suggest changes in the language (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The participants of the study were allowed to read the transcribed notes from the interviews for accuracy of data and allowed to make changes as required. Participants were mailed or emailed, by method they preferred, their transcript from their interview. The participants were asked to respond via U.S. mail or email with an approval or request for correction within 10 business days.

Reliability is the extent to which the results and findings of a study can be replicated (Merriam, 2009). “The investigator is limited by being a human being and mistakes are made, opportunities lost and personal biases interfere” (Merriam, 1997, p. 20). The possibility of bias is always a source of concern as the primary data is information exchanged between subject and researcher. Each participant was allowed the opportunity to ensure their intellectual material was presented in the fashion intended without undue bias interjected by me.

The five participants in the study were each asked to review their transcribed comments from the individual interviews. The participants were asked to ensure what they said was transcribed correctly and represented the thought being shared. Each member was allowed to make any changes deemed necessary. The participants were also asked if they had any

additional thoughts to add after having time to read and reflect on the interview responses. There were no corrections or additions from the participants.

Summary

This chapter summarized the following design components: research questions, method of inquiry, participant selection, participants, data collection, data analysis, and establishing validity and reliability. The main purpose of this study sought to determine the characteristics of a successful high school principal that are observable and can be placed into practice by current and future building leadership.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to gain insight about high school principals who are considered effective by organizations and institutions in the state of Indiana. Through a qualitative study, I sought similarities in the way effective high school principals lead their staff and students. There were five Indiana high school principals interviewed for this study based on the recommendations of major Indiana universities that grant administrative licensure and IASP.

The participants met the following criteria for participation: the participants had a minimum of three years as principal in their current schools and the district they served could be rural, urban, or suburban in setting with no qualifications on gender, race, or ethnic difference. The school test scores were not used a qualification.

There are 242 high school principals in Indiana and of those 74 are women, composing 30% of Indiana high school principals. Of those who are principals, 16% are members of IASP. There were female participants identified, however, none of those selected responded to the request to participate.

The participants who participated were all male subjects. The participants included three from suburban districts and two participants who served in rural districts. Each participant had been serving in his or her current position as principal from five to 14 years. Two of the participants had served as principals in other schools prior to their current positions. Two of the

participants were elevated to the principal position from the assistant principal position in their current schools. The school each participant led ranged in size from approximately 500 students to over 4,000 students. The socioeconomic differences ranged from less than 10% free and reduced lunch rates to over 47% free and reduced lunch rates. The diversity of students was limited to less than 19% in each of the schools. The five principals all led schools that received an A accountability grade from the IDOE, on the A to F scale, although it was not a selection criteria.

Findings and themes from the interviews are presented in Chapter 4. The participants are identified in this study by using participant (P) with a number designation to differentiate among the five participants. Participant 1 is identified as P1 in sequential order for each successive participant.

Participant 1 (P1) was principal of a large suburban district in central Indiana. He began his career in a rural school and later an urban school corporation where he taught and was an administrator for a semester before moving to his current school. He had been principal in his current school for seven years after having served as assistant principal in his current school. The district had experienced great growth in the student population. The student population of 2,300 was roughly 12% diverse with 18% free and reduced lunch rate. The community believed in high expectations and was above average in educational attainment.

Participant 2 (P2) was principal in a declining rural corporation in central Indiana and served as principal for six years. He grew up in the community he currently served, taught at the high school, served as athletic director, and had been assistant principal in the school corporation. The student population was 800 students and had experienced slow decline in recent years. The student population was predominantly White with a 40% free and reduced

lunch rate. The community was a farming community with less expectation for post-secondary education.

Participant 3 (P3) served a large suburban school in central Indiana with an increasing enrollment. He was in his 10th year as principal in this school. Prior to his current principalship, he taught, was an assistant principal, and was a high school principal in a different district. The school served over 4,000 students with 19% diversity and a 10% free and reduced lunch rate. The community was higher than average in educational attainment.

Participant 4 (P4) was in his 14th year as principal in his current school. The district was a rural corporation in northeastern Indiana. He served as a teacher and middle school assistant principal in the district he currently served. The school was rural with approximately 500 students. The student population was less than 8% diversity and was 46% free and reduced lunch rate. The school had a high mobility rate.

Participant 5 (P5) was in his eighth year as principal in a suburban district in central Indiana. He served as a teacher, assistant principal/athletic director, and principal in another district prior to his current position. The district was stable in growth with the school having an enrollment of 1,100 students. The student population was less than 9% diversity and had a 47% free and reduced lunch rate. The community was varied in educational attainment with great disparity between student populations. Table 1 is a summary of the participants and their schools.

Table 1

Summary of Participants and Their Schools

Participant	School Grade	Years as Principal	School Setting	School Enrollment	Free/Reduced %	Diversity %
1	A	7	Suburban	2,300	18%	12%
2	A	6	Rural	800	40%	8%
3	A	10	Suburban	4,000	10%	19%
4	A	14	Rural	500	46%	8%
5	A	8	Suburban	1,100	47%	9%

Emerging Themes

Six themes emerged as a result of careful review of the transcribed interview sessions with the five participants. The six themes are as follows:

1. Principals who participate in preparation programs with an internship program and/or who have effective mentors as new principals receive the foundation for effective principal leadership.
2. Effective high school principals understand the essential traits for leading school and staff. They have developed effective collegial networks as resources for dealing with educational change.
3. Effective principals are committed to and value improving their educational practice as a result of increased academic demands.
4. The instructional abilities of effective principals are improved through communication, relationships, and collaborative skills.

5. Effective principals are optimistic individuals and see obstacles as challenges to lead staff and students that will be overcome.
6. Effective high school principals use relationships, conscientious decision making, and effective time management to cope with emotional stress.

Theme 1

Principals who participate in preparation programs with an internship program and/or who have effective mentors as new principals receive the foundation for effective principal leadership.

The internship for an aspiring administrator has long been seen as an integral piece of developing effective principals. The field internship was one of the most helpful pieces of leadership preparation for 50% of the respondents in a study conducted in Massachusetts (Militello et al., 2009). The selection and training of mentor principals is a crucial element for the success or failure of pre-service administrators (Havard et al., 2010). The participants in this study all had varied levels of internship experience. Their internships ranged from none to a full year for the participants. The participants relayed different levels of mentor support during their internships.

P1 felt his internship began well before he entered the education profession. His father was an administrator for many years allowing him to be around educational activities all his life. The preparation program in which he participated required a semester-long internship.

The preparation program P1 participated in lacked support from the principal during the internship. The school was in an urban district and the principal was generally unavailable. The district placed little value on continuity in the schools and moved their principals regularly. “She was always in a meeting somewhere else and the building was big enough that simply . . . well,

education went on.” “I picked up some things.” “I don’t list her in my mentor group.” “I list her in my experience group.” The internship included time as an assistant principal, which allowed him to develop the skills necessary to land the first job for which he applied in administration.

When P1 began his first principalship, he had a mentor who helped him to develop into an effective high school principal. His mentor did more than teach the job. His mentor showed P1 how to care for himself and family. This mentor remains one of his mentors today and they meet at local Kiwanis meetings regularly. P1 learned how to treat people, give attention to people, give your time, and remain humble from this relationship.

The experience for P2 was one of success due to the situation and mentoring he received during his preparation. He earned his master’s degree in education prior to going back to school to obtain an administration license. The preparation program required a one-semester internship. He was already in an administrative position as athletic director, which allowed him more flexibility to participate in the administrator preparation role.

The principal under whom he did his preparation influenced his development and remains an influence to this day. “I worked for great principals that really did more to help prepare me than anything.” It was clear that he valued the insight he gained as a result of mentors. “When I was thinking back about my preparation, I can think back over the years of all the people I’ve worked under . . . just the things you learn without realizing it at the time, maybe, but I had some great mentors and I don’t know how I was so lucky.”

The outlook for P2 as he thought about his own role in preparing future administrators supported the need for quality internships and mentors. He counsels those thinking of entering administration to do it for the right reasons. Part of his role, as he saw it, is to develop future

administrators to be successful. P2 had a mentor during his internship he could turn to and in turn wants to return that service the overwhelming responsibility to “pay it forward.”

