NCPEA
International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation

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The International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation is NCPEA's contribution to the Open Education Resources (OER) movement. This contribution to OER will be permanent.

In August, 2005, NCPEA partnered with Rice University and the Connexions Project, to publish our IJELP as open and free to all who had access to the Internet. Currently, there are over 400 peer-reviewed research manuscripts in the NCPEA/Connexions database. The purpose of the NCPEA/Knowledge Base Connexions Project is to "add to the knowledge base of the educational administration profession" and "aid in the improvement of administrative theory and practice, as well as administrative preparation programs." Our partnership continues but a new door has opened for NCPEA Publications to join the OER movement in a more substantive and direct way. In March 2013, NCPEA Publications and the NCPEA Executive Board committed the IJELP to the OER movement.

What are Open Educational Resources (OER)?

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching and learning materials that you may freely use, adapt and reuse, without charge. Open Educational Resources are different from other resources an educator may use in that OER have been given limited licensing rights. That means they have been authored or created by an individual or organization that chooses to provide access to all, at no charge. NCPEA Publications is committed to providing access to all, while assuring author/s of full attribution as others use the material.

The worldwide OER movement is rooted in the idea that equitable access to high-quality education is a global imperative. To NCPEA, this is a moral/ethical responsibility and issue of social justice. Open Educational Resources offer opportunities for systemic change in teaching and learning through accessible content, and importantly, through embedding participatory processes and effective technologies for engaging with learning. The OER Commons project aims to grow a sustainable culture of sharing among educators at all levels.

What is the OER Commons?

The Institute for the Study of Knowledge in Education (ISKME) created OER Commons, publicly launched in February 2007, to provide support for, build, and make available to all, a knowledge base around the use and reuse of open educational resources (OER). As a network for teaching and learning materials, the web site offers engagement with resources in the form of social bookmarking, tagging, rating, and reviewing. OER Commons has forged alliances with over 120 major content partners to provide a single point of access through which educators and learners can search across collections to access thousands of items, find and provide descriptive information about each resource,

and retrieve the ones they need. By being "open," these resources are publicly available for all to use.

What NCPEA OER is Not!

NCPEA open educational resources are not an open door at the NCPEA Publications submission and review stages. We have always insisted on and will continue to require very thorough peer reviews (double and often triple-blind). NCPEA Publications is fortunate to have a cadre of professional reviewers (university professors), numbering over 300. Topic Editors first consider a submitted manuscript, and if appropriate, selects/assigns two reviewers who also have the expertise/interest in the manuscript's specific topic. This process assures that reviewers will read an author's manuscript with expertise/experience in that area.

The "openness" of the IJELP OER comes at publication stage. Once the issues are published, they are formatted/published in an open access website, indexed by Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), catalogued as a "commendable journal" in the Cabell's Directory, and provided to the Open Educational Resource database. The IJELP is currently viewed and read by educators from over 72 countries (many 3rd World) and all 50 U.S. States (data provided by Google Analytics).

The manuscripts in Volume 9, Number 2 (Fall 2014) have been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration as significant contributions to the scholarship and practice of school administration and PK-12 education.

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Who Are We Choosing for School Leaders? A Review of University Admissions Practices

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

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This study assessed the degree to which school leader preparation programs have adopted reforms in program admissions standards and practices that have been recommended in the literature since 2000, including seeking district nominations for applicants, increasing collaborative efforts, involving district personnel in instruction and intern supervision, and aligning program design with district needs. Results indicated that closer linkage between districts and university leadership curricula are emerging, with greater attention being afforded to district needs.

Introduction

The job of school principal is critical to the operation of a campus and the achievement of its students. Teachers have a direct effect on the students they instruct, but the caliber of the principal impacts all children in the building (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013). Universities that offer principal preparation programs have been criticized for their lack of selectivity in recruiting prospective school leaders (Levine, 2005). Specifically, critics have charged that institutions cared primarily about large enrollments (Southern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2007), did not involve school districts in the admissions process (Bruner, Greenlee, & Hill, 2007), and admitted applicants who lacked the requisite skills or vocation. Lashway (2003) suggested that the aspiring principal pool could be fortified by partnering with school districts to choose program candidates. As early as 2001, the Southern Regional Education Board outlined strategies that states and school districts could use to generate an adequate supply of qualified principals (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001). The issue was the same as it is today, to "recruit and train school leaders who have a deep knowledge about how to improve the core functions of a school" (p. 7).

The Southern Regional Education Board (2007) suggested that districts could advance outstanding teachers into leadership roles and place them in alternate certification programs and later recommended that universities and school districts work together "to recruit, select and prepare future principals with the most promise of improving classroom practices and student achievement" (p. iv). In the context of admissions standards, SREB (2007) urged schools to develop criteria that ensured candidates were effective teachers who had been successful in improving students' learning and had shown leadership potential.

The recommendations for greater selectivity in the admission of students to graduate education designed to prepare school leaders have been in the public domain for more than a decade. The purpose of this study was to discover how much effect these proposals have had on universities' practices in recruiting, choosing, and preparing candidates for the principalship.

Background Literature

In addition to the SREB findings, other researchers have elaborated on the issues surrounding the selection and training of school leaders. From a study of eight successful programs, LaPointe and Davis (2006) found that these universities engaged school administrators in recruiting, chose students who mirrored their service areas demographically, and admitted teachers with more than 10 years in the classroom and expertise in core subjects. In an extensive analysis of exemplary programs, another group of researchers concluded that recruiting is key to program quality and that recruits must have a solid history in instruction, "represent the populations of their communities," and show an aptitude for leadership (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen, 2007, p. 149). The Wallace Foundation's (2008) analysis of effective university programs drew similar conclusions: programs need to be more selective and tied to the needs of the districts they serve.

Cheney, Davis, Garrett, and Holleran (2010) examined programs that participated in the Rainwater Leadership Alliance (RLA), a think tank that includes nonprofit organizations, school districts, universities, and foundations. Cheney et al. (2010) examined the dedication of the RLA programs to recruiting and selecting capable, enthusiastic individuals who facilitate the learning of all students. Cheney et al. (2010) wrote,

> while RLA programs reinforce all the skills and dispositions of effective principals during their training, they recognize that these skills, knowledge, and dispositions need to be present to varying degrees at the time of selection; some require full or close to full proficiency before the program begins, while others can be developed during the program. (p. 46)

Methods

The purpose of this study was to assess the degree to which school leader preparation programs had adopted the reforms in program admissions standards and practices that had been recommended in the literature since 2000. For this quantitative study, the researchers reviewed current literature with special attention to recommendations on candidate recruiting and admissions. The researchers chose survey research to gather first-hand information from university faculty members about the status of admissions reform in their programs and chose to assess current practice through members of a large national organization representing educational administration/leadership programs.

Major themes that surfaced in the literature informed the design of the survey. Themes included the need to increase school district involvement, to enhance rigor in admissions criteria, to choose effective and well-experienced teachers, and to enlist candidates representing community diversity.

Dillman's Tailored Design Method (2000) informed creation of the survey. Researchers invited subject-matter experts to review survey items for proper wording and compared the closed-ended items to other questions from the literature to diminish repetition and augment the knowledge base. With the feedback from subject-matter experts, researchers edited items to improve clarity. This process produced a final survey of 37 questions: 34 were closed-ended, requiring respondents to choose from a series of response categories. Three open-ended questions solicited narrative responses.

The survey was administered in person and online to professors of Educational Administration or Leadership who belonged to a national association focused on educational administration. Researchers excluded graduate students and emeritus members so that all respondents were active faculty in university Educational Administration/Leadership programs designed to prepare school leaders. There were 121 surveys distributed to the association's membership; 59 were completed and returned, for a response rate of 48.7%.

Researchers entered collected survey data into an Excel spreadsheet and then imported data and analyzed them with Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software. The results were compiled and reported from the perspective of participants on how their university programs have changed to respond to the recommendations for reform in admissions practices as articulated in recent literature.

Findings

Of the 59 survey participants, 24.5% were assistant professors, 41.5% associate professors, and 28.3% were full professors. Three respondents described their status as adjunct or lecturer. In terms of years of practice, respondents described a wide range of experience: 41.8% reported 1 to 7 years in higher education; 36.4% noted 8-19 years; 14.6% indicated 20-31 years; and 7.9% had served more than 31 years. When asked about their prior professional experience, 59% said they had been a principal or superintendent, while 32% had worked in other administrative roles, and the remainder had been teachers.

Other demographic factors of interest included gender, age, ethnicity, state of residence, and size of university and degree program. Respondents were predominantly male (63%) and White (96.4%), although two African Americans responded, and four faculty (6.7%) chose not to disclose ethnicity. For age distribution, only one member was under 44 years of age, while 20% were 45-54 years of age, 56.4% were between 55 and 64, and 21.8% were between ages 65 and 74, and four chose not to reply.

Faculty represented 20 states and varying types of institutions. By institutional size, the study included universities with enrollments under 10,000 (36.4%), 10,001-20,000 students (40%), and over 20,000 students (23.6%). Their principal preparation programs varied in size from fewer than 50 students (5.6%), to 50-100 students (31.5%), to 101-200 students (27.8%), to 201-400 students (29.7%), to more than 400 students (5.6%).

How Have Universities Involved School Districts in Recruiting and Admissions?

When asked whether program applicants were recommended by their campuses or self-selected, only 78% (46 of 59) of faculty chose to respond. Among them, 89.1% indicated that applicants were self-selected and only 10.9% noted applicants were asked to apply by their campus administrators. Similar results emerged about admitted students where 87.2% of respondents said that admitted students were self-selected. However, 10 faculty members offered supplementary comment indicating that candidate recruiting and selection were not either/or situations but involved both school district input and candidate self-selection. One person noted that a new, district-based MEd program accepted students based on district recommendations and another said that about 25% of program admits were asked to apply by district administrators. Thus, it appears that district involvement in recruiting is increasing, and a few respondents (n=5) noted that district personnel serve on program admissions committees.

Asked to gauge progress in reforming admissions practices, 36 of 54 (66.7%) faculty noted some or promising progress on school administrators' influencing applicant selection; but only 16 (29.7%) faculty acknowledged some or promising progress in tying student selection to cooperating school districts' needs. For the remainder of the admissions decision-making, 30 (55.5%) said that a departmental committee recommended candidates for selection; 33 of 53 (62.2%) reported some or promising progress in department head input to the decision; and 33 (62.3%) reported some to

substantial progress on graduate school input into the admissions decision. Among the respondents, 31 of 55 (56.4%) indicated that they themselves served on the student selection committee for their program.

Researchers sought additional information on changes in student selection processes in the prior 2-3 years. Ten faculty members offered a wide range of responses, from raising the GPA threshold to 3.0, to aligning programs to state and national standards, to increasing attention to leader readiness and teaching experience. One faculty member reflected the impact of state fiscal problems on programs: "With increasing competition among institutes of higher education in the state along with serious budget cuts, almost any student may be admitted to the program."

Have Universities Enhanced Rigor in Admissions Criteria?

To check on how programs had addressed the call to upgrade admissions standards, researchers used a series of prompts to assess progress. Prompts included five areas in the admissions process: GRE scores, letters of recommendation, grades on prior transcripts, leadership potential, and teaching effectiveness. A subsequent question sought clarification about changes made in the student selection process in the prior 2-3 years: 59.2% of respondents indicated no substantive changes had occurred. Reports of changes are included in the topical discussions below.

Perceptions about GRE scores were divided. Asked if program admission required *average* GRE scores, 25 faculty members disagreed, and 24 faculty members agreed. When the emphasis shifted to *above average* GRE scores, 34 disagreed, and only 14 agreed. In a follow-up question, 10 respondents indicated that their programs had increased GRE requirements recently while 4 said that their programs had decreased GRE requirements. Whether faculty mistrust the GRE as a predictor of student success or are satisfied with present standards, the GRE cannot be regarded as an important indicator of increased standards.

On letters of recommendation, respondents were again divided in their opinion about *average letters of recommendation from school leaders,* with 23 disagreeing and 26 agreeing. When the terms changed to *above average letters,* 35 respondents agreed and only 14 disagreed. Judging from feedback, it appears that faculty members seek strong reference letters from school leaders. As an indicator of increased standards, 8 respondents reported that their programs required school district endorsement of applicants whereas 3 reported that their programs had discontinued the practice.

On the previous issues, *not sure* responses were common, but no uncertainty emerged when it came to applicants' academic records. Forty-four respondents (81.5%) indicated that their program required *above average grades on previous transcripts.* For the follow-up question on this topic, 10 faculty members reported that their programs had increased GPA requirements recently.

With respect to the criterion of leadership potential, 74.6% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that candidates for admission must exhibit this characteristic. Further investigation of applicant qualities probed the role of effective teaching as demonstrated in student learning. Twenty-one people (40.7%) discounted this quality, and 28 (52.8%)

agreed or strongly agreed that strength in teaching was essential for applicants to their programs.

How Have Programs Recruited Candidates Representing Community Diversity?

Researchers sought to discover how leadership programs recruited a diverse student body reflecting the communities they served. Forty-four faculty (74.5%) commented on this question, offering a variety of approaches. Twelve respondents (27%), however, indicated their programs did not make a special effort in this regard or they were unaware of such efforts. One person expressed concern about this issue: "Our students tend to come from a few surrounding areas, and have little diversity and little life experience beyond this area of the state." Others, coming from diverse or urban areas, drew upon those locales to recruit students. Noted one respondent, "We have a student population which matches our region—about 20% minority, primarily African-American." Several faculty members mentioned their personal engagement in recruiting diverse students, the use of alumni and state professional organizations, and school district referrals.

A few participants outlined specific strategies that their programs used to achieve diversity. "We cast a broad net through a layered online recruitment process that targets diversity in recruiting," replied one respondent. Other approaches included showing students from many backgrounds in brochures, contracting with schools showing the desired diversity for cohort sites, marketing to multiple audiences and holding recruiting meetings, including a recruitment component in the master's program, and placing students in diverse communities to build relationships there.

Several respondents cited greater diversity as a priority for their programs. However, many campuses have yet to articulate and implement strategies to achieve the community representation. References to the role of alumni and state professional associations as resources for recruiting leadership program applicants suggest that these organizations might be helpful overall in designing and launching broad-scale recruiting initiatives on behalf of their members.

How do University Programs Involve School Districts?

The literature includes several recommendations about how principal preparation programs should interface with the school districts they serve: seeking district nominations for applicants, increasing collaborative efforts, involving district personnel in instruction and intern supervision, and aligning program design with district needs. Researchers sought to explore these facets of potential cooperation with a series of closed- and open-ended questions.

The recruiting section above revealed closer interface between schools, districts, and programs to identify program applicants than did the closed-ended questions. Whether programs linked admissions to cooperating school districts' needs, only 18 (33.4%) people cited some to substantial progress whereas 36 (66.7%) noted little or no progress. However, when asked about recent efforts to increase program alignment with school district needs, 33 of 53 (67.9%) respondents either agreed or strongly agreed. Another promising sign emerged when faculty were asked if their program adjusted

course curriculum to address area school district needs. In this case, 56.4% (31) agreed, and 25.5% (14) strongly agreed.

The broader question about the role of school district personnel in university preparation programs showed promising responses. Thirty-four (61.8%) of 55 faculty members indicated their programs sometimes employed district personnel as faculty, and another 15 (27.3%) indicated they often did. On an open-ended question seeking information about how district personnel were involved, 52 faculty members indicated an array of involvements as follows: 20 acknowledged district participation on program advisory councils; 20 reported district personnel supervised interns; 16 employed district personnel in faculty roles. Respondents indicated other roles for district personnel as follows: 5 included district personnel on admissions committees; 8 noted their participation in course or curriculum design; and 8 reported their engagement in program or graduate assessment. One respondent reported that the state board of education had mandated closer connections between school district and university programs, and that advisory committees would become standard. This latter response may foreshadow new state policy expectations reflected in a recent SREB report (Challenge to Lead 2020, 2012):

> States should adopt policies and standards for leadership preparation programs. The policies should address recruitment of aspiring principals; require leadership preparation programs to offer substantive field-training; establish tiered licensure and evaluation; and call for districts to mentor and provide for induction of new leaders. (p. 13)

Discussion and Implications for Practice

The present study showed that there has been progress toward bridging this disconnect in some areas of concern identified in the literature. Specifically, closer linkage between school districts and university leadership curricula are emerging, with greater attention being afforded to district needs.