P3 participated in an internship that was a full year in length and found it to be “very, very valuable.” He found that experience to be important to his development. “I can’t imagine someone becoming a building principal without the opportunity to do an internship.” He also described his time as a coach and teacher as an informal internship and possibly the most important piece.

The mentor leading P3 during the internship added to the success he experienced in the internship program. He replaced his mentor as a teacher. P3 was able to observe his mentor as a leader prior to his serving his internship. He described his mentor as being a “skilled administrator.” After taking his first principal position, he continued to meet regularly with his internship mentor.

P3 felt that during his first principalship the closest he had to a mentor was the district superintendent. The principals in his first district did not share information or discuss change for fear of giving away ideas that would make another school more successful. When he moved to his current position, he found many more principals willing to mentor him. The principals in his current district worried less about keeping what they knew a secret. The experience in his current position has been a positive influence on his continued development.

P4 participated in an administrative master’s degree program with an internship for one semester. The internship allowed him to have a mentor at the middle school where he did his internship. He also began his first administrative job in that school with his mentor.

When he became a principal, other principals in his area were his mentors. Those mentor relationships continue today through the same area alignment. There are three or four men who

served as his mentors and he “relied heavily” on them for support. The group continues to meet monthly 14 years later.

P5 is the only principal interviewed who did not have an internship with his preparation program. He gained his license by earning a master’s degree in administration with only course work. Without having an internship, he did not have a traditional mentor. He was, however, able to have an internship of sorts. P5 worked on his licensure and degree while in an administrative role in a small school.

His first principal position was in a small district where he had a “couple” of people he could call for advice. He did not know anyone and found it challenging as far as a mentor was concerned. In his current position, he formed collegial relationships that allow him to share with other principals.

Principals who participate in an internship program receive a foundation for becoming a successful high school principal. Once they become a principal, they benefit from an experienced high school principal who can mentor the new principal and sustain that relationship over time.

Theme 2

Effective high school principals understand the essential traits for leading school and staff. They have developed effective collegial networks as resources for dealing with educational change.

The five participants were able to describe their leadership styles and how they used their individual skills to reach their goals. The first obligation of an instructional leader is to create a vision and standard of action to reach that vision (Reeves, 2006). The participants all have a vision for their schools and regularly communicate that vision. In addition to having their own

vision, they have developed relationships with other local principals and in some cases state organizations to communicate and share ideas on addressing educational change. Marzano et al. (2005) listed communication, input, outreach, relationships, and resources among 21 responsibilities for principals. These five traits align with principals seeking partnerships with other principals to ensure success.

P1 believed his leadership style to be servant leadership. His goal was to work hard, be accountable, and put in a good day's work while leaving no stone unturned. "You've got to have relationships with people so you know I'm the one in the classroom and I expect teachers to do their job in a professional manner." Due to the number of years he had been in his position and having hired most of the teachers, he had the ability to mentor new teachers and new administrators.

P1 changed his leadership style to fit the situation when it was warranted. When addressing a situation, he evaluates those involved and adjusts his stance so that the individuals can grow from an experience. Although he may adjust his style for the situation, he "builds capacity in them without cutting their legs off." He insists people should be able to make mistakes in order to grow.

An important part of P1's network was developed through the athletic conference to which his school belongs. The schools in the conference are similar and face similar situations. A "close bond" exists among the principals in those schools. The school leaders within his county also meet on a monthly basis for discussion although the schools vary in size and goals. In addition to conference networking and regional affiliation, he sits on boards with the Indiana High School Athletic Association and IDOE. He values his membership in IASP for information

as well as the board affiliations. These committees and memberships allow him to know what is coming in order to make the appropriate decisions and adjustments for his school.

P2 felt that his leadership style leans towards the transformational style of leadership. It was an evolutionary process for him to arrive at the transformational style. When he began as a principal, his style was “I am sole leader making decisions” and he “shot from the hip” to address issues. P2 even went so far as to say he was “old school” in his initial thoughts on leadership. In his growth as a leader, he learned there has to be more of a shared vision with teachers having a voice. He now saw himself as a more approachable person with a better relationship with staff and students as the school vision evolves.

P2 absolutely felt it was important to adapt his leadership style to meet situations. As he stated earlier, he was black and white when he first assumed the role of principal. The idea of incorporating varied leadership traits outside of black and white continues to be a struggle in his growth as leader. There are “gray” areas for issues and the growth he managed in this area of leadership is pleasing. “I’m not saying that’s the way I always wanted to be, but I think you have to go with what your situation is and you have to adapt.”

P2 recognized early in his career that a collaborating network of principals to address issues and concerns would benefit his growth as a principal. He stated that much of his network developed out of the athletic conference to which his school belongs. The principals in his conference meet monthly as a support for the work they are trying to accomplish. They also email each other regularly to assist one another with questions that arose in their work. In addition to the conference affiliation, he is a member of IASP and had served on boards with the association. “None of us have all the answers but a lot of times, if we all put our heads together, we can come up with some great solutions.”

P3 described himself as having a servant leadership style. His belief is that leadership is about relationship building. He wanted his kids and teachers to know he cares about them and his parents to know he is available. P3 believed his parents and staff knew he cares about his school and when he makes an error in decision making there must have been a good reason for the decision. He stated that service style leading is a bit “cliché” but the reason it is cliché is the fact that there is truth to the style.

When it came to changing leadership style to fit a situation, P3 tried to stay consistent in his approach. “People ought to know what to expect.” He made the point that anyone can learn leadership from a book but when you look at a situation, what decisions are going to be best? Leadership for him is better served in doing what is fair which meant you do not do the same thing all the time. “Fair is doing the right thing all the time.” “Administrators interpret and enforce policy.” “I don’t think there is anything wrong with my saying to you, yes, you can do that and then the next person that comes in says, no, you can’t, based on circumstances.”

P3 has a network of administrators whose schools compete in his athletic conference. The schools in his conference are of similar size and socioeconomic break down. Where he differed on his network, he saw his network as made up of unions, students, and parents as well as other administrators. The networks he developed has assisted him in making the best decisions for his school. P3 stated,

If you’re here as an administrator and you think this is where you need to be, and we all have that . . . whatever *this* is. Obviously, the most direct route is right here, but what you have is all these interest groups out here . . . students, school board, parent groups, union . . . whatever it might be, and I think administrators who do this are wrong. It’s like a bull in a china shop. You may get here, but when you look behind you, you’ve

made these people angry . . . you've alienated them and you've done whatever, and then you might find yourself here by yourself. I think the skill of administration, to me, has never been really kind of knowing what's right. I don't think there's a lot of gray area. Most of the things that come across my desk, I have a pretty good idea of what's right and what's wrong. It's not about where we should be, the skill is how to get other people there. I think that what you do as an administrator, you come over here, and then you come here, and then you come over here. If you do that, it takes a little bit longer, but what you do is you bring these groups with you, but also you find out that, okay, maybe instead of being here you actually should be over there.

"You as a leader need to be open and honest by sharing and listening. You have an obligation not to do what you want to do. You have an obligation to do what is right."

P4 saw himself as a servant style-type leader although he felt that his leadership did not really fit into any type book definition. It was important that the people he works with on a daily basis believe they work with him rather than for him. He described his best definition of leadership style as *influence*. The best P4 could do was influence people in a positive way. The starfish he wears everyday reminds him to make a difference in people's lives each day.

P4 firmly believed in not changing his leadership style but rather to make the situation fit his style of leadership. He stated that "everything runs through a filter."

P4 developed a network of support that is both local and statewide. His connections to the IDOE are important to him for information. A lot of what he learned was through his membership in IASP. IASP allows him to stay up to date on policies, changes, and connections to other principals. P4 also communicates with principals in his local area for support.

P5 described himself as a servant style administrator “where I just serve my people and help them do their best.” He believes that you should hire the best people possible and remove obstacles and let them do their jobs. With the changes that have occurred in education, a principal does not have the time to address every situation. There are so many things dictated to schools by the state that principals need to avoid adding things that are not researched. Principals need to avoid adding things that increase fear for teachers.

P5 stated that he absolutely changed his style of leadership when necessary. “You have to.”

P5 developed his network of support from other administrators through his athletic conference. This was a natural occurrence. He meets with those principals monthly to discuss issues of interest. “We get our principal questions answered at those meetings.” He also participated on IDOE committees. P5 found his membership in IASP added to his network. He met several groups through the association. He stated, “There’s always some sort of resource, I can pick up a phone or shoot an email.”

The participants in the study all had an understanding of their leadership styles and how to lead their students and staffs toward success. They were not afraid to change the way in which they led in particular situations as warranted. The participants each valued a collegial network to support their work.

Theme 3

Effective principals are committed to and value improving their educational practice as a result of increased academic demands.

The principals who participated recognize the importance of all aspects of educational performance. The increased academic demands have influenced their practice. They know that

their attitude can influence the performance of their staff. Like Fullan (2001) suggested, principals are leaders who address problems that are without readily apparent answers. They must hire and work with the best teachers possible. In most cases, the practices they use have been improved rather than totally changed. When leaders try to initiate change, they are usually tinkering with behaviors that have become automatic, and changing those behaviors requires careful supervision (Heath & Heath, 2010).

P1 did not concern himself with the demands of educational changes as much as he embraced the changes as a positive response to improved student educational opportunities. He readily pointed out that “no business would run in the situation the way it does now for us.” In his estimation, Indiana is in a better place than many other states in regards to educational improvement. He has adjusted how he places people in positions to better use the resources available. “You see a situation, adapt . . . know what’s needed and then have the resources or ability to make that decision or make some suggestions.”

P1 became more focused on how and to what position he hires. The teaching candidates he interviews have their transcripts reviewed more thoroughly. When a school invests in a teacher, it is a significant monetary investment. If P1 makes the wrong decision on hiring a candidate, it is his job to remove him or her from the building. When the wrong decision is made on hiring a teacher, it is important to review why the individual was hired to ensure it does not occur in the future.

The communication that takes place has improved significantly for P1. The school is trying to reach goals and the goals are posted with more discussion occurring around those goals. In order to improve, communication increased with staff members and families. The staff is emailed daily. Rather than waste time with newsletters that are never read, P1 moved out of his

comfort zone by using Twitter to communicate with parents. He was amazed at how little communications teachers want to have with parents. “If we want better scores, we better take it to the parents.” By communicating more, everyone involved in student success is on the same page for student success.

P2 took a straightforward approach to improving his educational practice and the effect it has on the school. He did not agree with everything that had occurred in education but did embrace many of the revisions to education. He told his staff, “I’m not going to another occupation. I’m going to live with this, I’m going to work hard to make the best of it.” He stressed that schools must be flexible and do what is best for kids. P2 regularly shares with staff that “hard work” will pay off and we do this “for those 800 kids.” P2 believes his school has high standards and it is important to maintain those standards. He is in tune to what his community believes is best for their kids. His school offers a significant number of college credit courses while the state is pushing for more advanced placement courses. He encourages students to seek vocational training if the traditional college path is not the best path for a student.

I think probably more than anything . . . what I try to do is maintain what we’re doing, keep going down the curricular paths that we have and work hard to try and keep kids on whatever path they need to be on.

P2 did not believe he had changed the way in which he approached hiring the staff who are responsible for academic achievement. “The most important thing we do is hire employees, because one bad hire can take us down the wrong path.” He spends a great deal of time researching the candidates he is considering for employment. He used his network to find out the potential for a candidate. The knowledge base of curriculum is not as important for him. He

feels a teacher candidate must have the skills to become a teacher. He and his staff can help a teacher become a better teacher if they have the skill base and drive to do so.

P3 has adopted a philosophy of balance when addressing the changes that occur in education and the effect the changes have on his school. When you are dealing with a directive of law, you have to be positive but acknowledge the challenge it places on teachers. One must keep integrity when it comes to dealing with changes that are hard. Decisions that are made are often hard but must be made with the kids in mind and not the adults. P3 believes that in some places the decisions that are made seem to be for kids but really are adult-friendly decisions. It is okay to tell your teachers “I understand and sympathize but, at the same time, we’re going to do what we’re asked to do and move forward with it.” P3 did not address the issue of his hiring practices directly.

P4 felt that his academic skills have been affected in a positive way. He believes that he is much better at being involved in the curriculum decisions and evaluation aspects improvement.

I certainly don’t agree with how (the changes) have been done, but at the end of the day, whether it’s standardized testing or teacher evaluation or other, we probably do a better job at teaching and administering than we did before and that’s unfortunate.

He made the point that if we want to improve, someone has to be pushing us because even with the best of intentions we would not get where we need to be with accountability. “I think it has made me better.”

P4 has a positive outlook on the changes that are occurring with his staff. “I tell them that the (Indiana) Department of Education is 100 hundred miles away . . . and this is what I believe as a leader.” If the IDOE is affecting his building in a negative way, he believes it is his

responsibility. When he considered how he hires teachers, the heart of a person is more important than knowledge, content, and instructional methodologies as a measurement of future teaching success. A potential teacher for P4 needs to be a “team player” who can fit the school.

P4 stated that there are two words that have helped him become a better school leader: “focused” and “intentional.” His high school is better now as a result of the work they have done improving education. He likes to follow Chuck Swindoll’s philosophy of “10% is what happens to me . . . 90% is how I react to it.” He has chosen to make his school “better” not “bitter.”

P5 was not convinced that the changes have made things better but knows when he confronts his staff he has to be positive. He conceded the changes have improved education but the changes often frustrate teachers. He learned to get out in front of change so that “we don’t get run over.” Hiring has become one of the most critical pieces in his practice. P5 wished there were a personality test he could give candidates. “I can take someone who has the right demeanor and right personality and I think I can make them a pretty good teacher.” He does not see “book smart” as the most important piece rather he likes to try and get to know them as a person.

P5 stated that becoming more academically oriented is time consuming. He began delegating and letting go of things he used to perform to spend time on academic pursuits. He no longer has the time to follow that student who is in “trouble.” There is a great deal of time spent with data and tracking students. The school administers the Acuity test multiple times a year and created data walls in all tested areas. The changes have helped them improve their end of course assessment scores. The academic demands are “part of improving our test scores and us trying to get better.”

The principals in this study understood the importance of academic achievement. They did not fear increased accountability. The participants embrace the accountability and strive to lead students and staff in a positive manner to academic success.

Theme 4

The instructional abilities of effective principals are improved through communication, relationships, and collaborative skills.

The five participants learned through their experiences the importance of communicating with staff for instructional success. Instructional leadership is considered one of the key components of the principal's position (Noonan & Renihan, 2006). They consistently inform staff of their vision and beliefs when it comes to educating students. The supervisors they work for allow them to make appropriate curricular decisions. Leadership is second only to classroom instruction in factors that affect student learning and is a key factor in differences in schools that foster students' learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). These principals are not afraid to gain information and opinions from the teachers with whom they lead. Principals who try to lead change and improvement on their own are a major impediment to effective leadership (Hallinger, 2003). None are afraid to make decisions on curriculum or other school decisions, but they work to build a relationship that fosters a team approach to effective leadership.

P1 was in a position to participate in the hiring of the majority of his staff. This allowed him to shape the staff in the vision he saw surrounding the success of the school. Approximately 13% of staff members had been at the school as long or longer than P1. Those staff members he hired or assisted in hiring were well aware of the vision. The vision had been communicated to them since the interview phase of employment in P1's school. "Where we focus more is the data is clear about good instructional practices produce better results." Those who were in the school

prior to his leadership participate in discussions on what they “hope their legacy” will be at the school. For those teachers, he presented their status as an opportunity to be part of teaching the younger staff how to continue the school’s success.

P1 was allowed to make decisions on curriculum and instructional methods with the blessing of his superintendent. They have a close relationship and hold similar beliefs on education. He can go to his superintendent with ideas that go beyond his building to the district level. P1 felt that it was his role to assist in leading the district due to the fact he had been in the district for a lengthy time. When the district leadership team met, his thoughts and ideas are heard by the other member of the district team unlike when he first became an administrator in the district. Over time, his relationship with the superintendent earned him the privilege of leading with limited supervision. That is not to say he does whatever he desires. The superintendent is always made aware of decisions and seeks reciprocal input.