Lashway (2003) wrote that preparation programs should "work collaboratively with practitioners to identify and 'tap' strong candidates" (p. 4). In 2005, the SREB cautioned: "Until there is collaboration between districts and universities, a serious disconnect will continue between what districts and schools need principals to know and do and what universities prepare them to do" (p. 2). Five of 59 respondents in the current study indicated that district personnel served on their admissions committees, and a few mentioned district participation via letters of reference, applicant nominations, or district-based cohorts. All of these are good signs of progress, but such progress is not uniform across the profession, and a few respondents indicated changes that seemed to go in the opposite direction.

Signs of greater rigor in admissions criteria were uneven. Although some programs had increased GPA or GRE thresholds, still others had lowered these requirements. According to Cheney et al. (2010), "By testing candidates' responses through multiple activities, programs gain a deep understanding of their candidates' capacities and the alignment of their stated beliefs with their actions" (p. 46). Lashway

(2003) wrote, "entrance into most preparation programs has been determined by self-selection, with half-hearted screening and little outreach to talented individuals" (p. 3).

Preparation program faculty should seek out aspiring principal candidates who are committed to pursuing the knowledge acquisition and attainment of skills required for the principalship. Levine (2005) stated that the admissions standards of the educational leadership programs he studied were lower than other education school programs. The students seemed to be "more interested in earning credits and obtaining salary increases than in pursuing rigorous studies" (p. 31). Not all students enrolled in such programs may aspire to the role of school leader and thus may impact program direction and quality. Martin and Papa wrote that since certification and preparation programs depend on "open enrollment and self-selection for qualifying students, many educational leadership programs serve educators who are not principal candidates, diminishing the programs' effectiveness" (p. 14).

Seeking committed students may impact enrollment numbers. The Rainwater Leadership Alliance programs have considered the challenge. According to Cheney et al. (2010), the RLA programs are prepared to admit fewer students rather than lower their standards. Such a commitment may have to be made by other university programs. Although the programs may experience a reduction of tuition dollars, such decisions may, in the long run, help to ensure program and graduate quality.

Summary

Principal preparation programs must continue to drive the initiative to recruit and to select effective, experienced teachers who are committed to instructional excellence. Doing so may take the involvement of school district leaders who see first-hand the instructional and leadership skills of future educational leadership candidates. Preparation program admissions should be monitored continually to ensure that only qualified applicants are selected. Because campus leadership is second only to classroom instruction in impacting student achievement, such decisions by school leader preparation programs have the potential to affect student learning at candidates' future school campuses (Cheney et al., 2010).

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Communitarian Leadership Practice Acquisition in Educational Leadership Preparation

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Principals have tremendous influence on the schools they lead (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Marzano et al., 2005). Certain leadership behaviors impact school level factors (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1990; Marzano et al., 2005; Orr, 2003). To affect high levels of student achievement, school principals must be responsible for uniting diverse groups under shared purposes with purposeful emphasis on others rather than on self (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1990; Marzano et al., 2005; Orr, 2003). Effective programs in educational leadership preparation include cohort-modeled groupings, among other features (Davis et al., 2005). Because cohorts are a feature of effective programs, yet few aspiring school leaders are prepared through cohort-based programs (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2009), a concern regarding a problem of practice is raised.

The purpose of this study was to explore how aspirant school leaders experience the acquisition of leadership practices within their educational leadership preparation program and to contribute to the empirical understanding of how to best prepare school leaders for successful practice. This study was designed to examine: How do school leaders make meaning of their experience in a principal preparation program? In what ways do their experiences support the development of communitarian leadership?

The sample included nineteen school leaders who were alumni of a university-based educational leadership preparation program. Participants were interviewed using a basic interview protocol that followed the semi-structured approach for interview technique outlined by Moustakas (1994). The data analysis was carried out in the stepwise manner, using Atlas.ti 7.0 to code and group significant statements from the interview texts and using a basic memoing process to address any concerns of subjectivity.

Leaders who experienced preparation activities, including activities that gave them practice leading diverse individuals to shared outcomes articulated how preparation influenced the development of communitarian leadership skill, including relationship-building, communication, and values-identification. Communitarian leadership, which includes leadership actions linked to improved school-level outcomes (Marzano et al., 2005), may have utility as a framework for developing aspiring principals through formal preparation programs.

Introduction and Purpose

Principals have tremendous influence on the schools they lead (Bamburg & Andrews, 1990; Marzano et al., 2005). The standard roles of the school principal are multiple and complex; they include establishing a community in which teachers work collaboratively to improve achievement for all students (ISLLC-ELCC, 2009). Improving classroom instruction, therefore, is a primary focus of school leaders as a strategy for addressing educational inequity.

The purpose of this study was to identify how current U.S. elementary and secondary district and school leaders who are alumni of one university's educational administration preparation program describe how they acquired skills and experiences needed to be effective in leadership positions. The specific analysis that became the focus of this article was how students acquire communitarian leadership practices in a part-time educational leadership preparation program. The research questions that guided this aspect of the study were: How do school leaders make meaning of their experience in a principal preparation program? In what ways do their experiences support the development of communitarian leadership?

Certain leadership behaviors impact school level factors, including student achievement (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1990; Marzano et al., 2005; Orr, 2003). This leadership skill set includes situational awareness, flexibility, discipline, outreach, monitoring/evaluation, knowledge of curriculum, communication, ideals/beliefs, and relationships (Marzano et al., 2005). Although there has been criticism of the research design (Louis et al., 2010), critics concede that the meta-analysis findings are useful in explaining the contribution of successful leadership to student achievement. Practices that "distance the ego from decision making," (Lashway, 2001, p. 8), and rather, focusing on decision making for the benefit of a community of school stakeholders including students, their teachers, and their families, had the highest correlation with high levels of student achievement. Successful school leaders skillful in the high-impact leadership traits evidenced by Marzano et al. (2005) are well-positioned to establish and nurture communities oriented toward supporting improved student achievement.

To affect high levels of student achievement, school principals must be responsible for uniting diverse groups under shared purposes through forged relationships, awareness of the political situation, flexibility in the midst of interpersonal dissent, and purposeful emphasis on others rather than on self (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1990; Marzano et al., 2005; Orr, 2003). This leadership skill set, which includes the responsibilities evidenced by Marzano (2005), could be labeled "communitarian leadership" in that it acknowledges both the importance of the broad school community and of the rights of individuals situated within the community. Communitarianism is a policy theory that encourages policy makers to seek outcomes that balance individual citizen rights with the good of the entire community of citizens (Etzioni, 1993).

Effective programs in educational leadership preparation are research-based, have trans-disciplinary curricular coherence, provide experience in authentic contexts, use cohort groupings and mentors, are structured to enable collaborative activity between the

program and area schools, and are linked to the standards (Davis et al., 2005). In short, an effective educational leadership preparation program includes focus on communitarian leadership practices. Communitarian leadership practices are supported by structures such as the cohort learning group, the mentor-mentee relationship, and the collaborative relationship between the preparation program and the area school.

Despite evidence that the cohort model is a common feature among effective programs in educational leadership preparation (Barber, 2007; Bottoms, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Davis et al., 2005; Orr, 2006), the model is not commonly accessed by the most typical aspiring school leaders: graduate students with fulltime work responsibilities (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2009). The ability of these part-time leadership preparation programs to build communitarian leadership practices has not been studied. In this qualitative study, we examined how aspirant school leaders experienced the acquisition of leadership practices within their evening and weekend modeled educational leadership preparation program.

Effective educational leadership preparation is experiential by design (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Davis et al., 2005). Theoretical, ethical, and technical learning are "integrated," in this model, and the communal structure of the graduate classroom environment, the practical application of leadership skills in the field during preparation, and individual- and group-oriented reflective exercises create a holistic learning experience that is at once personal and communal. Aspiring leaders, in this way, become self-aware of their roles as learner and leader-in-training. In that they experience this preparation as a collaborator within a group of individuals, they may be receptive to leadership practices that "distance the ego," focusing instead on building effective interpersonal relationships for a common purpose (Bennhold-Samaan, 2004). In community-oriented educational leadership programs, aspiring leaders learn together how to lead people to collaborate for the improved academic achievement and social development of children, leveraging communitarian leadership (Davis et al., 2005; Hess & Kelly, 2007; Murphy, 2005; Levine, 2005).

Conceptual Framework

Communitarianism (Etzioni, 1993) is a framework that emphasizes a balance between the rights of the individual and the individual's responsibility to his or her community. Though originally conceptualized as a framework for public policy design, Amitai Etzioni (1993) has advocated for a broader application of communitarian concepts in public discussion, in empirical dialogue and, more specifically, in the research and practice of public education (pp. 18-19). A central assumption of communitarianism is that Western thought, American thought in particular, has become far too aligned with the primacy of *personal rights* to the point that *responsibility to others* is obscured as a secondary or even absent concept. Communitarianism, as a policy framework, seeks to identify this imbalance between *rights* and *responsibility*, and to equalize that imbalance by placing less emphasis on individual rights and active emphasis on the obligations people have to one another as human beings. Communitarian thought assumes that humans depend upon one another to accomplish the project of society, or, community; it

assumes that a collection of unique individuals can accomplish more than they could individually.

Communitarian leadership practices, as in leadership responsibilities evidenced by Marzano, et al. (2005), require the identification of the ego and the isolation of the self from decision-making. In this model, emphasis shifts from *leader as individual* to *leader as individual in relation to others*. Marzano describes each of the communitarian leadership strategies explicitly as a *responsibility*. Similarly Michael Fullan (2003), in his book entitled *The Moral Imperative of School Leadership,* explicitly demarcates the broader social responsibility of school principals to understand their schools as "the main institution[s] for fostering social cohesion in an increasingly diverse society" and as organizations that "serve all children, not simply those with the loudest or the most powerful advocates" (p. 3). These responsibilities, and the responsibilities enumerated in the ISLLC standards, are explicitly communitarian in that the school leader does not place emphasis on only "each student" or on self, but also on a collected school community equally comprised of multiple and diverse constituents.

Through a communitarian lens, the balance, or imbalance, between community and self in issues surrounding the preparation of educational leaders becomes paramount. The standards, for example, call for principal preparation that balances the approaches of community outreach and promotion of individual student success; the development of professional learning community, and the evaluation of individual teachers. The self/group dichotomy is personified in the educational leadership preparation learning structure; aspiring leaders are, simultaneously, individual candidates with unique career aspirations and also members of a unified class of students engaged in team-oriented group learning activity. Aspiring leaders are held individually accountable for their academic performance and for their performance on the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA), the licensure exam required by many states in order to qualify for an administrative certificate. They are also a member of a broader learning community, responsible for contribution to intellectual discussion and group academic projects. Viewed from a communitarian perspective, it is essential that leadership modeled in such a way that the aspiring leader exists at once as an individual and as a responsible member of a larger community.

Communitarianism is, therefore, an especially helpful perspective for an investigation into the individual aspirant school leader's experience within a leadership preparation program. Etzioni (1993), invited researchers to "responsively" (p. 19) apply communitarian thought to empirical inquiry in fields outside public policy research. By "responsive" Etzioni meant, quite literally, that the application and development of communitarian thought should take the form of a dialogue among diverse participants. We offer the outcomes of this study as an added unique voice to this discourse. Examining the experiences of current educational leaders who matriculated from one university's leadership preparation program provides insight into how school and district leaders were prepared to balance the needs of individuals within a community with the needs of the larger group, offering a unique voice to the communitarian discourse and a unique addition to the field of educational leadership preparation.

Methodology

The sample in this study included nineteen school leaders who were alumni of a university-based educational leadership preparation program. Potential participants were current school leaders, including school principals and central office administrators, who were graduates of an educational administration program housed within a private institution that grants degrees in the field of education in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Within this sample, participants were not excluded or selected based on race, ethnicity, or gender. Participants' email addresses were identified through alumni records of this Education Administration program and were subsequently recruited into the study by email. All participants graduated in the year 2000 or later. While the university-based program underwent various structural changes over the years, and participants studied at various satellite campuses, the sample is constrained by the fact that the leadership preparation programs were each housed within a single private university in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States.

The sample included twelve females and seven males, with a range of seven to twenty-five years of experience in the field of education. The sample included thirteen school-based leaders, or those who identified their current position as Assistant Principal (4) or Principal (9). The remainder of the participants (6) served in Central Office professional roles within local education agencies. Participants also served in a variety of school communities: ten served in suburban public school settings; four served rural public school settings; four served in urban public school settings; and one served in an independent private suburban setting. Each member of the study was assigned a randomly generated alias (Lofland & Lofland, 2006), to which they are referred in this article.

Thematic Analysis

The research team used a basic semi-structured approach to interview each study participant in an individual 45-60 minute session. We carried out the data analysis in the stepwise manner. First, we used ATLAS.ti software to highlight "significant statements" from the transcripts of participant interviews (Moustakas, 1994). We identified significant statements in response to the research questions for this study: How do school leaders make meaning of their experience in a principal preparation program? In what ways do their experiences support the development of communitarian leadership? We captured significant statements from passages where a) participants reflected directly on their own experiences in leadership preparation, b) participants reflected on how these experiences related to the development or the hindrance of their own school leadership mindsets or actions, and c) participants reflected on how they related to and interacted with others both in their preparation experiences and in their subsequent professional school leadership. Throughout the analytic process, using Microsoft Excel, we maintained a running record of reflective memos (Lofland & Lofland, 2006) to track methodological, theoretical, and personal developments.

Next, we used ATLAS.ti software to group 663 significant statements into ultimately 57 distinct codes or themes that respond to the proposed research questions.

After multiple iterations of revising and merging codes, we analyzed the frequency and concurrence of themes across study participants using Microsoft Excel. The theme communication occurred on 89 discreet occasions across all interviews, and it was the most frequently occurring theme overall. The second most frequently occurring theme was relationships (73), followed by knowledge of curriculum (65), authentic experiences (47), and values and beliefs (43).