P1 sought input from his staff in varied ways. He has an administrative set-up that allows his assistants to participate in decision making as well as the teachers. A great deal of his communicating with teachers is handled through email. Administrative meetings are held twice a week to gain input and information. The staff is allowed to bring up issues for discussion. “The opinions come when you give them more time to think about it and digest it and then come back and have some meeting time where everybody is able to express their opinions.”

P2 was certain his staff is aware of his vision for the school but felt his approach could be a weakness. At times, he worries that he can be too straightforward in his approach with staff. “I think my staff will tell you if they want to know where I stand, all they have to do is ask me and I’ll tell them.” The staff should be aware and that is “how you should operate in life.” The concern he expressed was that “it’s not always what people want to hear.” When it came to the

data side of instruction, “we try to make data-driven decisions, but it’s not like what I live for every single day.”

P2 is allowed by his superintendent to make the necessary adjustments in curriculum as long as the superintendent is aware of what is occurring. It is a situation where he “pretty much has the freedom to do what I think is right.” As an example, he cited the changes in advanced placement course with the input of teachers. When he took the position, few students were earning the required score to receive college credit. P2 decided to change course and offer more dual credit to his students. They now offer 17-18 dual credit courses allowing students to earn three college credits per course for \$75. It allows the students in his community to keep their college degree cost in check. The teachers bought in to college credit over AP exams even though they were required to get additional training.

P2 began his tenure as principal by meeting with every teacher the summer before he took the office. He clearly let them know he wanted to hear the good, bad, and everything they had to say. “I tell everybody that I work with . . . I don’t want yes men.” He told his staff regularly that if “I am not seeing something here, tell me.” It is okay to disagree in his school because that is where growth can take place. The input P2 received allowed him to make better decisions. P2 is willing to own the decisions he makes, good or bad.

P3 said that his staff absolutely understands his vision for the school. He is straightforward in his approach. P3 does not want to gain that trust from teachers by bashing those placed above him. Those who gain trust through fear allow people to believe that the principal can protect them from central office. He calls that style of leadership “round the wagon.”

P3 stated that he can absolutely make curricular decisions for his school as long as the decision stays within board policy and there have been some conversation on the proposed change. Knowing what central office is thinking assists him in making his decisions. The relationship with his superintendent is one of trust. He stated, “I wouldn’t want to be in a place (where I cannot lead) . . . I know this school and I want to have an impact on what we do.” Data-driven instruction is an area that he has improved over the years as data became more accessible due to technological improvements.

P3 does not want people who surround him to be yes men. He encourages those around him to provide him with information. He recognized that he is a strong figure and had that fact reinforced by an assistant principal who told him it is not easy to say no to him. When he looks for building leaders, he wants people who advocate for their department and are comfortable enough to come to him with why they disagree with his decisions. The major expectation for leaders is once a decision is made it is carried out in a team manner and not given to staff as a “principal decision.” He does, however, help his building leaders at times by taking the heat for a decision, thereby taking pressure off the assistant principal or department chair.

P4 was confident about his leadership with staff. He believed that every level of staff member in his school knows his vision and beliefs. He stated, “They’ve been kidding me about it, which means at least they know it.” When he began as an administrator several years ago, data was not a priority. Now P4 can tell you his school grade before the IDOE announces the grade based on the data he studies.

P4 has a relationship with his superintendent that allows him to make major academic decisions about his school. He makes the decisions with the input of others. He values the input of his staff. “Flat out say, I want your opinion.” The ideas that are best often arise out of

disagreement. “If we can disagree with each other and still like each other and still respect each other and not have to become emotional with each other, it’s OK to disagree.”

P5 knows his staff understands his vision for the school since he tells them all the time. His superintendent allows him to make the major academic decisions necessary as long as it is communicated. Using data helps him to make better academic decisions. He can tell you now where the algebra classes will be on a specific date in the spring because of increased attention to data in instruction. He believes that if you are not able to make decisions that may not be popular but are right, you probably should not be in the principal’s office. “When it comes to academics, you have to keep putting kids first and sometimes that conflicts with what’s best for the teachers and they understand that.”

P5 also stated that he does not want a lot of yes men working with him. He wants people to tell him what they think and what is going on in the building. He has an advisory committee and when they meet it is important that he not dominate the meeting. P5 reminds his inner circle that he does not have all the answers. “If I did, I certainly wouldn’t be doing this . . . I’d be selling it for a whole lot more.” “I think that’s the only way to survive in this because if you’re the only one that’s driving the train, you’ll wear yourself out.”

The participants were each allowed to make curricular decisions for their schools. The teachers they lead understood the vision each principal holds. Each participant sought the input of teachers in the decision-making process.

Theme 5

Effective principals are optimistic individuals and see obstacles as challenges to lead staff and students that will be overcome.

The effective principals are often hardest on themselves. However, they are optimistic about the future and embrace accountability as a means to improvement. Regardless of the leadership style, effective leadership has the most effect on successful organizations over time (Marzano et al., 2005). The participants in this study have all been in their current roles long enough to effect change in their schools. Each of the principals expressed his desire to ensure that his students and community receive the best education possible. Leaders in schools with successful cultures know how important schools are to children and make schools the best they can be (Deal & Peterson, 2009). It is no longer good enough to ensure that a few are relatively well educated (Schlechty, 1997). Effective principals do not worry about how the rules are made; they ensure that their staff plays the game to better their students' educational experience.

P1 was positive about his leadership in the school he led. His philosophy is not to be the only one with answers. His goal is to "get people to go places they wouldn't have gone on their own." P1 recognized that it is not just teachers that make a school successful. He included the teachers, custodial staff, and cafeteria as part of the educational team for children. He did not leave himself out and expects to remain in the building more than in the past rather than serving on committees or doing other things that take away from his connection to the building. The best way for him to improve is to study those areas he knows best and make the area even better. This effective leader understands that constant praise will fall on deaf ears if not balanced with improvement goals for all staff members to achieve.

P1 saw no problem with evaluating teachers on a yearly basis and ensuring that the teachers continue to grow. In fact, he was glad to see accountability that required more evaluations. His corporation did not require frequent evaluations before changes in accountability. Although the teachers felt more pressure, he turned it to a positive. "You have to

have relationships with people and so you know I'm in the classrooms a lot and I expect teachers to do their job in a professional manner." He saw his friends in the business community deal with similar pressures for meeting high standards. "It just makes everybody accountable." "We can get better from the mistakes or positive things we've done in the past." Part of the principal's role is to balance what is important and where the school is headed.

P2 believed in his approach to leadership and continually refined what was being done by self-reflecting on a regular basis. "If I'm not doing the best job and the right things, I don't think there is any point in doing it." P2 never wanted to be that principal who is seen as hanging on or for people to see him as an ineffective leader. He loves working with kids and staff. "I think you have to look at yourself in the mirror and say, am I doing the right thing . . . am I doing what I'm supposed to be doing . . . am I making an impact for these kids." If he ever feels that he is not performing to the level he expects of himself, it is time to change occupations.

P2 stated, "I often tell people it's different . . . in leadership and management." He sees the difference between a principals role 20 years ago to a principals role in this age. Leaders have to stand up for what they believe in and make decisions that may not be popular. When teachers are upset about the new accountability models, he simply lets them know the school will do the work required. P2 added,

It's tough and some days are better than others, but we're put in the role for whatever reason . . . because someone felt like we could lead, and we have to keep fighting, doing what's best for our students, our staff, our community, and our schools. It's an ongoing battle but someone has to do it and we have to accept that.

P3 is proud of the leadership he has given to the schools. He reflects more as he ages and gets closer to the end of a career in education. Many of his beginning leadership core values are

still intact. He was willing to admit that over time he has learned much and been humbled at times as part of his growth. He is fond of a quote his dad shared: “Just because you think you’re right, doesn’t mean you are and even if you are, that doesn’t mean anyone else cares.” He believes that knowledge gained from his father to be “more and more true.” He feels “honored to have been able to do this . . . be part of a school at this level . . . it’s been fun.”

P3 did not agree with all the changes in accountability. But he supported the accountability efforts and is willing to admit it has improved schools in general. He worked hard to ensure that his teachers recognized that the increased accountability is the opportunity to improve. He realized that you can have great kids and good facilities but if you do not have “passionate” leadership, who can connect with their teachers and inspire those they lead, “you will not prosper.” P3 did not believe you can just put anyone in a leadership role at any level. “When we pick leaders, and I consider teachers leaders, we’ve got to make sure we’re putting good, quality people in there if we want to have the kind of success that we have.”

P4 loved the role he plays as principal. There are no plans in his future to change what he does for a living. He elaborated by saying he hoped to “continue what I do and do it better.”

P4 saw leadership as influence. There are many areas for a principal to manage and maintain but it all came down to one area in his mind, climate and culture. Climate and culture are the most important things a principal should focus on. When discussing climate and culture he stated, “I believe is like the ground.” “If the ground is not fertile with the proper climate and culture, nothing will grow.” The new teacher accountability system can lead to negativity in a building. Without good climate and culture, accountability requirements will lead to an unsuccessful school. The building leaders must take care of climate and culture. “If that’s not where it should be, it will hurt everything else in my opinion.”

P5 was hard on himself as he reflected on his leadership. He admitted to second-guessing himself but did not allow others to know that he secondguessed his decisions. His goal is to continue to “accentuate the positives.” It is important to P5 that his school celebrates and continues to push for improvement. It bothers him that some groups of teachers in the building at times felt left out due to being in a subject area that was not tested.

P5 found the principal’s role to be an ever-evolving position. The principal 20 years ago had very different goals than a principal in practice today. In today’s climate, parents, community members, media, and legislature think the principal should know “every situation” in the building. He stated, “That’s just not possible.” The role of the principal “continues to evolve and we have to keep remaking ourselves because you can get run over in this job.”

The principals believed in what they do as building administrators. Those issues that may be seen as obstacles to some are simply challenges to be successful to these effective principals.

Theme 6

Effective high school principals use relationships, conscious decision making, and effective time management to cope with emotional stress.

These effective high school principals were in tune with the areas of their professional lives that create stress. They each readily accepted that stress is part of leadership and must be managed. When leaders ignore their feelings and discomfort, they lose sight of the work that they do and what really matters in the position they hold (Murphy, 2011). Emotional health can lead to sustained and effective leadership in schools, but if absent can lead to leadership that does more harm than good (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004). The five participants developed methods that helped them to relieve the stress associated with leadership. Their methods for

dealing with job stress include sharing with family members, colleagues, laughter, and physical exercise. There are simple strategies that can assist a person in dealing with their emotions such as writing, quiet time, or speaking with a colleague (Johnson et al., 2005). Leaders who hope to address the stress of the job are advised to develop a process of addressing discomfort, allow thoughts to be taken less personally, and take care of their physical needs (Murphy, 2011). These effective high school principals do not dwell on the stress that comes with leadership; instead, they manage the stress in their lives.

P1 had a healthy outlook on the position he held and, in turn, was able to deal with the pressure of leadership. When he first began as an administrator, he lost sleep over things that were beyond his control. With time, he learned that leadership requires processing through the situation you are in and making the right decision, then move on. P1 believes that stress is always tied to something. One way to eliminate some stress is to know the rules so that when data is released to label your school you know why the data looks the way it does. “Decisions without data are uninformed.” “That’s the kind of stuff that helps my stress to make sure I have direct answers.”

In addition, P1 found effective methods in his personal and professional life to deal with the stress of leadership. He surrounded himself with good teachers and administrators. Laughter is a mechanism for dealing with the ups and downs of leadership. P1 and his leadership team try to have fun in the job they do. The administrative team socializes and plays games to relieve pressure. P1 has a wife who is supportive of his administrative work. He included regular exercise as part of his routine “just to simply control what I can control and what I can’t.”

P2 believed that dealing with the pressure of the position might be a weakness in his practice. “I probably get a little too worked up at times.” It helped him to have colleagues in

other districts and schools to discuss problem. Principals in other schools understand what principals are dealing with and are able to help colleagues put a problem in perspective. “When things are bad, you can take a look around and see someone else who has it 10 times worse than you do, and then your day is not so bad.” P2 loves his job and feels a “positive attitude” is crucial.

Time management has become more important for P2. It became more difficult to take the time to meet with teachers or simply take the time to socialize with students. There was more focus on meeting the deadlines and completing tasks. Increased demands cut into the time he spent attending events. There was more time spent working at night for P2 to complete what he used to be able during the day. “It’s getting harder to do justice because there are so many other things we need to be worried about. But, I don’t want to let that go.”

P2 had a support structure for dealing with stress through his family. He considered his family supportive of his work. Although he may overcommit, it was important that he coach his children’s teams and attend their events. It is a relief to spend time with his kids as it helps take his mind off the job for a time. In addition to family, he incorporated regular exercise in his daily routine. P2 added,

Sometimes when you have all this on your shoulders, you want to make sure things are done right and I think that stress is big, but I think you have to find as many avenues as you can to get your mind off what you’re doing and try to relax a little bit once in a while. I have a hard time with that, but I try.

P3 accepted the fact that stress is part of a principal’s job. There are things you worry about, and you are judged on “what happens” not how you “deal with what happens.” Stress is something to be managed and controlled rather than being controlled by stress. “I try to keep

things in perspective . . . I spend a lot of time on that . . . big picture . . . but there's stress, there's no question." He was able to process much of what occurs by using the time in his car thinking about school. The increased accountability demands took him away from building walkthroughs but he tried to ensure that the students do not see a difference in his presence. He made time to visit with them in the hallways during passing periods.

P3 shared his problems with his wife to get a fresh perspective on problems. His wife told him, "You have to laugh to keep from crying about some things." His administrative team met regularly to discuss building issues. They instituted the practice of doing a stand up calendar look. It was during those times that the team let their hair down and laughed about what was going on in their lives. He worried that people visiting would hear them and think the team was partying rather than working. He shared insight he learned from another individuals. "If you have a load of rock and somebody comes and you share with them, you still have just as many rocks, it's just not as heavy."

P4 recognized the stressors in his profession but was able to deal effectively with those stressors. He readily admitted that he works harder than he has in the past, but that it is by choice. P4 chose to work harder and remain positive. As a leader of a high school, in an era of transparency, P4 is required to make sure that he is doing everything in the best interest of students. "Sometimes decisions come down to me, even after you've taken input and worked with the team, that decision is still ultimately mine and that's a very heavy responsibility and in today's accountability, we have to get this right."

P4 stated that he "needs to laugh a lot." It is important to have fun at work as long as it does not "distract" from other's work. "I have fun every day on the job even in the midst of adversity." He valued the time he spends in the classroom with students. The students, in his

mind, are insulated from the stress of accountability. “With staff, again, I believe relationships become stronger through adversity and there’s been some adversity, but I don’t think to the point where it should affect us negatively.” He added regular exercise to his regimen for release. His family and faith are kept close to him and are highly valued. “I still think this is the best time ever to be in education and ever to be an administrator.”

P5 worked hard every day to ensure that his students succeed. There were days he admitted things happened and you did not get to do the things you had hoped to accomplish. “You’ve got to learn to manage.” Stress is ultimately something you have to learn to manage. No two days are ever the same and “you just have to learn to deal with it.” The biggest area of stress in P5’s opinion is the daily fight to get kids through to graduation. “I just worry about the kids.” “What’s going to happen to them and what’s their life going to look like? It’s hard.”

P5 believed that laughter was one of the best ways to deal with stress. “It’s either laugh or cry.” He thought he knew his staff better than ever. The relationships are stronger through the process of digging into data and addressing school accountability. P5 and his staff hold more conversations on school accountability than they held previously. P5 tried to work out occasionally, but did not accomplish that goal as much as he liked. “There are days you leave and it’s not all done, but they still expect to see you at home once in a while.”