Van Manen used the metaphor of a spider web to describe how themes emerge in qualitative analysis. Following this metaphor, each experience articulated by a participant in an interview is a unique thread in a spider web (1990). There are particular points in the web where multiple threads cross, and these points of intersection emerge as knots; when there is a large confluence of threads, the knot becomes more prominent. By parallel example: when we noticed evidence that multiple study participants had articulated a common experiential theme, we noticed that theme as prominent. While communication emerged as the overall most frequently articulated theme, we used Van Manen's metaphor as a methodological guide to analyze the data more closely to discern which themes emerged most commonly across all participants (Figure 1). This analytic approach fit with a communitarian framework, as we valued the identification and inclusion of individual perspectives within a given community or group (Etzioni, 1993).
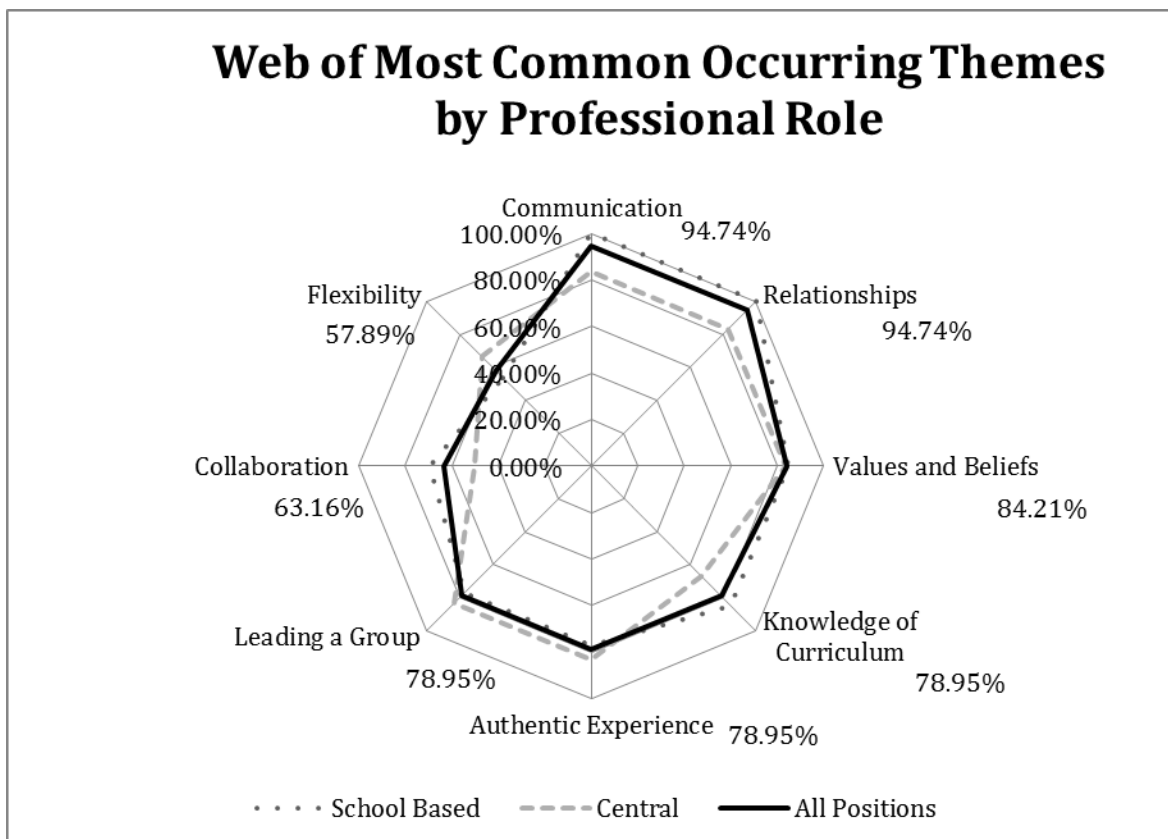
Figure 1. Most Common Occurring Themes by Professional Role

Findings

We examined which themes were articulated by the highest percentage of all participants. Using Van Manen's web metaphor (Figure 1), we found three main themes stood out more prominently than the rest as experiences common to most participants: communication, relationships, and values and beliefs (Table 1). These themes include communication, relationships, and values and beliefs, and are consistent with the high leverage communitarian leadership responsibilities evidenced by Marzano, et al. (2005).

Table 1
Most Common Occurring Themes by Professional Role

Theme	School Based	Central	All Positions
Communication	100.00%	83.33%	94.74%
Relationships	100.00%	83.33%	94.74%
Values and Beliefs	84.62%	83.33%	84.21%
Knowledge of Curriculum	84.62%	66.67%	78.95%
Authentic Experience	76.92%	83.33%	78.95%
Leading a Group	76.92%	83.33%	78.95%
Collaboration	69.23%	50.00%	63.16%
Flexibility	53.85%	66.67%	57.89%

Note. Sorted by All Positions

In the following sections, we present significant statements from study participants and analyze how these experiences contributed to the development of communitarian leadership. In their own words, participants described how they experienced themes including communication, relationships, and values and beliefs in their principal preparation experience.

Communication

Eighteen of nineteen total participants (94.74%) reflected on experiences in their leadership preparation that prepared them to communicate effectively in their work as leaders. We classify communication as a leadership action that fits within a communitarian framework because communication assumes interaction between the self and others (Etzioni, 1993). Assistant Principal Desiree Summers said succinctly what was echoed commonly among most leaders in the study: School leaders, "need to be able to communicate effectively with people," and, "learning to work with a variety of people with a variety of skill levels," in the leadership preparation program was one way to develop communication skills. Participants experienced communication in educational leadership preparation in various ways. In the following excerpts from interviews,

participants described in their own words how they experienced communication in their leadership preparation program.

Participants identified the challenges of working in settings where group members had disparate skill levels, talents, and perspectives. For example, central office school leader Willie McBride reflected:

> Absolutely [working in groups was challenging]. When you are half-hazardly [sic] grouped with a group of individuals, which is the reality of the world, there are inevitably differences; not just differences in personalities, perspectives, opinions, motivations, agendas, but also in work ethic. That's what was the biggest challenge for me . . . there were times when I'd be in a group . . . and two of us were doing the lion's share.

Other participants articulated a main challenge of motivating those who are initially reluctant or oppositional as identifying and respecting the differences that individuals bring to participation in groups. Motivating others to take particular action through communication was an experience that participants encountered in the preparation setting and in the work place. Central office school leader Roberta Riley described how she experienced communication as a tool to motivate her classmates to complete a group presentation project in the leadership preparation setting by defining the scope of communication:

> I did work in a group that had one person that talked it to death. . . . There comes a point you talk about it but then you got to move on and you gotta get it done, and this person never got out of the chewing portion. . . . Pretty soon, the teacher in me just pops out [because our time was up]. I say, "Okay that sounds great. Now let's do this," and then I ended up sort of directing [my classmate].

We also found one way leaders experienced the development of communication strategies in leadership preparation was through projects and coursework where they used researched -based data to support arguments and decisions. Assistant Principal Darcy Kennedy, through the experience of an administrative internship associated with the leadership preparation program, was responsible for synthesizing student achievement data to argue for a strategy to improve science instruction in the school that hosted her field experience:

> We had to establish, by looking at data . . . a school need. The science scores were not very strong; the kids that I was working with didn't have a lot of experiences, and so we build from a problem at the school, try to come up with a solution and then work towards establishing that [Outdoor Classroom solution]. I think that was a great learning experience for me because I had to start from the data, problem solve the solution, figure out if the administration was on board and then seek outside resources and support to make that happen.

Parallel to a data-oriented communication approach, leaders described preparation and leadership experiences where they learned how to have difficult conversations with members of the school community. Principal Ariel Maddox described a drive she feels to communicate candidly with teachers and an associated need to not, "be afraid to . . . explain what your decisions are or let people know that [things] are going to be tough."

Principal Maddox described finding the courage to not "be afraid" to initiate challenging conversations with members of the school community; Principals Charles Perry, Ophelia Guy, and Erna Gregory each also referred to the recurrent work-embedded challenge of initiating "courageous conversations" regarding instructional issues with oppositional staff. Principal Gregory first stated that she wished her leadership preparation program included more explicit focus on having these challenging conversations, but then reflected:

> Maybe when you're doing group work [in the leadership preparation setting], sometimes you have to say, "So-and-so, you really gotta step up. We need you to do your part. You haven't turned in your work yet." That may be a courageous conversation.

In summary, leaders in this study articulated that communication is a leadership action they valued in their preparation and subsequently prioritized in their work. In parallel, meta-analyses of research on the influence of school leadership on student outcomes identified communication as a leadership action positively correlated ($r = .23$) with improved school level student outcomes (Marzano, et al., 2005). Participants identified group work as an instructional activity they experienced that helped them to internalize the importance of diversified communication and to learn and practice strategies for diversified communication. Leaders in this study described how they experienced the development of communication strategies to motivate individuals from "talk" into action. Leaders reflected on coursework and associated assignments that initiated experiences using data in communication. These findings align with the research literature on problem-based learning (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Davis et al, 2005) and cohort-modeled leadership preparation (Barnett, et al., 2000) that credits the group learning dynamic with producing improved interpersonal problem solving skills, including communication.

Relationships

Assistant Principal Desiree Summers succinctly captured what was related by others in the study in reflecting on their preparation experiences: communication was a critical tool to interact with other people to build working relationships. Eighteen out of nineteen interviewees articulated experiences associated with developing relationships as central their leadership preparation. Central Office leader Willie McBride reflected that his work was, "nine times out of ten, [focused] on relationship building," and that leadership preparation provided opportunities to build relationships with diverse personalities. Interpersonal relationships are central to a communitarian model of leadership where the leader continually negotiates organizational decisions considering at once the interests of

individual community members and the interests of the group at large; leaders who are effective in balancing the interests of the individual with the group are well-suited to build and to nurture relationships, and to build community (Etzioni, 1993).

Participants shared that group projects provided opportunities to build working relationships with individuals that have different perspectives. Participants reflected on how the collaborative act of academic group work helped them build awareness of the need for communication; participants also identified how working together towards common outcomes helped to establish relationship-building skills. Principal German Walker discussed how participating in projects where he had to collaborate with a collection of individuals strengthened his mindset of accountability and helped him exercise skills that held team members responsible for the quality of their work:

> I've always been an individual where I like to hold everyone accountable. I don't have a problem with being outspoken. I feel like that if it's a group grade then there should be contribution in equal amount from everyone in the group. And there weren't many situations where there was tension, but there were some.

A common theme emerged as study participants reflected on how they have established and maintained successful relationships in their preparation and in their professional experiences. To paraphrase generally: when teachers trust a leader, they will listen to and follow the leader; this makes relationships very important. When teachers are in a comfortable relationship with a leader, they will tell the leader what they really think. Trust is a common theme that emerged as participants talked about experiences that helped them learn to build working relationships. To reemphasize a statement by Assistant Principal Desiree Summers, "if you are a strong communicator, you can form relationships, build a rapport, and build a trust level with your faculty. . . . *from my experience, if you have the trust of your faculty, they will do anything for you* [emphasis added]." Ariel Summers noted that others will follow when they see a leader is willing to do and to understand the work that they do when she talked about cleaning up the school grounds with community members, "'You're going to pull weeds too?' I said, 'Well it's my garden, so come on.'"

Central office leader Elijah Cook described how the mentor principal with whom he worked during his intern field experience taught him to lead by placing trust in others through distributing responsibilities:

> [She] put a lot of trust in people and allowed people to work in areas that they felt that they were best at and that they were happiest in. And she did model a lot of distributive leadership in terms of allowing people to take over and she [managed] those people but [didn't] lay down the law [nor do] a lot of top-down type stuff.

Cook learned a style of relationship-based leadership from a mentor principal that emphasized placing responsibility and trust in others. Cook reflected that the mentor sought out opportunities to give others independent space in their work.

Participants talked about the value of trust in relationships, how they learned to build relationships by nurturing trust, and how they went on to leverage trust in building

working relationships in their service to schools. Some participants also reflected on the actual relationships they experienced with mentors in the preparation process. Interning with a mentor during the leadership preparation program was an influential experience for some leaders in the study. One way these relationships influenced the development of the leadership style and behaviors of participants was through modeling by the mentor. Central office leader Elijah Cook, for example, previously described how he learned to build trusting relationships through a mentor principal he encountered during his leadership preparation experience. He reflected specifically on how a different mentor administrator demonstrated a strategy for building relationships with students that was influential:

> He was very personable. I mean, we learned all the kids' names. Well, he did. I tried. But he learned all the kids' names, you know, before summer school. So I learned the importance of that kind of stuff from him, so it was good. It was a good experience.

In summary, leaders in this study articulated that relationship-building is a leadership action they valued in their leadership preparation and that they prioritize in their work. That participants valued learning associated with relationships fits with meta-analyses of research on the influence of school leadership on student achievement, which identified a positive correlation ($r = .18$) between leadership actions that were relationship oriented and improved student achievement. Participants identified group work as an instructional activity they experienced that helped them to internalize the importance of identifying and respecting the diverse perspectives and motivations of individuals and to learn and practice strategies for building working relationships. Leaders described the importance of establishing working relationships with a purposeful foundation in trust. Leaders reflected on mentor relationships with host principals and professors they experienced in preparation, and articulated how those experiences influenced the development of their approach to establishing and nurturing working relationships in their school leadership. Each of these findings regarding how mentorship and field-based internship experiences influenced how study participants developed skills in building relationships support evidence in the research literature that internship and field experience in the educational leadership preparation process is influential to aspiring leaders (Milstein, 1990; Murphy, 2005; Restine, 1997; Young, 2009).

Values and Beliefs

Leaders reflected that preparation experiences that helped them develop skills in communication and relationship-building were of value to them. Leaders also talked about why emphasis on communication, on relationships, and on other personal values and beliefs were central to their leadership practice. Sometimes participants pointed to particular leadership preparation experiences that influenced their values set; other times participants reflected that the development of their personal values set began long before they aspired to become school leaders. Leaders said the program helped them to identify values and to see the importance of values, but many reflected that their values set was

developed almost exclusively outside leadership preparation. In the following excerpts from interviews, participants describe in their own words how they experienced values and beliefs in their leadership preparation program.

Participants also identified experiences outside formal leadership preparation that influenced their development as leaders. Some participants referenced overarching values and beliefs that were, for them, guiding principles in their lives. Others referred to particular childhood or family experiences that influenced their beliefs. The values of some school leaders interviewed in this study were shaped by experiences they had in their work lives before and since administrative preparation. Principal Constance Norton pointed to a pre-established set of spiritual values that she uses to guide leadership decisions:

> I would first have to say my own spirituality and my own ability to find and draw from strength and encouragement from a higher power [influences my leadership]. I first have to say that. I feel like, I know this is confidential, that if you don't pray you'll probably be a drinker. So you either drink or pray. [Laughs] I've chosen prayer.

Norton purposefully described spirituality as her "first" influence, above all others. For Norton, there existed foundational and pre-established beliefs and values upon which her leadership philosophy has been built. Other leaders, in this way, referred to undergirding values that influenced their leadership in the school setting. For example, central office leader Willie McBride valued optimism. His worldview was framed in a generally positive way:

> My worldview [is] always looking for that silver lining, always staying on the positive side, finding a way to take a negative and turning it into a positive. I think just staying on that positive side is crucial because if you plant a seed of positivity, the positivity will grow. If you plant a seed of negativity, that will grow, too.

Whereas McBride believed in keeping an optimistic mindset and "staying on the positive side," central office leader Carla Curtis described her belief that people's actions are most important to her. Curtis reflected, "I really believe in your actions, the way that you respond to people, how quickly [you] respond to them with accuracy and articulation, all of that is very important. . . . It's almost like leading by example."

Norton, McBride, and Curtis described values that were foundational to them and that influenced the decisions they made as leaders, Life experiences outside the education administration program were influential to the values and beliefs of most participants in this study. Some articulated how experiences inside the preparation program contributed to the development of new values and beliefs, and strengthened long-standing values trainees brought with them as they engaged in principal preparation. The overarching experience of graduate study, for Principal Erna Gregory, was one that strengthened pre-established values of diligence and persistence. Gregory said, "I think graduate work just

forces you, shows that you're capable of learning and that you can persevere and finish, so I think that's what people find if you can persevere and finish."

Principal Gregory reflected on her graduate studies as a holistic experience while others in the study discussed how a particular class within the overall course of study shaped their values. For example, Principal Kristie Bradshaw talked about how her coursework in School Law influenced her to not necessarily follow policy to the letter, but to give value and self-awareness to one's own moral voice:

> I think [the professor who taught the School Law course] is a fascinating person. [She taught me to consider that] morals in education is very important. I think it really opened up a lot to me and I think I look at things very differently. I mean, I know there are legal responsibilities I have to report things, but then I also like the fact that here I have judgment that I get to use.

For Bradshaw, the experience of this course in School Law helped her to value engaging in challenging dialogue with individuals who have diverse perspectives. She said, "I think that is because the topics were so passionate to everyone involved . . . you had very impassioned people kind of coming together and having to, in the end, have [reached consensus]."