Stress is a part of any high school principal’s daily life. The participants all had methods to deal with and overcome the stress inherent in the job they chose to perform.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented the themes produced after review of the transcribed interviews with five principals considered effective in Indiana.

1. Principals who participate in preparation programs with an internship program and/or who have effective mentors as new principals receive the foundation for effective principal leadership.
2. Effective high school principals understand the essential traits for leading school and staff. They have developed effective collegial networks as resources for dealing with educational change.
3. Effective principals are committed to and value improving their educational practice as a result of increased academic demands.
4. The instructional abilities of effective principals are improved through communication, relationships, and collaborative skills.
5. Effective principals are optimistic individuals and see obstacles as challenges to lead staff and students that will be overcome.
6. Effective high school principals use relationships, conscious decision making, and effective time management to cope with emotional stress.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

High school principals in Indiana today are leading during times of great change and uncertainty. They face increased academic demands, additional evaluation requirements, and shrinking staff budgets, with teachers who are unclear as to what the future holds for their teaching careers. In spite of those issues, some high school principals continue to lead schools to great success. “The research indicates that school leadership has a substantial effect on student achievement and provides guidance for experienced and aspiring administrators alike” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 12).

The high school principal who is effective seeks out answers and shares with colleagues to make informed decisions for students and staff. Fullan (2008) identified that “the two greatest failures of leaders are indecisiveness in times of urgent need for action and dead certainty they are right in times of complexity” (p. 6). Effective high school principals are not afraid to do what is right and take a stand on issues for the good of student success.

Effective high school principals see their jobs as meaningful and are committed to the profession. They see their own personal success directly linked to those they lead on a daily basis. The students are the beneficiaries of principal commitment to educational success. Educational leadership that leads to success and not personal gain includes acting with heart,

doing what needs to be done because it is valued, leading to the enhanced development of the young people principals are charged to develop (Blankstein, 2004).

Results

Theme 1 developed through conversations during the interview. It was readily apparent that principals value the opportunity to participate in an internship as part of the preparation for the principalship. Although one participant did not have a traditional internship, he had a non-traditional internship by performing an administrative job while completing the degree required for licensure in Indiana. Programs vary on the amount of time spent participating in an internship as well as amount of course preparation (Havard et al., 2010). Two of the five lacked an effective mentor in their preparation programs. The selection and training of mentor principals is a crucial element for success or failure of preservice administrators (Havard et al., 2010).

The principals voiced support for having an effective mentor after ascending to the position of building principal. Three of the five had the opportunity to have another principal to contact for support in their first year as principal. The first-year principal struggles with providing quality leadership for schools (Adams, 1999).

The second theme evolved through discussion on the leadership traits each participant brought to the table. They all understood their leadership styles and how to effect change through leadership. Four of the five believed that their style of leadership was servant leadership and one felt his leadership style was transformational. Servant leadership is the process of putting others before you, being part of the team with teachers, and providing resources without expectation of acknowledgement (Black, 2010). Transformational leadership focuses on restructuring the schools through improving schools conditions (Stewart, 2006).

The five leaders all were thankful for the networks they had developed while dealing with problems and change. The principals had developed regional as well as state-level support networks. The principal understands that collective decision making solves larger non-routine problems (Valentine & Prater, 2011).

Theme 3 centered on the academic demands placed on principals and teachers. They may not agree with everything that has been done in education over the past three to five years but they embraced accountability. The schools they led have improved as a result of change regardless of their own beliefs towards the changes. Hiring practices were discussed by four of the five participants and each paid even more attention to the candidates they select as teachers. The first obligation of an instructional leader is to create a vision and standard of action to reach that vision (Reeves, 2006). These principals had a balanced approach in influencing staff and leading change in their schools.

Theme 4 was one of improving instructional capacity of the schools in which the principals led. When teachers and principals work in a collaborative approach, no one person is responsible for all the leadership skills necessary (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). The relationships that each principal built with his superintendent and central office leaders allowed him to make curricular decisions for his school. They communicated with their supervisor, their leadership teams, and staffs to ensure that they were meeting the needs of their students and community. Those relationships with staff built a sense of trust and ownership in the direction and success of the schools.

Theme 5 was one that was evident throughout the interview process for all five principals. Principals may not coordinate everything in their buildings but are ultimately accountable for everything that occurs in their buildings (Crum & Sherman, 2008). Each of the

principals was willing to accept responsibility for the successes and failures that take place under their watches. They did not dwell on mandates or regulations that could be viewed as impediments or excuses. The principals in this study met the challenges head on with a positive outlook. The positive energy was passed on to their respective staffs. The best leaders clarify and take the necessary steps to reach the real purpose they serve (DuFour & Marzano, 2011). The attitudes the principals displayed about students and staff in the schools they lead are successful.

The sixth theme was based on the importance of knowing how to deal with the stress related to being a high school principal. The five participants were aware of the stress leadership created in their lives but have developed effective methods for dealing with the stressors of the position. Educational leaders today must develop a well-rounded sense of self (Ackerman & Maskin-Ostrowski, 2004). They developed the ability to build relationships with administrative team members. In each case, they recognized the importance of balancing home and work. Their families are understanding and supportive of the work they do. Family time was a release for stress in the principal position. Four of the five tried to incorporate exercise into their life routines in an effort to remain healthy and effective balance. It was also interesting to find that laughter was seen as important to the participants.

Conclusions

The following conclusions are based on the results of the interviews conducted as part of this study. Conclusion 1 is “the preparation program establishes a solid base for aspiring principals regardless of program or internship. In addition, new principals benefit from an informal mentor.” There is no document, blueprint, or formula that provides a roadmap to developing effective educational leadership for all situations (Dubin, 2006). Each participant

participated in a program with varied programs and length of internship. The majority of their preparation came through the coursework they took in the preparation program. The participants all felt that they were prepared well through their programs for the role of administrator.

The learning that takes place for becoming a principal often takes place on the job, but it should have occurred during the graduate study experience (Havard et al., 2010). This was a common thought among the participants. Much of what they have learned over the years in preparation for a principalship came through on-the-job experiences. One participant had no internship and was a practicing administrator during his preparation program allowing him to practice on the job. None of the participants felt they were hindered by learning on the job rather than the internship. The internships are not full-time positions, perhaps contributing to the need for on-the-job experience.

It was clear that each principal felt that he had to learn to use data after becoming a principal. Principals are taught little in preparation programs on effective use of data (Hess & Kelly, 2006). Much of the increased data learning is the result of changes in education, which forced the use of data to make decisions. They all felt that it was an area they have improved in markedly.

The participants each had someone he could call for advice once he became a building principal. New principals need support and guidance as they grow into the role of school leader (Eller, 2010). The need for a mentor in the early years was a common statement. There are those who remain in contact with their original mentors. Although they may not have mentors now, they continue to network to ensure success.

Conclusion 2 is “increased accountability is seen as a positive rather than a negative by effective principals.” The five participants all felt that increased academic demands are a

positive change for students and schools. Change is an integral part of building leadership and involves people. Principals must determine how to work with their staff to bring about change (Crum & Sherman, 2008). These effective principals address changes in a positive manner with staff and community. They do not allow people to think that the schools they lead cannot be successful. The frustration that may arise from change is not allowed to be seen by the teachers they lead publicly. If there is frustration, it is kept behind closed doors. The participants have embraced accountability as a way to improve the schools they lead. Each one felt students are benefiting from increased demands and teachers are meeting the new demands. Teacher evaluation has created a major demand on all involved. Although completing evaluations of all teachers is difficult, effective principals agree that teachers should be evaluated yearly to ensure teaching quality remains high. Increased accountability is present to ensure that the primary focus of educating students is done well. Effective principals understand that accountability is about doing the work better for kids.