In summary, this university-based leadership preparation program helped leaders identify their own values and beliefs and understand the usefulness of communicating their values and beliefs to inspire and to motivate others into productive relationships. Some values and beliefs were developed in preparation experiences including being inspired by professors, learning from the internship field experience, or being compelled by the data-driven presentations of classmates. More commonly, participants articulated that they developed their core values and beliefs through experiences outside their formal educational leadership preparation. The sources of these experiences included family, church, and the workplace. The value of the preparation program in the development of leadership is helping aspiring leaders identify their own pre-established values and teaching them the importance of using those values as a guiding force in their future leadership. This should be done with intentionality, rather than by accident over the course of the leadership preparation experience. Values and Belief-based leadership was positively correlated (r = .22) with improved student achievement in a meta-analysis of research on the influence of school leadership on student outcomes (Marzano, et al., 2005).

Discussion and Implications

Participants learned through their preparation experiences to communicate in order to build relationships with others that they can leverage in their leadership. First they make meaning through their interactions with others--through learning to communicate in challenging settings; learning to build working relationships; identifying values and beliefs; and learning to communicate values and beliefs in order to build relationships that inspire and motivate others. These findings support the development of communitarian leadership, where there is an emphasis on an awareness of the

relationship between the self and others: how one communicates with others, how one builds working relationships with others, and how one respects the values and beliefs of others.

There is a deep body of research literature focused on effective preparation of educational leaders (Davis et al., 2005; Peterson, 2001; Sparks & Hirsch, 2000). Effective programs in educational administration focus on recruiting selective cohorts of trainees, engaging trainees in curricular content that is focused and coherent, and facilitating opportunities for aspiring leaders to engage in experiential learning in authentic contexts. While communitarian themes emerged when leaders reflected on their preparation experiences in this study, development of community-oriented leadership was not an explicitly articulated purpose of the program. Programs can be built to better emphasize these community-oriented themes. This section describes implications for practice in the development of communitarian leadership in the university-based educational administration preparation setting, and is organized in to four main subsections: cohorts, administrative internship or field experience, coherence of curricular content, and program recruitment.

Despite evidence that the cohort model is a common feature among effective programs in educational leadership preparation, the model is not commonly accessed by the most typical aspiring school leaders: graduate students with fulltime work responsibilities (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2009). The participants in this study attended programs that were structured to meet in an evening and weekend model. While some participants described experiencing preparation in a cohort setting or a cohort-like setting, because of the part-time nature of the program, none of the participants' learning was structured in a full-time cohort program. One practical recommendation for future preparation of aspiring leaders is to create opportunities for a cohort structure where a cohort structure does not currently exist. Some study participants reflected that even though their fellow aspiring leaders worked in a variety of school settings, and were sometimes geographically dispersed, they still identified as a "cohort." In some instances, this was simply because the group was labeled a "cohort" by the university. Groups who were geographically dispersed sometimes collaborated as a unit meeting by telephone and on the internet. Opportunities to create a cohort community among part-time students who work during the day and attend class in the evening and on the weekends might include leveraging social media, creating professional networks within the group based on the interests of trainees, and purposefully calling the group a "cohort," encouraging members to brand their cohort with a name and a mission.

Study participants described a wide variety of internships in which they engaged. Some were meaningful to participants, while others described the experience as unhelpful. University-based programs should not wait for the state to detail parameters for improved internships. University programs in educational administration, particularly programs geared toward individuals who have full time jobs in addition to their studies, should take a more purposeful approach to tightening their internship processes. This more purposeful approach would include identifying and building relationships with host school leaders who demonstrate aptitude and desire to coach more novice leaders in their development, and who agree to focus on the development of community-oriented leadership through their relationship. While study participants did not reflect on the

planning of the internship phase of their leadership program, the research literature indicates universities should also make the expectations for hosting and supporting a trainee through an internship very clear to both the intern and the host. Expected outcomes and participation should be discussed and agreed upon before the internship begins.

One feature of many leading programs in educational administration is a coherence of curricular content. In other words, the content and all of the learning experiences are explicitly and purposefully linked together in a way that makes sense and that drives trainees toward a set of standard learning outcomes. While some trainees articulated how particular learning activities contributed to their development as community-oriented school leaders, there were only a couple of instances where trainees made a meta-cognitive recognition that the purpose of a given activity was to develop a leadership skill they would use later in their careers. One recommendation for programs in educational leadership preparation is to spiral connections with communitarian outcomes, such as improved relationships and improved communication skills, very explicitly throughout the course of study.

Finally, in this study, we identified themes that were common to the experiences of trainees who went on to serve as school leaders in roles including Assistant Principal, Principal, and central office leader. These themes included communication, relationships, and values and beliefs. These themes also emerged in Marzano et al. (2005) as leadership actions linked to improved student performance through meta-analyses. They also appear in the standards for administrative licensure. Programs in educational leadership studies should use the themes from this study as characteristics that could be used to screen candidates for employment as instructors, and target traits within their student selection model. These themes might also be employed as curricular anchors as educators engage in leadership training program design, providing a concise set of thematic units of study. Titles of learning units might include question-themed titles that guide aspirant leaders to generate their independent understanding of how they will grow within these community-oriented leadership traits (Pink, 2013).

Unit titles might include:
What Do I Believe?
Who Is My School Community?
How Will I Build Relationships?
How Will I Communicate with Others?
How Will I Listen?

Suggestions for Future Research

While research has determined particular leadership actions that support improved school level outcomes and has identified preparation structures that contribute to the successful development of school leaders, there remains much to be learned about how aspiring leaders best acquire leadership skills that help them to develop relationships. With the findings of this research, we highlight the importance of developing leaders prepared to build and sustain working relationships with diverse individuals, to communicate

effectively, and to relate in a values-driven way. Some participants found value in particular preparation activities for developing these skills, but more research is needed to determine in which other ways trainees effectively develop community-oriented leadership. Most importantly, continued research is needed to better understand how aspiring leaders acquire a communitarian leadership skill set in evening and weekend modeled programs. In particular, an expanded study that includes a more robust and diverse sample of the experiences of aspirant leaders studying in an added three to four evening and weekend modeled programs would give the educational administration training workforce sharper and more employable recommendations for shifting instruction in ways that ready leaders for the realities of the roles they will play in schools.

In summary, leaders who experienced preparation activities, including activities that gave them practice leading diverse individuals to shared outcomes articulated how preparation influenced the development of communitarian leadership skill, including relationship-building, communication, and values-identification. Communitarian leadership, which includes leadership actions linked to improved school-level outcomes (Marzano et al., 2005), may have utility as a framework for developing aspiring principals through formal preparation programs.

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PERCEPTIONS OF MENTORING:
EXAMINING THE EXPERIENCES OF
WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

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This descriptive mixed methods study gathered both quantitative and qualitative data on the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in a Southeastern state. The quantitative participants included 39 women superintendents from this state and the qualitative portion of the study was comprised of eight female superintendents purposefully selected from that group. Overall findings revealed women superintendents had positive mentoring experiences that included the importance of having a female mentor and establishing a support system. Additional findings revealed social-emotional based elements for effective mentoring relationships leading to challenge, support, and encouragement of other female educational leaders through both formal and informal mentoring.

Introduction

Historically women have held the majority of positions in the teaching field but hold the smallest percentages of leadership positions, especially that of superintendent (Brunner & Grogan, 2007). According to Katz (2006), if 75% of women occupy teaching positions, expectations would be that more would obtain the role of superintendent. Contrarily, women in the superintendency have not increased in number at the same rate as their male counterparts; in fact, they remain disproportionate compared to males. Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, and Ellerson (2010) reported women make up approximately 24% of superintendents across the nation, while men account for nearly 86%.

As an aging population of baby boomers prepares to retire, a crisis looms in the K-12 leadership ranks. Kinsella and Richards (2004) reported there would be a shortage of school leaders in the near future, and Glass and Franceschini (2007) stated that by 2015 several vacancies could exist, specifically in the superintendency. Within the next five years, approximately 39 percent of superintendents plan to either leave their position, or retire (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010).

The disproportionate number of women in the superintendency could possibly be linked to challenges they face, both on the road to advancement and once they are in the position of superintendent. Issues such as gender bias (Glass & Franceschini 2007), work family balance (Darrington & Sharrett, 2008), and a lack role models (Sherman, Munoz, & Pankake, 2008) have been noted as specific challenges of women superintendents. In order to increase the number of women joining in the superintendency and continuing to support those currently in the position, research reveals that mentoring is an avenue that holds promise.

Mentoring is an important component of building support systems for personnel in administration and leadership (Bjork & Kowalski, 2005). A mentor can be described as one who teaches, coaches, advises, trains, directs, protects, sponsors, guides and leads another individual or individuals (Brunner, 2000; Grogan, 1996; Kochan 2003; Shakeshaft, 1989). According to Kram (1985), mentoring is a developmental relationship with the goal of career development and guidance for the mentee.

Mentors play a critical role in the recruitment and development of female leaders. According to Kinsella and Richards (2004), mentors have been associated with helping mentees attain access to and achieve success in leadership positions such as the superintendency. Similarly, Gilmour and Kinsella (2009) indicated mentors play a crucial role in sharpening a superintendent's decision-making skills, regardless of whether the superintendent is a veteran or novice. Brunner and Grogan (2007) noted that a lack of support and mentorship was a main reason that there are few females holding superintendent positions. Clearly mentoring, and specifically the mentoring experiences of women, is an area that requires further examination.

Review of Literature

A number of theories exist regarding women's studies and of mentoring relationships, but rarely are both discussed in concert. As such, the framework for this study was based on

the broad theoretical areas of women in educational leadership and the elements of mentoring relationships.

Women and the Superintendency

In 2000, the American Association of School Administrators (AASA, n.d.) conducted a ten-year study of American School Superintendents that indicated the number of female superintendents increased from 6.6% in 1992, to 13.2% in 2000. In 2007, Glass and Franceschini conducted a survey of 1,338 superintendents that provided a snapshot of school leadership in America and women's preparedness for the superintendency. This study indicated that the number of female superintendents increased to nearly 22%.

This study was followed by the decennial study on the American School Superintendent conducted by Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, and Ellerson (2010). Similar studies have been conducted every ten years since 1923. In this study of 1,867 superintendents surveyed women respondents composed 24.1%. Although the number of women superintendents is increasing, 51% of superintendents surveyed indicated they would not be in the superintendency by 2015, which indicates a substantial turnover in the near future.

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) study (2000) also showed most women superintendents began their administrative careers in elementary positions and were employed in small districts. Grogan and Brunner (2005) revealed a large number of women superintendents were found to pursue the following career paths: teaching, assistant principal or principal, and central office. Nearly 40% of female superintendents were recorded as coming from an assistant superintendent's position. This path to superintendency was quite different from male superintendents, of whom 53% came directly from the principalship.

In relation to career advancement, Grogan and Brunner (2005) found 75% of women superintendents reported that networking assisted them in securing their position. Findings also indicated most women superintendents reported their boards hired them to be educational leaders rather than managers. Interpersonal skills and organizational relationships ranked higher for women, indicating a strength in the more social aspects of the position. However, 73% of women sought professional development in the area of curriculum and instruction compared to 39% of men.

Challenges Faced by Women Superintendents

Investigations have been conducted by numerous researchers concerning challenges women face when pursuing the superintendency (Blount, 1998; Brunner & Grogan, 2007; Dana & Bourisaw, 2006; Derrington & Sharrett, 2008, Gilmour & Kinsella, 2009; Katz, 2006). One reason the superintendency contains disparities among women and men may be due to the existence of the glass ceiling and the lack of mentoring opportunities for women and people of color (Haar, Rankin, & Robicheau, 2009; Kamler, 2006; Marina & Fonteneau, 2012). Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, and Ellerson (2010) noted that superintendents reported the most crucial source for enlightening elements of their practice was peer superintendents. Research revealed individuals are most likely to

mentor those most like themselves (Mahitivanichcha & Rorrer, 2006). More specifically, Sherman (2000) reported that male administrators naturally move toward mentoring younger males who they view as younger versions of themselves. Since the majority of superintendents are male and they are typically pursuing a mentee of their own gender, establishing a mentoring relationship is a clear challenge for women superintendents.

Support Systems for Women Superintendents

Due to the variety of challenges that have existed for women superintendents, one might assume that some of the professional organizations would provide support and guidance for this population. Unfortunately, Glass (2000) observed women had a less developed mentoring system than men and Brunner and Grogan (2007) noted a lack of mentors and professional networks for women superintendents.

A number of organizations have continued to be available to school administrators seeking professional development. However, most professional organizations for school administrators promote assistance for school and district educational leaders in general; women administrators are not offered targeted assistance within these organizations.

Mentoring Women Superintendents

The State of the American School Superintendency (2007) reported that 39% of superintendents across the nation indicated that they had received no mentoring before becoming a superintendent. In comparison, 33% of these individuals indicated they had received mentoring from a superintendent and this experience aided them in their transition into the superintendency. According to the research of Sherman, Munoz, and Pankake (2008), mentoring plays an important role in developing confidence and leadership and networking skills; which is a problem for women superintendents since there exists a lack of mentors and role models for this population. Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011), who examined female administrators and their mentoring experiences, found these relationships beneficial in assisting women in gaining high level leadership positions. These correlations increased when the mentor and mentee shared many similarities such as values, background, experiences, and outlook.

Several studies have been conducted regarding the contributions females can bring to the superintendency (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992; Grogan, 1996; Helgesen, 1990). Unfortunately, these offerings may go unnoticed unless there are more women chosen for the available positions. Grogan (1996) claimed female aspirants to the superintendency have defied traditional perspectives by providing unique and individual approaches to the position. These can include using alternative techniques to leadership, reforming outdated practices, and placing more emphasis on teaching and learning rather than organizational management. Helgesen (1990) reported that women succeed by employing their feminine strengths such as supporting, encouraging, teaching, open communication, soliciting input, and creating a positive, collegial work environment. Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992) suggested that women are interpersonal experts who network well when given the opportunity. Considering the positive attributes women

have to offer the superintendency, mentoring was explored as another option to provide additional support for females in this role.

Women superintendents require positive, encouraging mentors and career environments that are supportive (Grogan and Brunner, 2007) and Glass (2000) specifically noted this group benefits from a mentoring experience. In addition, Gilmour and Kinsella (2009) indicated mentors play a role in honing a superintendent's decision-making skills and Odum (2010) noted that both networking and mentoring were important factors that existed in the circles of the superintendency. Mentors can assist aspiring women superintendents in gaining positions as well. Dana and Bourisaw (2006) stated women with mentors shift into school districts or school leadership positions more rapidly than those who are without mentors.

Elements of Mentoring

Mentoring women superintendents can consist of formal and informal experiences. Informal mentoring is defined in the literature (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011) as a relationship that develops spontaneously or informally without any assistance. In this study, informal mentoring experiences were described as those that were impromptu and free flowing, where there was a comfort level between mentor and mentee. These sessions contained an array of topics that could be discussed at any time. Similarly, formal mentoring is described as a relationship that results from a structured program that contains specific criteria for implementation.

There are two main areas of support that mentors have provided for their protégé's: vocational/career and psychosocial (Bauer, 1999; Chao, 1997; Kram, 1985). Friday and Friday (2002) reported the career development functions included actions such as assisting the mentee in obtaining desirable positions, coaching, running interference, providing challenging assignments, and introducing the mentee to influential people in the field.

Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) investigated female administrators and their mentoring experiences in higher education through a quantitative survey with women in Tennessee. Mentors proved beneficial to those females who do aspire to the top leadership positions. The authors also noted that mentoring is more effective for these women when the mentor and mentee share many similarities, such as values, background, experiences, and outlook. The study pointed out that mentor relationships that develop informally through natural interactions are generally more beneficial than formal relationships. Kamler (2006) noted that friendship actions such as reassurance, support, transparency, and availability were crucial constituents of mentoring.

There is some disagreement in the literature related to gender and the mentorship experience. Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) found that there were no differences in the provisions of career or psychosocial mentoring between mentees with female mentors and mentees with male mentors in higher education. However, females who had female mentors perceived that the gender was important and would have an impact on the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship, which was supported by former research (Lowe, 2003; Wolverton, 2002).

Alsbury and Hackman (2006) found that both principals and superintendents noted benefits in the development of skills when addressing difficult issues. Positive relationship building between the mentor and mentee was recorded as important. In addition, gender and race were two crucial variables that should be considered in mentoring programs.

Although studies on mentoring women exist, few have been conducted specifically on women administrators, especially at the state level. The purpose of this study was to gain information on the perceptions and experiences with mentoring by women superintendents in an effort to gain further insight on the extent to which women superintendents have been mentored, how they describe these experiences, what elements are contained in an effective mentoring program, and how an effective mentoring program could encourage women to enter the superintendency. The results of this study could be utilized to assist persons and agencies in mentoring women who are or wish to become superintendents. This information may lead to an increase in the support offered to female educators, potentially creating further opportunities for advancement and decreasing disparities in the number of women superintendents.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:
1. How extensive is mentoring among women superintendents in one Southeastern state?
2. How do women superintendents in one Southeastern state describe their experiences with mentoring?

Methods

The researchers examined the effects of mentoring on women superintendents by utilizing a sequential descriptive mixed methods approach. A three-part survey was used for the quantitative portion of the study. The first two sections included descriptive data including demographic items and information about superintendents' mentoring experiences. The third section listed potential elements of an effective mentoring program specific to the position of superintendent (see Appendix A). The qualitative portion consisted of a semi-structured interview protocol designed to further explore the mentoring experiences of the participants (see Appendix B). All of the survey and interview questions were developed by the researchers based upon elements found in the literature regarding mentorship and the superintendency. In addition, prior to beginning the research, four retired women superintendents were contacted and formed a panel to establish face validity for the quantitative survey instrument developed by the researchers and to refine the interview questions for the qualitative phase.

Participants

The survey was sent electronically via Survey Monkey to all 52 women designated as superintendents in one Southeastern state in the current or previous school year (2011-2013). Of the 52 surveys distributed, 39 were returned and analyzed. This number

represented a response rate of 75% and yielded a 95% confidence level and a confidence interval of eight. Of the 39 respondents, 84.6% (N=33) were Caucasian, 10.3% (N= 4) were African American, and 5.1% (N=2) identified as "other". A high percentage of Caucasian of women superintendents reported in this study, mirroring the AASA national survey which was 94% for both men and women (Kowalski, McCord, Petersen, Young, & Ellerson, 2010).

Survey respondents were asked if they would be willing to participate in follow up interviews. For the qualitative phase, eight women superintendents were purposefully selected from those who participated in the survey. From those who indicated they had been mentored, four participants were chosen from rural districts, three from urban districts, and one from a suburban district. Each interview lasted approximately 25 minutes and identities of participants remained confidential throughout the process. The eight interviewees are described in Table 1.

Table 1.

Qualitative Participants

Superintendent Number	Years of Experience	District Type	Mentor Gender
Superintendent 1	5	Rural	Male
Superintendent 2	6	Suburban	Male
Superintendent 3	11	Urban	Female
Superintendent 4	6	Urban	Male
Superintendent 5	5	Urban	Male then Female
Superintendent 6	1	Rural	Female
Superintendent 7	1	Rural	Female
Superintendent 8	5	Rural	Female

Data Analysis

Data collected using Survey Monkey were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Frequencies, percentages, and distributions were reviewed to assist in answering the research questions. The qualitative data were analyzed using open, axial, and analytical coding in accordance with procedures for a basic interpretive study (Miles & Huberman,

1994; Merriam, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). First, the researchers performed initial coding of responses, followed by identification of patterns, which in turn led to the identification of broad themes. The first level of data analysis involved reading each transcript in its entirety and noting significant points. The researchers then reviewed the notes and recorded any commonalities that existed. Transcripts were analyzed multiple times, leading to 19 initial elements and then narrowed down to six patterns. A third level of analysis produced the major themes discussed in the findings. Triangulation of data was utilized to corroborate evidence retrieved from the panel, quantitative surveys, and qualitative interviews. In addition, feedback was solicited from the emerging findings from the women superintendents interviewed, described by Merriam (2009) as member checking.

Findings

The findings are arranged by the method used. The first section includes the quantitative results which addresses Research Question 1: How extensive is mentoring among women superintendents? The second section covers the qualitative results, which addresses Research Question 2: How do women superintendents describe their experiences with mentoring?

Quantitative Results (Extensiveness of mentoring)

Data showed that 84.6% (n=33) of respondents indicated they had a mentor when they became superintendent and 15.4% (n=6) reported they did not have a mentor when they obtained the superintendency. It is important to note that in the state where this study took place, there is not a universal requirement for superintendents to have mentors.

Regarding the length of the mentorship experience, 58.8% (n=20) had a mentor zero to one year; 35.3% (n=12) had a mentor one to two years; 2.9% (n=1) had a mentor from three to five years; and 2.9% (n=1) had their mentor more than five years. In relation to gender, participants who had male mentors accounted for 63.6% of the survey responses, while 36.4% indicated they had a female mentor.

Participants were asked to indicate the type(s) of mentoring they had experienced. Dunbar and Kinnerly's (2011) definitions of informal and formal mentoring were provided with the question to assist in clarification regarding mentoring received. An option of selecting both formal and informal mentoring experiences was listed for those participants who may have had more than one type of mentoring experience. Participants indicated 56.4% (n=22) received both informal and formal mentoring. A total of 17.9% (n=7) received informal mentoring, 10.3% (n=4) received formal mentoring, and 15.4% (n=6) reported they did not have a mentor.

Finally, participants were asked to rank the areas they perceived to be important elements to be emphasized in an effective mentoring program (see Appendix A). A Likert scale was utilized to rate the importance of each element listed, with a score of five (5) denoting the highest level of importance for each particular element. The top 10 effective elements listed by the respondents can be found in Table 2. The percentage of

respondents who selected each item is listed followed by the actual number in parentheses.

Table 2.
Top Ten Effective Elements of Mentoring

Element	Ranking of Importance for Mentorship					Mean Score
	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	
School Board Relations	0	2.7% (1)	0	18.9% (7)	78.4% (29)	4.73
Personnel Matters	0	0	5.4% (2)	24.3% (9)	70.3% (26)	4.65
Budget and Finance	0	2.7% (1)	2.7% (1)	27% (10)	67.6% (25)	4.59
Strategic Planning	0	0	18.9% (7)	32.4% (12)	48.6% (18)	4.30
School/Community Relations	0	0	29.7% (11)	27% (10)	43.2% (16)	4.14
Familiarity w/Board Policies	0	10.8% (4)	16.2% (6)	29.7% (11)	43.2% (16)	4.05
School Law	2.7% (1)	5.4% (2)	18.9% (7)	32.4% (12)	37.8% (14)	4.0
Politics in Education	0	2.7% (1)	24.3% (9)	48.6% (18)	24.3% (9)	3.95
Collaboration	2.7% (1)	2.7% (1)	29.7% (11)	32.4% (12)	32.4% (12)	3.89
Stress Management	5.4% (2)	5.4% (2)	21.6% (8)	32.4% (12)	35.1% (13)	3.86

Qualitative Results (Experiences with Mentoring)

All eight participants indicated their overall mentoring experiences had been positive and beneficial. Mentoring experiences were broken into sub-themes that emerged based upon the interview responses. The sub-themes included: the importance of a good relationship and support, a preference for a combination of formal and informal mentoring, and having a female mentor.

Formal/Informal Combination. Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) defined formal mentoring as a relationship that results from a structured program that contains specific

criteria for implementation and informal mentoring as a relationship that develops spontaneously or informally without any assistance. These were the definitions used for the survey question that asked about the types of mentoring experiences participants received.

However, the results of the interviews led to a much different interpretation of formal and informal mentoring experiences. Participants described formal mentoring as instances of mentoring that were more structured and purposeful, with the interaction is limited to a predetermined set of topics and meeting times. Conversely, informal mentoring experiences were those that were impromptu and free flowing, with less structure based on a comfort level between mentor and mentee. These perspectives on formal and informal mentoring were focused more around the nature of the relationship between mentor and mentee, rather than the nature of the activities.

Six of the eight participants interviewed revealed that having a combination of formal and informal mentoring in the relationship with their mentor was beneficial. Superintendent 7 disclosed her mentoring relationship was informal in that she could call her mentor anytime on any topic and formal in that the mentor gave her assignments. For example, "I had to list my goals for the 2011-12 school year and she looked over these goals, gave me feedback, and let me know if I was on the right track for priority setting" (Superintendent 7).

Similarly, Superintendent 2 stated,

> My mentoring was a combination of both that began with formal mentoring that contained protocols and timelines and the informal portion came in when I casually called him between the formal, scheduled sessions. In the formal sessions, he guided me and helped facilitate my thinking without giving me advice.

Superintendent 3 indicated the formal portion consisted of assignments while the informal portion was geared toward the relationship. She shared:

> I could just say [to my mentor] you know I've got this situation and this is how I'm thinking about handling it. What do you think? That's kind of informal because we are just having a conversation. Or I could get specific formal feedback in writing of something I had done, for example, my goals, my priorities that I knew I wanted, I would want to know her point of view and if that was the route I was supposed to be taking. (Superintendent 3)

In describing her mentoring experience, one participant said, "It was very informal. I felt very free to ask questions. I felt like there were not any questions that I didn't feel comfortable asking so in other words, there were no dumb questions" (Superintendent 5).

Support System. All eight superintendents reported having positive experiences from mentoring and 75% (n=6) of them specifically mentioned mentoring was a supportive system for them. Superintendent 1 revealed the most beneficial portion of her mentoring was feeling she was supported and not alone in her concerns. She felt better,

"Knowing that there are other superintendents out there who face the same types of issues and you know hearing how they deal with things in their district in order for you to try it in my district" (Superintendent 1).

Superintendent 7 reported she experienced a supportive mentoring experience when she initially began the superintendency. She indicated support was a necessary ingredient for success:

> My mentor provided support throughout my experience. She let me know quickly that other superintendents had the same problems and issues as me and that brought relief. Sometimes you think you are the only one with these issues and you are not. Just knowing you have good people out there that are willing to help you and support you for success was a benefit. (Superintendent 7)

Superintendent 4 reported an effective element needed in a mentoring program would include support for managing emotions. She also described the important role of mentors in assisting women with directing their feelings:

> It would be nice to have people to tell us how you manage your emotions in this job, how do detach when you make a decision and what do you have to do to take care of yourself. I think this would really be beneficial to a lot of women. (Superintendent 4)

Positive Relationship. All eight superintendents disclosed having an excellent relationship with your mentor could be advantageous. Superintendent 2 revealed it was important to have a good relationship with your mentor and someone accessible. She described why:

> They assigned me someone geographically close to me and someone who had a lot of experience with different types of situations since I was in a difficult situation where someone had been fired and there was a lot to clean up. We had a good relationship immediately and this was instrumental in my success with a difficult situation. (Superintendent 2)

In addition, having a mentor with a similar outlook and character can prove to be key to the relationship, "My mentor matched my personality and I think that is important" (Superintendent 3). Overall, the participants revealed a highly developed relationship with their mentor. Descriptions portrayed during interviews indicated these affiliations were important attributes of a positive mentoring experience.

Female Mentor. Overall, five participants indicated female superintendents desire other female superintendents for mentoring due to specific challenges their genders face. One participant was assigned a male mentor, but sought out a female one. She explained:

You know there's nobody to really help us through things and I think women have a…another dimension of challenge. We tend to approach problems differently...I mean men superintendents are very fine people and I enjoy conversations with them, but how they would go about handling problems such as personnel issues, communication problems, and things like that are just a whole lot different than I would…when it comes to those real solutions women tend to have a different style…when you talk about something you have done and how you went about something [with male colleagues], you feel like you are talking another vocabulary. (Superintendent 4)

Similarly, another participant reported she initially had a male mentor, but later began leaning on other female superintendents. She shared, "Even though I had a male mentor, I leaned heavily on other female superintendents because I felt like sometimes some of the same issues may not be the same for a male superintendent" (Superintendent 5).

Similarly, Superintendent 6 believed given the state of K-12 education today, having a female mentor assigned to new women superintendents was key. She elaborated:

Being a superintendent is definitely a man's world and so there are some things you have to deal with that you are going to deal with the majority of men. The committees are going to be men and other groups you are in are going to be men. It was exciting that the mentor I had was a female veteran superintendent to give me guidance in the role of being a superintendent, but also in being a woman in a man's world. (Superintendent 6)

Discussion

All eight superintendents indicated their experiences with mentoring had been positive. The survey indicated 91% of participants who had a mentor believed the process had been beneficial to them in their current position of superintendent. Those who were not mentored responded that they believed the mentoring process would have been beneficial to their development as an administrator. Similarly, those women who took part in the interviews claimed mentoring had been valuable to them. Benefits noted by these participants included developing a support system for them in the district, creating a bond or good relationship that has continued, having a female mentor, and experiencing a combination of both formal and informal mentoring. Bjork and Kowalski's (2005) research was supported by this study in which participants revealed mentoring is an important component of building support systems for personnel in administration. The Iowa Department of Education's study by Alsbury and Hackmann (2006) maintained that positive relations between mentors and mentees were recorded as important and the same information was found in this research.

The majority of surveyed superintendents reported they secured their mentor's assistance for one year. Most of the interviewed superintendents disclosed they had mentors when they began their position and indicated they have maintained a mentor to date. However, many of their mentors have changed during this time and most sought

out a female mentor if they previously did not have one. Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) pointed out in their study those mentoring relationships that develop informally lead to natural interactions that are generally more beneficial and longer lasting than those created more formally.

A total of 63.6% of surveyed participants indicated they had a male mentor. Previous AASA studies in 2000, 2007 and 2010 (n.d) revealed more males occupy the superintendency than do females, which may be the reason for the higher numbers of male mentors. Conversely, interviews revealed that while these women appreciated and supported male mentors in the field, they felt that women better understood women, and a female mentor could better assist with challenges specific to women. Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011), Lowe (2003), and Wolverton (2002) also reported females who had female mentors perceived their gender was important and would have an impact on the effect of the mentoring relationship.

The majority of females surveyed indicated they received a combination of both formal and informal mentoring experiences. In the interviews, participants commented on the importance of having formal (structured) and informal (unstructured) relationships with their mentor. An amalgamation of both formal and informal mentoring experiences and relationships would prove beneficial because it offers flexibility and organization in a constantly changing arena that requires preparation and planning.

As previously mentioned total of 91% of surveyed participants and 100% of interviewed women indicated mentoring had been an advantageous process for them, which substantiated earlier research by Sherman, Munoz, and Pankake (2008). Benefits of mentoring noted from the qualitative portion of this study included building a support system, creating a good relationship, being mentored by another female, and employing both formal and informal mentoring. Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) found mentoring proved beneficial to females who have aspired to top leadership positions and the findings from this study reinforced those claims.

Implications

Current school administrators including assistant principals, principals, Title I Directors, Special Education Directors, Transportation Directors, Human Resource Directors, Assistant and Associate Superintendents could review this research to enlighten themselves on the benefits of a mentor if they were considering advancement to the position of superintendent. Superintendents could also review this study to perhaps mentor another female administrator in their district or another nearby district who desires to aspire to the superintendency. Based on this study, consideration should be given to assigning female mentors to other females aspiring or currently in the superintendency. A combination of both formal and informal mentoring should be recommended for these mentees. Formal mentoring sessions should include scheduled meetings between the mentor and mentee with designated topics, which should comprise board relations, budget, and personnel. Informal mentoring should be available when needed to discuss topics pertinent to the superintendent.

Conclusion

Overall, the information found by answering these questions provided insight into the mentoring experiences of women superintendents in one Southeastern State. Through this study, new knowledge was gained regarding the extent to which women superintendents in one Southeastern State have been mentored, how they described these experiences, what elements were contained in an effective mentoring program, and how an effective mentoring program could encourage women to enter the superintendency. In addition, the information gained from this research could assist persons and agencies in mentoring women who wish to become superintendents. This information might lead to the creation of additional opportunities for advancement for women in education, thereby decreasing disparities in the number of women superintendents.