Conclusion 3 is “effective Indiana high school principals adapt their leadership skills to meet the demands necessary to lead successful schools.” The five principals involved in this study each had an understanding of how they led their staffs and when and where to apply different skills to meet the success they desire. “Effective school leaders are strong educators, anchoring their work on central issues of learning and teaching school improvement” (ISLLC, 1996, p. 97). The five participants all enjoyed the time they spent in the classroom as teachers. They saw the importance of strong teaching and have not forgotten how the classroom setting can be challenging. Their staffs know what the principal expects as a teaching professional and the vision and beliefs each principal holds on educational practice. When leaders try to initiate change, they are usually tinkering with behaviors that have become automatic, and changing

those behaviors require careful supervision (Heath & Heath, 2010). P3 said it well in relating how as dean he tried to “change behavior” for students. When you are working with a teaching staff, many times the principal, through leadership, is trying to “change behavior” for teachers.

The participants have developed strong teams in their buildings to address the many issues they face as leaders. Their leadership alone will not lead the schools to the level they must attain. It is no longer good enough to ensure that a few are relatively well-educated (Schlechty, 1997). The goals that each principal is striving for revolves around educating each student in his building. The only way to do so is to lead people to a common vision. The principals involved in the study have developed the ability to allow input on leadership decisions. The participants each had different forms of small group meetings with teachers, department chairs, and administrative members for discussion on academic developments. Their leadership styles allow them to receive input without allowing leadership ego interference.

Conclusion 4 is “effective Indiana high school principals are optimistic people.” The five participants, throughout the interview sessions in which they participated, came across with an optimistic outlook on their practice regardless of the demands placed on them by the state and their community. Currently, the trend among principals is to react with a more defeated manner due to changes occurring in education. Although a defeatist attitude may be seen in some, this attitude was not found in the principals interviewed in this study. Leaders should strive to structure the work so that individuals can find enthusiasm for the benefit of all (Russell, 2008). Effective principals see demands as opportunities.

Lambert (2006) listed six characteristics of principals with high leadership skills. Those characteristics are “clarity of self and values, strong belief in democracy, school improvement

through strategic thinking, deliberate and vulnerable persona, knowledge of teaching and learning, and the ability for developing capacity in others” (Lambert, 2006, pp. 242-244).

The five effective principals displayed the criteria set forth by Lambert. The skills displayed allow the participants to lead from an optimistic viewpoint. The people they led saw and heard the vision of each principal displayed in the manner in which he lead his school. There is not a black-and-white approach to their leadership. The principals sought and desired the participation of stakeholders in educating students. The plans they formulated for success were not by the seat of their pants but rather strategically formulated and carried out. When not in front of others, the principals worried about their ability to reach the goals they set, while insulating their respective staffs from concern. The skills they developed around teaching and learning improved throughout their tenure as principal. Teaching is the central component to success. Within their schools, they developed teacher leaders as part of their informal leadership team. P4 summed up each participant’s optimistic approach to leadership well by saying, “I still think this is the best time ever to be in education and ever to be an administrator.”

Conclusion 5 is “stress is an accepted part of the job for Indiana high school principals.” Stress is an accepted part of the position for effective high school principals. The five high school principals in this study recognized the stress in their lives but found the ability to deal with the stress. The educational leader who retains professional decorum regularly through denial and suppression may be creating a life that is unhealthy and energy depleting (Beatty, 2000). None of the participants chose to ignore the stress; rather, they dealt with stress through healthy means. They have developed relationships whereby they can discuss issues in confidence. Spouses are often confidants who listen to principals, giving leaders friendly, non-

judgmental release. The use of exercise assists four of the five participants in their emotional and physical health.

Principals who are outstanding have high self-confidence and display three traits: they (a) stand up for what they believe in, (b) present themselves with self-assurance, and (c) are able to act independently (William, 2008). The five participants displayed each of these traits through their leadership. They know what they stand for in education and are not afraid to share those beliefs. The confidence they display to stakeholders builds confidence for those involved in educating students. Although they sought input from others, the principals are able to make tough decisions that they know are the right decisions.

Additional Themes from the Study

- High school principals should seek collegial networks as a means of support for successful leadership.
- High school principals should stay abreast of educational trends and changes in order to lead students and staff from an educationally positive perspective.

Recommendations for Further Study

To further the work of this study, the following recommendations are suggested.

- A follow-up study of principal preparation programs and the effect the coursework and internship has on principal preparation should be conducted.

The participants all had varied experiences in their preparation and internship experiences. A follow-up study exploring the types of coursework effective principals have been exposed to in their preparation could provide guidance for preparation programs. In addition to coursework, more information on specific aspects of the internship could provide valuable material for planning internships. The study should also survey principals who have served as

intern mentors to determine attitudes on providing successful internships to potential administrators.

- A follow-up study should be conducted to delve deeper into the effects of peer and professional networks.

Through the interviewing process, the value of peer relationships and networks are important to effective principals. A study should be conducted to investigate the willingness of building principals to participate with other principals in networking for professional improvement. The attitudes displayed by principals and their corporations in regard to joining and participating in state associations as part of professional development could provide universities and associations information for meeting principal needs.

- A follow-up study should be conducted of principals who lead schools in need of improvement, to determine whether those principals display similar characteristics and attributes as principals in successful schools.

A study to determine the characteristics displayed by principals leading schools in need of improvement could provide additional information for the principalship. In this study, the schools were all A schools. Would principals leading schools that are not as successful display different attitudes about leadership? Are principals in less successful schools practicing their craft differently than those who are in successful schools? A study of this type could provide information about preparing principals for leading schools with varied needs.

Summary

The principals that participated in this study showed that a preparation program with either a formal or informal internship benefits an aspiring administrator. The time spent learning from another administrator assists candidates with a foundation of knowledge from which to

draw upon entering the principalship. The leaders in this study understand leadership style and strategy. The staffs they lead are part of the decision-making process. The principals in this study believe accountability is a positive change in education. There is a shared trust between the staff and principals that allow the respective schools to improve their instructional ability. The five participants do not dwell on the negative; they are a positive force in leading their schools. Each of the participants has learned to effectively deal with the stressors present in school leadership.

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FORM/EXPERTS

Polling Letter to Determine Highly Effective High School Principals

Dear Expert:

My name is Bryan Perry and I am a Ph. D. candidate at Indiana State University. The title of my dissertation is “Effective Educational Leadership Attributes of Indiana High School Principals.” You are being invited to provide a list of potential participants in a qualitative research study seeking to find the characteristics and attributes in effective high school principals that can be placed into practice by current and future leaders. This study is being conducted with Dr. Terry McDaniel, from the Department of Educational Leadership at Indiana State University.

My research will be qualitative – I will administer in-depth interviews with five of the identified most effective high school principals in the state of Indiana. Your department works closely with principals from throughout the state. I am requesting that as an expert in academic administration you provide me with a list of 5-10 principals you consider the most effective principals in Indiana. You are asked to identify 5-10 of the most effective high school principals practicing in Indiana.

The information you provide will help me to identify a final list of five highly effective high school principals in the state of Indiana. The information you provide will be confidential and combined with other institutions lists to create a list of candidates for study.

The information you provide on subjects, their school or any information you provide will be kept confidential. Data will be coded and pseudonyms will be used to ensure confidentiality and only accessed by the researcher. Should the data be published, no individual information will be disclosed.

Your contribution to this study is voluntary. If you are willing to provide a list, please provide me with a list of the 5-10 high school principals you consider to be effective in Indiana. The criteria used for your selection does not hinge on the principals school test data but rather what you consider effective leadership.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Bryan Perry at 812-431-0801 or bryan.perry@evsc.k12.in.us You may also contact Dr. Terry McDaniel at 812-237-3862 or terry.mcdaniel@indstate.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject or if you feel you've been placed at risk, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at Indiana State University, Office of Sponsored Programs, Terre Haute, IN, 47809, by phone at (812) 237-8217, or by e-mail at irb@indstate.edu

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request for assistance.

Sincerely,

Bryan A. Perry, Researcher
bryan.perry@evsc.k12.in.us
Telephone: (812) 431-0801

Dr. Terry McDaniel, Professor
terry.mcdaniel@indstate.edu
Telephone: (812) 237-3862

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT FORM/HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Dear High School Principal:

My name is Bryan Perry and I am a Ph. D. candidate at Indiana State University. The title of my dissertation is “Effective Educational Leadership Attributes of Indiana High School Principals”. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you were identified by experts in educational administration as a highly effective high school principal. You are being invited to participate in a qualitative research study seeking to find the characteristics and attributes in effective high school principals that can be placed into practice by current and future leaders. This study is being conducted with Dr. Terry McDaniel, from the Department of Educational Leadership at Indiana State University.