Recommended/Suggestions for Future Research

This study has provided valuable insight into the mentoring experiences of women superintendents. However, other recommendations will be explored to enrich the topic of mentoring women superintendents. These include:

1. This study could be replicated in additional states to broaden the research and also compare to the results obtained to those found in the Southeastern state used for this study. It is recommended that both quantitative and qualitative research continue to be utilized as opposed to a single research method in order to produce enriched results.
2. It is recommended that a mixed methods study examining whether or not gender of the mentor makes a difference in the mentoring experience be conducted. This study could provide needed information regarding assignments of mentors to female superintendents.
3. Finally, a qualitative study could be developed to ascertain if formal, informal, or a combination of both styles would also be more productive for women superintendents being mentored. Information obtained from this study indicated that a combination of both would be most beneficial. Data obtained from this type of study could support or contradict results obtained in this research project. Mentor programs could utilize this to inform mentors what relationship and type of experience is preferred when guiding mentors.

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APPENDIX A

Part III – RECOMMENDED ELEMENTS FOR AN EFFECTIVE MENTORING PROGRAM

Listed below are areas that often require a school district superintendent's knowledge and understanding. Please read each item and utilize the radio button to rate your opinion based on whether the item is an important element to include in a mentoring program.

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always

<u>Subject Areas</u>

Indicate the extent which the following administrative functions should be included as an <u>Effective Element</u> of a Mentoring Program for Superintendents

Budget & Finance	1	2	3	4	5
Personnel	1	2	3	4	5
School Board Relations	1	2	3	4	5
Politics in Education	1	2	3	4	5
School-Community Relations	1	2	3	4	5
Strategic Planning	1	2	3	4	5
Collaboration	1	2	3	4	5
School Law	1	2	3	4	5
Facilities (planning, construction, & operations)	1	2	3	4	5
Data Analysis for Instructional Improvements	1	2	3	4	5
Being familiar with Board Policies and their impact on the school district	1	2	3	4	5
Conflict Management Training and Application	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge of Federal Programs such as Title I, IIA, III, ESOL, Migrant	1	2	3	4	5
Information on NCLB/Waivers	1	2	3	4	5

Preparing Grants at the federal, state, & local levels	1	2	3	4	5
Professional Development for Faculty & Staff	1	2	3	4	5
Personal Time Management	1	2	3	4	5
Work-Family Balance	1	2	3	4	5
Personal Stress Management	1	2	3	4	5

1. Describe your mentoring experience as a women superintendent.

2. What was the first topic you and your mentor addressed in the superintendency?

3. How would you describe your mentoring experience?

4. What leads you to say it was a _____ type of mentoring relationship?

5. What positive experiences have you had based on your mentoring experience as a women superintendent?

6. What negative experiences have you had based on your mentoring experience as a women superintendent?

7. As a women superintendent what has been the most beneficial part of your mentoring experience?

8. Why was _____ the most beneficial in this role?

9. Describe what elements that an effective mentoring program would contain for women superintendents based on your experience.

10. Why do you believe these elements are most beneficial?

11. What advice would you provide to aspiring women superintendents when searching for a mentor?

No Board Left Behind: Perceptions of Local Board Governance Standards by Superintendents and Chairpersons

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

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This nonexperimental survey research investigated whether enrollment, location, expenditures, percentage of free and reduced lunch and percentage of minority students influenced Georgia's superintendent and board chairperson satisfaction. In addition, this study investigated whether respondents' satisfaction could predict student achievement. Finally, this study investigated whether superintendents valued professional standards differently than board chairpersons. Findings revealed a great deal of satisfaction held and agreement between superintendents and board chairpersons, but no significant difference in satisfaction levels based on district enrollment, percentage of minority students, or district location. Board chairpersons of districts with higher percentages of students receiving free and reduced lunch were significantly less satisfied than board chairpersons of districts with lower percentages of students receiving free and reduced lunch. Board chairperson satisfaction significantly predicted student achievement and graduation rate. Finally, results illustrated superintendents ranked the importance of ethics significantly higher than board chairpersons.

Introduction

Since the advent of NCLB, accountability has been the buzzword in education. Students, parents, teachers, and administrators have felt the pressure of increased accountability measures. Yet, the governing bodies of local education enjoyed immunity until 2005 when Georgia's Lanier County Schools became the first school district in 40 years to have their accreditation suspended. Between 2005 and 2011, eight school districts in the country had their accreditation formally downgraded because of school board misconduct (Associated Press, 2011). Notably, six of the eight districts were located in Georgia. The most extreme case was in 2008 when accreditation was revoked from Georgia's Clayton County School District due to school board ethics violations. Although not specific to school boards, the recent State Integrity Investigation released by The Center for Public Integrity and Global Integrity ranked Georgia's politicians and policymakers as 50th of the states in the nation for ethical behavior and policies (Sheinin & Joyner, 2012).

Faced with the brutal fact that more school boards in Georgia had been formally warned than the six that received formal sanctions, the state developed Georgia's local board governance standards (LBGS) accompanied by more stringent professional learning requirements. As school boards familiarized themselves with the standards to which they were to be held accountable, the next step of improvement was for school boards to evaluate their current performance and to set future goals. The possible threat of school board members compromising their standards and jeopardizing student achievement provided the reason for this study. This research investigated the level of satisfaction superintendents and school board chairpersons had with their performance on the LBGS, the values they embraced, and the potential that student achievement could be predicted from their levels of satisfaction.

Significance of the Study

Almost 300 years ago, concerned citizens would gather at informal town hall meetings to discuss education issues before the institution of the first U.S. school board in 1721 founded in Massachusetts (Provenzo, 2008). These initial boards functioned on an as-needed and unpaid basis (Glass, Björk, & Brunner, 2000). However, a shift occurred in the 1900s when the role of school board members shifted from educational philosophers to managers precipitated by the increased presence of business professionals on school boards and with the advent of Frederick Douglas's Scientific Management theory. The focus of schools then shifted from educating to training (Glass et al., 2000).

In the 20th century, a shift in power occurred from local control to an increase in federal influence. Walser (2009) pointed out the average voter turnout for school board elections nationally was a dismal 10% indicating very little accountability to the local public at this time. The school district consolidation movement also diluted local control, as Meier (2009) reported that in her lifetime the number of school board members had declined from 200,000 to 20,000. With 9 out of 10 school boards dismantled since 1940, personal local accountability has declined in favor of federal and state measurable data points such as standardized achievement tests (Lawrence, 2004). With the NCLB act the quantification of education led to a numbers game (Lawrence, 2004; Lee, 2010; Medina & Riconscente, 2006), this quest to manipulate the system had an adverse effect on the school district according to 68% of school board members (Nylander, 2009).

Seeking a resolution for the problems in public schools, several solutions have threatened the very existence of the traditional school board. The current U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, endorsed dismantling the local board and handing over the control of public schools to city mayors (Hechinger & Sataline, 2009). While the alternative mayoral control held true to the value of local accountability, Henig and Hess (2010) and Miller (2008) favored the extinction of local boards in favor of national control. Their rationale included the demand for U.S. schools to compete globally rather than locally, and many nations with higher levels of student achievement have national control of education. Believing in the value of competition, Vail (2007) and Miller (2008) predicted that local boards will play a part in the demise of public education and prophesized that their role will become nothing more than managing the contracts of private or profitable organizations such as the charter schools.

Vail (2007) asserted all school board members were politicians despite their claims to the contrary. Non-partisan did not mean nonpolitical (Martin, 1969). As Garza (2008) explained, it is impossible to take politics out of decisions. Therefore, Farmer (2009) and Stover (2009) encouraged school board members to harness their political power for the benefit of students.

Political power could prove to be beneficial since student achievement has been found to be positively correlated with school board performance (Krueathep, 2008; Strauss, 2011). Supporting that conclusion, a meta-analysis of 4,500 studies established that district level leadership, including school board governance, had a significant impact on student achievement (Marzano & Waters, 2009). Ironically, Ward (2004) found staying focused on student achievement was the hardest part of the job.

Though the job of the school board is multifaceted, two components consistently surfaced within the literature as essential to success. Building and maintaining positive relationships, as well as working collaboratively, were found crucial. Kennedy and Barker's (1987) research across 42 states found an essential characteristic for success was for school board chairpersons to value the mastery of relationships. In fact, Kimball (2005) and Hoyle (2007) both agreed the ability to master positive relationships was the singular key to success. During an extensive review of the literature, Grogan (2000) indicated that poor relationships were the most frequently cited reasons for superintendent failure. Superintendents reported to Lamkin (2006) that their biggest challenge was maintaining positive relationships.

Stillman and Hurlburt (2011) concurred that relationships were important, but reported it was teamwork that produced results. Brazer, Rich, and Ross (2010) also found successful superintendents understood the importance of collaboration when making strategic decisions. Furthermore, as boards strived to achieve tactical goals, Arcement (2007) and Marzano and Waters (2009) asserted that collaboration was essential.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine superintendents and school board chairpersons' satisfaction with their perceived boards' performance on Georgia's LBGS and the prediction of student achievement. The research also sought to attain information regarding the value judgments superintendents and school board chairpersons placed on the importance of the domains categorizing the LBGS. Accordingly, we hoped to

provide the State Board of Education information to aide in fulfilling their obligation under the Georgia State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1-.36 (2010) to provide training programs for local school boards on the newly adopted standards.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What levels of satisfaction do superintendents and school board chairpersons hold regarding their perceived performance on the LBGS?
2. Is there a difference between superintendents and school board chairpersons' satisfaction with their perceived level of performance on the LBGS?
3. Is there a significant difference by selected district level characteristics (district enrollment, percentage of students on free and reduced lunch, percentage of minority students, district location, and total expenditures per FTE) on superintendents and school board chairpersons' satisfaction with perceived board performance on Georgia's LBGS?
4. Is superintendent or school board chairpersons' satisfaction with their perceived level of performance on the LBGS a predictor of student achievement (spring 2012 CRCT results in Reading and Math for Grades 3, 5, 8, district cohort graduation rate)?
5. Is there a difference between the rankings superintendents and school board chairpersons on the domains of the LBGS?

Methodology

The study was a nonexperimental survey research design with between group comparisons. The variables of interest included six independent variables; (a) district enrollment, (b) percentage of students on free and reduced lunch, (c) percentage of minority students, (d) district location, (e) total expenditures per FTE, and (f) the role of respondents. Dependent variables included measures of student achievement and the rank order means of the LBGS domains. Third, fifth and eighth grade reading and math scores from the 2012 spring administration of Georgia's Criterion-Referenced Competency Tests (CRCT) were utilized as measures of student achievement. The school districts' graduation rate was used to as a measure of high school student achievement. Total scores of superintendent and school board member satisfaction served as both independent and dependent variables.

Participants

Georgia school board chairpersons and superintendents served as the target population for this study. Each of the 180 school districts is governed by a school board generally consisting of five to seven elected officials. According to Georgia's Local School Board Governance Rule # 160-5-1-.36 (2010) each board must have a board chairperson from within to lead and represent the group. The board members appoint a superintendent who serves as a nonvoting member of the board. Georgia's superintendents and school board chairpersons were well represented with an overall response rate of 70% (123 of 180 (68.33%) superintendents and 129 of 180 (71.67%) school board chairpersons).

Superintendents and board chairpersons differed in their levels of experience. Superintendents (M = 5.85 years, Mdn = 5 years) were less experienced than board chairpersons (M = 11.26 years, Mdn = 9 years). The range of experience for superintendents was 22 years, while the range of experience for board chairpersons was 31 years.

Instrumentation

The survey administered in this study consisted of three sections. First, respondents were presented with the 17 LBGS and asked to rate their level of satisfaction with their board's performance based on a six point rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly dissatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied). Next, participants were asked to rank in order of their importance, 1 (most important) to 8 (least important), the domains of the LBGS: (a) governance structure, (b) strategic planning, (c) board and community relations, (d) policy development, (e) board meetings, (f) personnel, (g) financial governance, and (h) ethics. Finally, the survey asked four demographic type questions.

Content validity was established by an instrument review panel consisting of assistant superintendents and school board members. In addition, the survey was submitted to the Georgia School Board Association (GSBA) and Georgia Superintendents Association (GSSA) for review and comments. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was used to assess the reliability of scores. Cronbach's alpha for the 17-item satisfaction scale was .95.

Data Collection

After IRB approval of the study, each superintendent and school board chairperson of the 180 school districts in Georgia were mailed a paper copy of the survey accompanied by a cover letter with a link to the electronic version of the survey and a self-addressed stamped return envelope. Participants were provided multiple avenues to respond in hopes of increasing their response rate (Dillman & Christian, 2005). Follow-up emails were sent to all nonrespondents reminding them of the study and ensuring confidentiality of her of his responses. Attempts were made to conduct phone interviews with all superintendents and school board chairpersons who did not complete the survey by paper or electronically.

In addition to the survey data, Georgia Department of Education (GADOE) databases provided the necessary data for analysis. Data included CRCT scores (percentage of students meetings and exceeding standards) for third, fifth, and eighth grades and graduation rates from high schools. In addition, collected district demographic information included (a) total number of students, (b) percentage of students on free and reduced lunch, (c) percentage of minority students, and (d) total expenditures per FTE. Finally, information from the U.S. Census Bureau helped to determine whether each school district was rural or urban.

Data Analysis

All data were imported into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for a two-step quantitative process of descriptive then inferential analysis. First, descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency and variability were calculated to indicate superintendent and school board chairperson satisfaction with their board's performance on the LBGS. In addition, the percentage of agreement between superintendents and school board chairpersons of the same district were generated. Before inferential statistics were run, statistical considerations and assumptions were assessed. All assumptions were met or accounted for through the use of alternative statistical tests. For example, since equal variances could not be assumed when running the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch, the Welch's F test was reported rather than the standard F test. The statistical analyses included the one-way ANOVA, independent means t test, multiple regression, and Mann Whitney U. The Bonferroni adjustment was applied in order to maintain the overall alpha level of .05.

Results

Superintendents and board chairpersons rated how satisfied they were with their boards' performance by choosing from a satisfaction scale ranging from a low of 1(very dissatisfied) to a high of 7 (very satisfied). Table 1 presents the number and percentage of superintendent responses by question, while Table 2 presents the number and percentage of board chairperson responses by question. Both superintendents (99%) and chairpersons (98%) expressed their greatest cumulative satisfaction on the question related to announcing and holding board meetings according to state law. For this question, both superintendents (85%) and board chairpersons (89%) reported the highest percentage of being very satisfied. Alternatively, the superintendents and chairpersons reported the lowest percentage of being very satisfied within the board and community relations' domain. Superintendents (25%) expressed their smallest percentage of being very satisfied regarding how well their board guarantees a process for resolution to stakeholder issues and concerns. The smallest percentage of board chairpersons (30%) reporting being very satisfied was related to the board creating a culture where input is sought and heard.

Table 1

Number and Percentage of Superintendent Responses by Question

Item	Level of satisfaction									
	1 n (%)	2 n (%)	3 n (%)	4 n (%)	5 n (%)	6 n (%)	7 n (%)	Mdn	M	SD
Domain I: Governance Structure										
1	0 (0)	3 (2)	8 (7)	0 (0)	12 (10)	38 (31)	62 (50)	7	6.11	1.26
2	0 (0)	4 (3)	7 (6)	1 (1)	10 (8)	41 (33)	60 (49)	6	6.09	1.28
3	0 (0)	5 (4)	7 (6)	2 (2)	19 (15)	45 (37)	45 (37)	6	5.85	1.32
4	2 (2)	8 (7)	8 (7)	1 (1)	11 (9)	45 (37)	48 (39)	6	5.75	1.58
Domain II: Strategic Planning										
5	0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (2)	5 (4)	24 (20)	49 (40)	42 (34)	6	5.98	0.99
6	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2)	9 (7)	21 (17)	53 (43)	38 (31)	6	5.94	0.96
Domain III: Board and Community Relations										
7	0 (0)	1 (1)	9 (7)	4 (3)	15 (12)	57 (46)	37 (30)	6	5.86	1.16
8	0 (0)	1 (1)	4 (3)	4 (3)	22 (18)	50 (41)	42 (34)	6	5.97	1.04
9	0 (0)	2 (2)	4 (3)	4 (3)	22 (18)	60 (49)	31 (25)	6	5.85	1.05
Domain IV: Policy Development										
10	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (2)	12 (10)	45 (37)	63 (51)	7	6.36	0.79
Domain V: Board Meetings										
11	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	17 (14)	105 (85)	7	6.85	0.39
Domain VI: Personnel										
12	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2)	2 (2)	4 (3)	26 (21)	89 (72)	7	6.61	0.78
13	3 (2)	2 (2)	0 (0)	3 (2)	7 (6)	39 (32)	69 (56)	7	6.27	1.24
14	0 (0)	1 (1)	3 (2)	1 (1)	7 (6)	34 (28)	77 (63)	7	6.45	0.93
Domain VII: Financial Governance										
15	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)	26 (21)	94 (76)	7	6.72	0.61
16	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	4 (4)	30 (24)	88 (72)	7	6.67	0.58
Domain VII: Ethics										
17	4 (3)	5 (4)	4 (3)	3 (2)	15 (12)	29 (24)	63 (51)	7	5.92	1.58

Note. Levels of satisfaction were labeled as 1 (very dissatisfied), 2 (dissatisfied), 3 (somewhat dissatisfied), 4 (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied), 5 (somewhat satisfied), 6 (satisfied), and 7 (very satisfied).
n = 123.

Table 2

Number and Percentage of School Board Chairperson Responses by Question

	Level of satisfaction									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
Item	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	Mdn	M	SD
Domain I: Governance Structure										
1	1 (1)	1 (1)	3 (2)	1 (1)	7 (5)	45 (35)	71 (55)	7	6.34	1.03
2	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (2)	1 (1)	7 (5)	44 (34)	71 (55)	7	6.29	1.16
3	2 (2)	2 (2)	3 (2)	2 (2)	3 (2)	42 (33)	75 (58)	7	6.32	1.19
4	1 (1)	1 (1)	6 (5)	2 (2)	12 (9)	45 (35)	62 (48)	6	6.15	1.17
Domain II: Strategic Planning										
5	1 (1)	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (2)	13 (10)	53 (41)	56 (43)	6	6.17	1.03
6	1 (1)	1 (1)	3 (2)	7 (5)	17 (13)	54 (42)	46 (36)	6	5.98	1.11
Domain III: Board and Community Relations										
7	0 (0)	1 (1)	8 (6)	2 (2)	21 (16)	59 (46)	38 (30)	6	5.88	1.09
8	0 (0)	3 (2)	5 (4)	6 (5)	18 (14)	51 (40)	46 (36)	6	5.91	1.17
9	0 (0)	3 (2)	0 (0)	8 (6)	18 (14)	60 (47)	40 (31)	6	5.95	1.04
Domain IV: Policy Development										
10	0 (0)	2 (2)	1 (1)	1 (1)	6 (5)	41 (32)	78 (61)	7	6.46	0.89
Domain V: Board Meetings										
11	0 (0)	2 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2)	10 (8)	115 (89)	7	6.81	0.71
Domain VI: Personnel										
12	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)	5 (4)	0 (0)	21 (16)	101 (78)	7	6.69	0.74
13	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)	8 (6)	29 (23)	89 (69)	7	6.56	0.82
14	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)	2 (2)	5 (4)	34 (26)	86 (67)	7	6.54	0.82
Domain VII: Financial Governance										
15	0 (0)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)	2 (2)	30 (23)	94 (73)	7	6.64	0.75
16	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (2)	30 (23)	95 (74)	7	6.67	0.68
Domain VIII: Ethics										
17	3 (2)	4 (3)	3 (2)	2 (2)	9 (7)	40 (31)	68 (53)	7	6.12	1.39

Note. Levels of satisfaction were labeled as 1 (very dissatisfied), 2 (dissatisfied), 3 (somewhat dissatisfied), 4 (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied), 5 (somewhat satisfied), 6 (satisfied), and 7 (very satisfied).
n = 129.

Superintendents and board chairpersons differed on the question receiving the largest percentage of neutral ratings. Within the strategic planning domain, the question asking participants to rate their satisfaction on how well the governance leadership team monitors the system strategic plan had seven percent of superintendents state they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Six percent of board chairpersons chose the neutral response within the board and community relations' domain when rating their satisfaction on how well the board guaranteed a process for resolution to stakeholder issues and concerns.

When examining the three levels of dissatisfaction together, the largest percentage of superintendents (16%) reported being dissatisfied as related to how well their governance leadership team demonstrated a unified approach in order to ensure effective fulfillment of roles and responsibilities. For board chairpersons, three questions shared the claim for the greatest level of cumulative dissatisfaction with each having 7% of chairpersons expressing some level of dissatisfaction. When examining which question had the largest percentage of those saying they were very dissatisfied, the question related to how well board members adhere to ethical standards had the greatest percentage of responses for both superintendents (3%) and board chairpersons (2%).

Superintendent and school board chairperson median values were very similar. A median of seven, the highest possible level of satisfaction was reported for 53% of the questions for superintendents and for 65% of the questions for board chairpersons. The superintendents and board chairpersons rated all of the questions within the domains of strategic planning and board and community relations a median value of six indicating they were simply satisfied. Both groups produced a median of seven on the first question within the governance domain regarding the leadership team adhering to legal roles and responsibilities, and they both gave the last question within this domain a median of six. Board chairpersons rated their satisfaction higher than superintendents on questions related to the board executing its duties according to the law and caring out its policy making duties separate from the superintendent. There was no median below a six for either group of respondents.

The difference between superintendents and school board chairpersons' satisfaction with their perceived level of performance on the LBGS was conducted using percentage of agreement. Perfect agreement was noted when a superintendent and board chairperson from the same district indicated the exact same level of satisfaction for an item, whereas contiguous agreement occurred when there was a one point difference in either direction. Noncontiguous agreement was defined as the superintendent and chairperson from the same district selecting levels of agreement that were two or more points apart on the satisfaction scale.

Overall, superintendents and board chairpersons were in perfect agreement an average of 49% of the time (see Table 3). Scores were within one point of agreement 37% of the time. Seven items had greater than 50% perfect agreement, while three items had greater than 20% noncontiguous agreement. The largest percentage of perfect agreement was on holding board meetings according to legal standards, with 77% of superintendents reporting the exact same level of satisfaction as their corresponding board chairperson. The largest combined percentage agreement with a total of 97% of responses either perfectly matching or within one point of another was the domain related

to the board of education, upon recommendation of the superintendent, adopts a budget that adheres to state law provisions and consistent with its strategic plan.

The lowest level of perfect agreement, 35%, were questions which asked superintendents and board chairpersons to rate their satisfaction on how well their board acts as a policy-making body separate from the roles and responsibilities authorized to the superintendent, asked for the respondents' level of satisfaction with the governance leadership team providing input to and adopting the system strategic plan, and whether the board developed policies to ensure effective communication and engagement of all stakeholders.

Table 3

*Number and Percentage of Agreement between Superintendents and Board Chairpersons
from the Same District*

Item	Perfect Agreement n (%)	Contiguous Agreement n (%)	Noncontiguous Agreement n (%)
Domain I: Governance Structure			
1	41 (39)	45 (43)	18 (17)
2	47 (45)	38 (37)	19 (18)
3	36 (35)	47 (45)	21 (20)
4	43 (41)	43 (41)	18 (17)
Domain II: Strategic Planning			
5	36 (35)	50 (48)	18 (17)
6	40 (39)	44 (42)	20 (19)
Domain III: Board and Community Relations			
7	38 (37)	46 (44)	20 (19)
8	36 (35)	47 (45)	21 (20)
9	39 (38)	50 (48)	15 (15)
Domain IV: Policy Development			
10	56 (54)	38 (37)	10 (10)
Domain V: Board Meetings			
11	80 (77)	19 (18)	5 (5)
Domain V Personnel			
12	69 (66)	27 (26)	8 (8)
13	57 (55)	34 (33)	13 (13)
14	60 (58)	31 (30)	13 (13)
Domain VII: Financial Governance			
15	65 (63)	35 (34)	4 (4)
16	70 (67)	29 (28)	5 (5)
Domain VIII: Ethics			
17	45 (43)	32 (31)	27 (26)

Note. n = 104.

Regarding satisfaction on their board's ethical performance, five districts had their officials respond on polar opposite ends of the scale meaning that one was extremely satisfied while the other was extremely dissatisfied. The only other areas with

this kind of drastic disagreement were related to the board adopting personnel policies and adopting and monitoring the budget.

The t test for independent means and one-way ANOVA were utilized to determine if district level characteristics impacted the level of satisfaction among superintendents and board chairpersons. There was no significant difference by district location on superintendent satisfaction, $t(121) = -0.68$, $p = .50$, $d = 0.12$. In addition, there was no significant difference by district location on board chairperson satisfaction, $t(127) = -0.73$, $p = 94$, $d = 0.01$. Respondents from urban locales did not express significantly different levels of satisfaction from respondents in rural areas.

One-way ANOVA results indicated that the selected demographic characteristics did not have a significant effect on satisfaction for superintendents or chairpersons (see Table 4). However, Welch's F test used due to a violation of assumptions, indicated a significant difference between the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch by quartile on board chairpersons' satisfaction with their school board's performance, $F(3,65.12) = 65.12$, $p < .001$. The Games-Howell post hoc test indicated a significant difference between districts with a high percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch ($M = 103.47$, $SD = 12.19$) and those districts with the lowest percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch ($M = 113.83$, $SD = 6.64$) on board chairperson total scores.

Table 4

ANOVA Results for Superintendent and Chairperson Total Scores by Independent Variable

Variable	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial η2
Enrollment						
Superintendent	1267.03	3	422.34	2.82	.042	.07
Chairperson	162.40	3	54.14	0.45	.718	.01
Free/reduced lunch						
Superintendent	1236.03	3	412.01	2.75	.046	.07
Chairperson	1937.72	3	645.91	6.08	.001	.13
Minority						
Superintendent	1008.89	3	336.30	2.21	.090	.05
Chairperson	706.89	3	235.63	2.03	.113	.05
Expenditures per FTE						
Superintendent	915.37	3	305.12	2.00	.118	.05
Chairperson	812.91	3	270.97	2.35	.076	.05

Note. Superintendent, n = 123; Chairperson, n = 129.

Results from standard multiple regression indicated that superintendent satisfaction did not significantly predict student achievement as measured by the percentage of students meeting and exceeding standards on the reading and math CRCT

in grades 3, 5, and 8, and graduation rate (see Table 5). However, the satisfaction levels of school board chairpersons did predict, with both statistical and practical significance, student achievement as measured by third grade reading and math, fifth grade reading, and graduation rates.

For third grade reading CRCT scores, board chairpersons' satisfaction accounted for 16% of the variance. Their total scores had a medium practical effect, and superintendent total scores had a small practical effect. Similarly, overall regression results were significant for third grade math CRCT scores. The satisfaction of board chairpersons accounted for 13% of the variance in third grade math CRCT scores and had a medium practical effect while superintendent total scores had little to no practical effect. Board chairpersons also made a significant contribution to the prediction of fifth grade reading scores and accounted for 11% of the variance. Both board chairperson and superintendent total scores had a medium practical effect on fifth grade reading. Furthermore, the overall regression results were significant for graduation rates. The satisfaction of board chairpersons accounted for 9% of the variance in graduation rates. Board chairperson total scores had a medium practical effect, yet superintendents had a small to medium practical effect.

Table 5

Regression Model Summary for Student Achievement Variables

Variable	R	R2	R2 Adj	F	p	Superintendent				Chairperson			
						B	β	T	p	B	β	t	P
Grade 3 reading	.40	.16	.14	9.44	.000	.01	.02	0.23	.823	.17	.39	3.90	.000
Grade 3 math	.37	.13	.12	7.71	.001	-.05	-.07	-0.68	.500	.28	.39	3.81	.000
Grade 5 reading	.33	.11	.09	5.96	.004	.07	.17	1.65	.102	.10	.22	2.14	.040
Grade 5 math	.26	.07	.05	3.77	.026	.09	.13	1.26	.210	.14	.18	1.74	.084
Grade 8 reading	.19	.04	.02	1.85	.162	-.01	-.03	-0.27	.789	.05	.20	1.86	.066
Grade 8 math	.25	.06	.05	3.45	.036	.171	.20	1.83	.07	.11	.11	1.01	.314
Graduation Rate	.30	.09	.07	5.01	.008	.12	.14	1.35	.180	.20	.22	2.10	.038

Note. Grades 3, 5, and 8 reading and math scores were the percentage of students in the school district meeting and exceeding on Georgia's CRCT. N= 104.

When comparing superintendent and board chairperson rankings several similarities and differences should be noted. Superintendents and board chairpersons' median rankings were in agreement for five of the eight domains: (a) strategic planning, (b) board and community relations, (c) policy, (d) board meetings, and (e) personnel. However, superintendents (Mdn = 2) ranked the governance domain higher than board chairpersons (Mdn = 3). Superintendents (Mdn = 4) ranked financial governance as less important than board chairpersons (Mdn = 3). The median ranking of ethics domain also was higher for superintendents (1) than for board chairpersons (2).

Although the ethics domain had different median values between superintendents and board chairpersons, both superintendents (52%) and board chairpersons (33%) had the highest percentage of respondents choose ethics as the most important domain. Conversely, seven percent of superintendents ranked ethics as least important while 12% of board chairpersons ranked ethics as least important. No superintendents ranked the financial governance as most important; however, 14% of board chairpersons ranked financial governance as most important for the success of their school board.   The

personnel domain also had notable differences between the percentage of superintendents (26%) selecting it as the least important and board chairpersons (19%) choosing personnel as least important domain.

The Mann-Whitney U was performed to compare the rankings superintendents and school board chairpersons placed on the domains of the Local Board Governance Standards. After the Bonferroni adjustment was applied to adjust for multiple statistical procedures within one analysis, the ethics domain was the only one where there was a statistically significant difference ($U = 6272.00$, $p = .003$, $r = .189$) between the rankings of superintendents (Mdn = 1) and board chairpersons (Mdn = 2). When looking at practical significance, all but two domains had little to no effect and the domains of financial governance and ethics had a small effect.

Discussion

The last few years of multiple school board drama have produced an often unfair stereotype of meddling unethical school board members across Georgia and other states in the public eye. An internet search for "Georgia school board problems" yields over 37 million results. Grillo (2009) interviewed the president and chief executive officer of SACS who stated about 20% of Georgia's school boards had a problem. The results of this study suggest those numbers in Georgia may be declining. This study's findings point out superintendents, often represented as being at odds with their board in the media, were overwhelmingly satisfied with their school boards' performance. Also, an interesting outcome of this research was the tremendous amount of agreement in satisfaction shared by superintendents and school board chairpersons. An intense effort to present the pervasiveness of positivity among Georgia school boards collectively may be necessary to overcome the sensationalism of a few high profile ethical breaches.

Superintendents and school board chairpersons were similarly satisfied within districts and across the state despite the significantly wide range of demographics from where respondents hailed. Although the number of students enrolled, expenditures per pupil, minority enrollment, and district locations were grossly different across districts, superintendent and board chairperson satisfaction appeared to be immune to these factors. However, the percentage of students on free and reduced lunch had a significant impact on board chairperson satisfaction. Chairpersons with the lowest percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch reported significantly higher satisfaction than those chairpersons reporting from districts with a high percentage of students on free and reduced lunch. However, superintendent satisfaction was not impacted. A possible explanation could be the intense focus on effective strategies to combat poverty that is part of educational leadership and professional learning programs. Board chairpersons might not have been afforded numerous and intense learning opportunities related to overcoming poverty.