High school principals face challenges beyond managing the day-to-day activities of a public school. The landscape of education has changed significantly while the goal of educating all students has become more focused. While the changes are significant, the importance of a strong building administrator has become more important. Principals who will continue to serve as principals and those who will enter the field of high school principal will face challenges of immense proportions. School accountability is both a political issue and moral issue that will continue to change the landscape of education and the way in which schools are led. How principals will respond to those issues will decide their future as principal. The purpose of this study is to gain insight about high school principals who are considered effective by organizations and institutions in the state of Indiana. High school principals have been trained in many ways by many institutions with little local level training before assuming their position. The model has been a sink or swim mentality with the high school principals main function as building level manager. The implications of No Child Left Behind, PL 221, Common Core State Standards, and data-driven instruction has changed the role of the building level leader. Through a qualitative study of effective high school principals, I will seek to find similarities in the way effective high school principals lead their staff and students. What are the characteristics of a successful high school principal that are observable and can be placed into practice by current and future building leaders? The criteria for selection does not include high standardized test scores nor does it dismiss high test scores. Effective high school principals may be leading schools in change but have not seen test score success. There are other leadership pieces that lead to successful schools and effective leadership goes beyond the standardized test score.

Participation in this study is voluntary. The interview will be face-to-face in a location of your choosing and will last up to two hours. Confidentiality of all participants, their school districts, or any information that could lead to identification of participants will be maintained. Data will be coded for use and accessed only by the researchers. All identifiers will be removed from the data in order to protect confidentiality.

If you would be willing to participate in this study, please contact me at (812) 431-0801

or at bryan.perry@evsc.k12.in.us

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request for assistance.

Sincerely,

Bryan A. Perry, Researcher
bryan.perry@evsc.k12.in.us
Telephone: (812) 431-0801

Dr. Terry McDaniel, Professor
terry.mcdaniel@indstate.edu
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APPENDIX C: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH/HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Effective Educational Leadership Attributes of Indiana High School Principals

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Bryan Perry and Dr. Terry McDaniel from the Educational Leadership Department at Indiana State University. This research is being conducted for the completion of a doctoral dissertation. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you have more than three years of leadership experience as a high school principal and have been identified as an effective high school principal leader by experts. Your identification as an effective leader was through the polling of Indiana universities who license high school principals and the Indiana Association of School Principals.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to gain insight about high school principal leaders who are considered effective by organizations and institutions in the state of Indiana. Through an interview process, I will seek to understand how you lead your students and staff. Legislation passed in the past two years has changed the way in which high school principals perform their duties. The increased demands have the potential to drive out current principals and discourage potential principals from pursuing principal-ships. I am seeking to bring together five different areas of the principal-ship through an interview process. These five areas have the potential to provide a clearer picture of the characteristic and attributes an effective principal has to be successful. In studying effective high school principals, future building leaders can learn from the identified strengths of effective principals to inform their base of knowledge for successful school administration.

PROCEDURES

The data collection process includes an interview with the effective high school principal leader. If you agree to participate in this study, you will receive a phone call to allow me to introduce myself and answer any questions you may wish to ask. We will begin the process of setting up an interview that fits your busy schedule. If you volunteer to participate in this study,

you will be interviewed individually. The interview will be held at your school or a location of your choosing with only you and me present. The interview will consist of 26 questions and last up to two hours. The questions will address leadership concepts and qualities.

The interview will be recorded and you may choose not to answer any questions. You will receive a follow-up phone call within 14 days. The follow up conference will allow you to provide any detail that you may wish. People often wish they had added a comment once they have time to reflect. You will have the opportunity to review the transcripts from the interview via email, or postal letter. You will be asked to select the method that meets your needs. Once the transcripts are reviewed they will be analyzed along with the other participant's interviews to determine themes that arise from the interviews.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The anticipated risks in this study are not greater than normal. The only anticipated risk from participating in this study is that not all participants will feel comfortable answering some of the questions. There are questions that relate to being able to operate autonomously from central office. Speaking frankly about central office can make some feel uncomfortable. The information shared will be kept confidential. Participants may choose not to answer any question.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND / OR SOCIETY

This study will benefit the area of educational leadership by increasing the awareness of leadership characteristics and attributes of high school principals. This study focuses on those building leaders who are effective at a time of great change and accountability in Indiana. The research questions are focused on five areas that were discovered in the review of literature. The questions used to interview the participants seek to bring all five research questions together giving the researcher a picture of how effective school leaders operate in a climate of increased demand and accountability. The existing research is limited in scope as it relates to current administrative practice. Research pulling together the five questions has potential for increased understanding of today's challenges as we continue to move forward. The study will add to the base of knowledge as to how high school principals are dealing with leading under increased demands. School leaders have never faced more scrutiny than they face in the changing educational arena of the 21st century. In order for principals to thrive in the new environment, research centered on the principal and the value they bring to student and school success must be conducted. In studying effective high school principals, future building leaders can apply identified strengths to their practice and better prepare for successful school administration. No guarantee of direct benefit to you as a participant exists.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

Your name will not be used in the study. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. Data will be coded for use and accessed only by the researchers. All identifiers will be removed from the data in order to protect confidentiality.

Confidentiality of respondents will be protected by all means available by me. You will be asked to provide a secure means of communicating with the researcher once you agree to participate to ensure your confidentiality. The interview will take place in a location of your choosing with only you and the researcher present at the time of the interview. The interview tapes will be locked in a file cabinet in the researcher's home. The transcription of the interview will be done by me personally. The transcribed interviews will be protected by password in my personal home computer. The master list of participants will be password protected in the computer and locked in my personal desk.

Participants will be requested to keep all information shared during the interview confidential.

Data collected in this study will be stored in the home of the researcher in a locked filing cabinet and computer files will be password protected in my computer for the required three year period. The data will only be reviewed and analyzed by me to ensure your protection from identification. At the end of the required storage period, all data collected, including audio-tapes, will be shredded and destroyed.

You have the right to review material prior to the final oral defense of the study by filing a written request to the researcher.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may choose to withdraw by notifying me through phone, email, or postal letter. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer. There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

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RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at Indiana State University, Office of Sponsored Programs, Terre Haute, IN 47809, by phone at (812) 237-8217, or e-mail the IRB at irb@indstate.edu. You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with ISU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

Date of IRB Approval: 8/8/2012

IRB Number: 357558

Project Expiration Date: 8/7/2013

APPENDIX D: HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How many years have you been a high school principal?
2. How long have you been in your current position?
3. Please describe the type of district in which you serve? Rural, Urban, or Suburban.
4. Please describe the school in which you currently serve? Size, Social economic Statistics, Diversity Breakdown.
5. What type of preparation program did you complete to become an administrator?
6. Did your preparation include an internship? If so how long was the internship?
7. Did you have an effective principal mentor in your preparation?
8. When you began your first job, did you have an individual who you considered your principal mentor?
9. Do you have a network of support for dealing with changes in education?
10. If so, how was that network developed?
11. Please describe the leadership style which you ascribe to?
12. Do you adapt your leadership style to fit differing situations?
13. Is your staff aware of your beliefs regarding schools and learning?
14. Are you allowed to make major academic decisions for your school?
15. Are you comfortable making major academic changes in the school?
16. Do you encourage opinions that are different from your own? If so, how do you encourage differing opinions?
17. What type of attitude do you display about the changes that occur in education?
18. Has your philosophy on hiring employees changed since you became a principal?
19. How have the increased academic demands of school improvement affected your practice?
20. What coping mechanism do you employ to deal with the stress of the position?
21. How have the increased education demands changed your relationships with student and staff?
22. Did you feel prepared to lead your staff in data driven instruction?
23. What impact have the changes in education had on the stress in your life?
24. Has there been an increase in any area of stress over another area in your work?
25. Do you still feel positive about your leadership?
26. Is there anything that you would like to add to what we have discussed about leadership?