Citizens and educators may ask why it matters if superintendents and board chairpersons are satisfied with their board's performance. Despite superintendent satisfaction not meaningfully predicting student achievement in this study, board chairperson satisfaction did significantly forecast student achievement. Several notable quantitative studies corroborated the results of this research study. Zeigler and Johnson

(1972) analyzed over 1,200 politicians' interviews, voting records, and corresponding jurisdictions' student achievement scores. A significant correlation existed between politicians having a positive attitude toward education and high student achievement. Marzano and Waters (2009) also found district leadership, including the school board, had a positive relationship with student achievement after conducting a comprehensive review of 4,500 research studies published over a 35-year period. Dervarics and O'Brien (2011) clearly asserted local school boards with high achieving students demonstrated distinctly unique behaviors and beliefs from their low achieving counterparts. Even more noteworthy and relative to this study, was when districts with similar poverty levels but dramatically different student achievement levels were compared and results indicated school board factors had a significant effect on the students' success.

Former superintendents Björk and Bond (2006) agreed that school board culture set the tone for the district from the boardroom to the classroom. However, staying focused on student achievement was the hardest part of the job even though that was why the board existed, asserted former board member Ward (2004). He believed being a school board member was the most challenging job in America, but worth it when students are put first. Every action, thought, and word spoken by a superintendent or board member should be preceded and filtered by the question of how it benefits the students.

Based on the evidence in the literature and the results of this study, a clear link exists between school boards and student achievement, which leads to the question of which factors have the greatest impact on satisfaction. Not surprisingly when looking at anecdotal evidence in Georgia, the LBGS concerning ethics carried the most significant quantitative findings in this study.

Eadie (2009) found school board members who were politically dissatisfied were less effective and sometimes sought satisfaction in negative ways to fulfill their egos. As it was in Georgia, Alfen and Schmidt (2007) conducted a descriptive study on rural school boards in Utah by utilizing school board minutes from a period of 20 years and 5,250 voting decisions and identified micromanagement commonly at the heart of the turmoil. Castor (2007) maintained board micromanagement of superintendents and administrators occurred for several reasons such as lack of honest information, distrust, or desire for power. Grady and Bryant's (1991) interviews with 31 superintendents found the majority of superintendent conflicts with school board members were caused from board members asking for exceptions for family members and friends. Board members often impeded success when they pursued their personal interests and goals, in opposition to and distracting from, district goals (Marzano & Waters, 2009).

Despite the threat of losing accreditation and enduring negative publicity, ethical issues persist for several reasons. Björk and Blasé (2009) asserted it was difficult for superintendents to take "corrective action" on school board members when needed, due to the fact that the board held the power to hire and fire the superintendent. Not recognizing, and definitely not publicizing, a need for change was also advantageous for sitting board members who may run for reelection (Rothstein, Jacobson, & Wilder, 2009). Helterbran's (2008) research of superintendents, board members, principals, and aspiring leaders found that the school board rarely analyzed ethics issues. In addition, his research indicated superintendents often found themselves in a conflict between the

ethics of duty, implementation of the board's decision, and their personal code of ethics. Superintendents often had to choose between the politics of pleasing the board or what they believed was the right thing to do (Helterbran, 2008). Georgia's current structure of an elected board that appoints the superintendent is not likely to change in the near future, and from the results of this study, there is little impetus for that change to occur. However, superintendents and board members should work together to form relationships where holding each other accountable to the highest standards is accepted and respected.

Limitations

An earnest attempt was made to eliminate and minimize limitations. Readers should consider several factors related to the participants. First, participants may have varying definitions of and degrees of what they deemed satisfaction along with their individual interpretations of the LBGS. Another consideration to reflect upon is the degree of honest reporting of satisfaction levels. The survey asked superintendents and school board chairpersons to self-report their satisfaction related to their perceptions of their school board's performance. Including participants who are not members of the school board could minimize the shortcomings of self-reporting. Finally, causality may not be established or inferred. Since this research was not experimental, a conclusion that one variable caused another was not possible; however, the current research design identified differences and determined predictability.

Conclusion

There was a great deal of agreement between superintendents and board chairpersons in the state of Georgia regarding satisfaction with board performance on the LBGS. Superintendent satisfaction did not appear to be a product of district demographic variables; however, school board chairperson satisfaction was susceptible to the poverty level of their community as measured by the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunch.

Concerning student achievement, superintendent satisfaction was not a significant predictor; however, school board chairperson satisfaction yielded significant results. Student achievement as measured by third grade reading and math, fifth grade reading CRCT, and cohort graduation rate could be predicted based on chairperson satisfaction scores. Each of these variables had a medium to large effect size indicating practical significance.

Outcomes of this study revealed superintendents and board chairpersons have the least satisfaction with and lowest levels of agreement within the LBGS domain of ethics. These results indicate superintendent and school board chairperson professional learning in the state should be focused on, as Carver (2000) described, creating the necessary yet delicate balance between micromanagement and rubber stamping that school board members must achieve for maximum effectiveness.

Although superintendents and board chairpersons were least satisfied with and had the lowest levels of agreement within the ethics domain, both groups ranked ethics as the most important domain to the successful operation of the school board. Conversely, they ranked school board meetings as the least important domain while both superintendents and board chairpersons reported their greatest satisfaction and most

agreement within the board meetings domain. Moving forward, superintendents and board chairpersons must work as a team to focus on their priorities. If, as they reported, they believe ethics is the most important determinant of their success then more attention, dedication, and collaboration should be taken to ensure better ethical performance, which, in turn, will lead to a greater level of satisfaction and improved student achievement.

An exhaustive review of the literature by Dervarics and O'Brien (2011) noted the majority of research on school boards and student achievement was qualitative. Therefore, this research contributes to the limited quantitative based literature on student achievement as related to superintendents and school board chairpersons. The results of this study emphasized the need to replicate this study in other states across the nation that could indicate regional and state differences. Also, future research is indicated to expand the participants beyond the superintendent and school board chairperson to other school board members, assistant superintendents, and possibly the superintendent/school board administrative assistant.

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Local Board Governance Standards Performance Satisfaction Survey

ISENT: *The purpose of the study is to examine superintendent and school board chairperson satisfaction with their school board's performance on Georgia's Local nce Standards (LBGS) as a predictor of student achievement and explore the values placed on the domains of the LBGS. All responses will be kept strictly confidential, -level results will be reported. Your submission of this survey indicates your consent for participation.*

Please circle the number that most closely corresponds to your level of satisfaction with your board's performance.

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Dissatisfied or Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
vernance Structure							
nce leadership team is comprised of the local board of education and the and adheres to appropriate roles and responsibilities, as defined in the state te law, local act and board policy.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
nce leadership team executes its duties as defined in the state constitution, state board rules consistent with local board policies, accreditation edures and ethical standards, which govern its conduct.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
cts as a policy-making body separate from the roles and responsibilities e superintendent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
nce leadership team demonstrates a unified approach to governing the n order to assure effective fulfillment of roles and responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
trategic Planning							
nce leadership team provides input to and adopts the system strategic plan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d as needed, utilizing the adopted strategic planning process, the dership team monitors and reports progress on performance measures.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
oard and Community Relations							
nce leadership team develops a process for creating a culture where input is nd valued.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
evelops policies to ensure effective communication and engagement of all which support the strategic plan, desired culture and continuous f the school system.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
nce leadership team ensures processes that develop, communicate and dures for communications by stakeholders which result in resolution of ems supporting the strategic plan, desired culture and continuous f the school system	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
olicy Development							
f education adopts, revises, and follows written policies that are clear, up-to- mpliance with the school system's strategic plan, state constitution, state s and state board rules.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ard Meetings							
nounces and holds meetings in accordance within local board policy and ings Law (O.C.G.A. §50-14-1).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neither Dissatisfied or Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
I: Personnel							
...rd of education employs a superintendent who acts as the Executive Officer of ...system.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...rd of education evaluates the professional performance of the superintendent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...rd adopts personnel policy that is implemented by the superintendent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
II: Financial Governance							
...rd of education upon recommendation of the superintendent adopts a budget ...s to State law provisions and consistent with its strategic plan.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...rd of education adopts policy for sound fiscal management and monitors the ...ation of the budget in accordance with state laws and regulations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
III: Ethics							
...rd of education adheres to, adopts and practices a Code of Ethics, avoids ...f interest, and annually reviews ethical standards to ensure and enhance ...e structure and organizational effectiveness.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

...nk each of the domains (1) most important to (8) least important according to their necessity for a successful school board.

___ Governance Structure
___ Board Meetings
___ Personnel
___ Strategic Planning
___ Financial Governance
___ Board & Community Relations
___ Ethics
___ Policy Development

...rcle the response that most closely matches your level of familiarity with Georgia's Local Board Governance Standards?

Unfamiliar   Slightly Familiar   Moderately Familiar   Very Familiar

Write in the name of your school district: _____

...ircle the response that indicates your role within the school district: Superintendent   or   School Board Chairperson

Write in how many *years* you have served as the superintendent or a board member for your current school district: _____

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Separating Wheat from Chaff: How Secondary School Principals' Core Values and Beliefs Influence Decision-Making Related to Mandates

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Research conducted by Larsen and Hunter (2013, February) identified a clear pattern in secondary school principals' decision-making related to mandated change: more than half of participants' decisions were based on core values and beliefs, requiring value judgments. Analysis of themes revealed that more than half of administrative decisions require secondary principals to make value-based judgments by filtering issues through their core values and beliefs. This ethics-based decision-making is evident in both black and white issues, and in more complex and nuanced circumstances. The research presented in this article extends the initial examination (Larsen & Hunter, 2013, February), confirming that decision-making must consider non-rational variables, and that political and structural variables complicate what may at first look like a straightforward decision. The research questions that guided this study were:

- *How are principals' core values and beliefs manifested in their descriptions of thought processes that attend decision-making?*
- *To what extent, or in what circumstances, may those espoused values be modified or displaced by mandates that emanate from the district, state, or federal level?*
- *How, if at all, do principals resolve the cognitive disequilibrium that a mandate creates when it conflicts with their espoused core values?*

The current study documents how secondary principals weigh mandates, compare those against their core values, and then consider how to meet the prescribed requirement while maintaining their commitment to their core values.

Introduction

Past research has documented how reform cycles occur and that change has certain organizational characteristics, both in the rational and non-rational areas (Bowditch & Buono, 1997; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Callahan, 1962; Grogan, 1996; Murphy & Hallinger, 1993; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Tyack & Hansot, 1982; Yukl, 1998; Zaltman, Florio, & Sikorski, 1977). There has been some exploration of the pressures and constraints that administrators face in balancing change and the status quo (Collins, 2007; Fullan, 1991; Fullan, 2001; Murphy, 2013; Sergiovanni, 1999). This considerable body of literature describes actions that principals should take in leading various change initiatives, and further describes effective school leadership from a variety of perspectives. Past research has addressed school change and the range of issues that a principal might encounter organizationally. However, there is little research that describes or explains the thought processes behind what school leaders do as they lead change initiatives, and, particularly, what they do to lead mandated change that may be in conflict with their core values and beliefs (Hallinger, Leithwood, & Murphy, 1993; Schlecty, 2007).

For a school principal, the security of clearly articulated mandates is often challenged by the reality of values-laden questions as to whether externally imposed requirements are congruent with the administrator's fundamental beliefs. The primary purpose of the current study is to explore how secondary school principals form decisions relevant to mandated change and school improvement that are simultaneously balanced against their core values and espoused beliefs.

Through surveys and focused interviews with secondary school administrators in the Pacific Northwest, this study explores the sparsely mapped terrain an administrator must traverse using her/his core values as a guiding compass when confronted with the challenges of daily decision-making. Many of the principal's most challenging decisions lead to an "either-or" outcome. By probing the landscape of mandated change and accountability demands, this study explores how secondary school administrators balance implementing externally-imposed requirements against the need to maintain cognitive equilibrium through actions that reflect their core values and beliefs.

Past research has shown that this cognitive balancing is neither a simple nor rational process, either mentally or in terms of daily organizational logistics (Blumer, 1969; Fullan, 2001). When decision-making variables create internal disequilibrium for leaders, where their core values and beliefs are in conflict with mandates, they often experience a need to balance competing ethical demands. On one side of the balance scale, leaders are employees who are required to comply with organizational requirements; on the other side, they are moral agents, relying on their internal values and expertise to guide the organization. This highlights what researchers have known for a long time: "Ethical situations often require that hard choices be made under complex and ambiguous circumstances" (Strike, Haller, & Soltis, 1998, p. 3). This study examines and describes how principals manage conflicting demands, where they must meet moral obligations to implement mandated change, and yet remain true to their core values and beliefs when mandates create internal disequilibrium.

Informed by relevant literature, the following research questions guided the investigation:

- How are principals' professional core values manifested in their descriptions of thought processes that attend decision-making?
- To what extent, or in what circumstances, may those espoused values be modified or displaced by mandates that emanate from the district, state, or federal level?
- How, if at all, do principals resolve the cognitive disequilibrium that a mandate creates when it conflicts with their espoused core values?

Review of the Literature

Introduction

This study examines leaders who are managing mandates. We proposed to describe the thinking and core beliefs behind administrators' decisions and actions. Therefore, a basic grounding in administrative behavior and cognition is important as a guide to understanding the connections between reasoning and acting. Toward this end, the literature review is divided into three sections: (a) educational and organizational change, (b) school leadership and administrative behavior, and (c) administrator cognition and symbolic interactionism.

Educational and Organizational Change

For decades, research, literature, and empirical evidence have reinforced that a purely rational-linear approach to change, especially state and federally-centralized mandated change, is not effective. Diane Ravitch (2010) speaks to the failures of a federally-centralized set of mandates with which public schools are currently grappling. Ravitch's commentary is easily summarized: it's a disaster. However, Ravitch's observations and assertions are only contemporary iterations of what research and empirical evidence have revealed for many years. For instance, the RAND change agent studies in the 1970s showed that change initiatives must be adapted to fit the organizational context, and that non-rational aspects of change impact outcomes (Berman & McLaughlin, 1975). The RAND studies helped develop a deeper recognition that change is systemic, involves a continuous improvement process, and is molded by many contextual variables (Fullan, 2007).

Furthermore, research by Hargreaves and Goodson (2006) indicates that high schools have resisted wave after wave of change, pulling back to traditional high school realities after navigating reform pressures. This recognition of persistent resistance by secondary schools to change is not new. The RAND studies indicated this tendency; Berman and McLaughlin (1975) summarized the data from the RAND research, noting that the receptiveness of the institution was a variable in the change process. "An implementation strategy that promotes mutual adaptation is critical" (p. x). Mutual adaptation refers to the need of the individuals in the organization to adapt to the change, and the need for the change to adapt to the needs and realities of the individuals in the

organization. In other words, successful change was possible when the organization influenced the innovation and when the innovation influenced the organization.

More recent literature reinforces this need for mutual adaptation in relationship to professional learning communities. When local actors—teachers and principals—are involved in and have influence over change initiatives, sustainable change is more likely to occur (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Leonard & Leonard, 2005). However, in the absence of this dynamic, research indicates that there are few successful initial forays and even fewer long-term successful implementations of mandated change (Berman & McLaughlin, 1975; Fullan, 2007; McLaughlin, 1984; McLaughlin, 1989).

Sashkin and Egermeier (1992) reviewed 30 years of educational change and identified the differing perspectives, strategies, and principles. They note that:

> Three perspectives that have been most influential in educational change are: (1) the rational-scientific perspective which posits that change is created by the dissemination of innovative techniques, (2) the political perspective (the "top-down" approach) which brings about change through legislation and other external directives, and (3) the cultural perspective (the "bottom-up" approach) which seeks to influence change by encouraging value changes within organizations. The strategies used for change in schools are just as varied as the perspectives that propel them: the aims are to (1) fix the parts (curricula, teaching methods), (2) fix the people, (3) fix the schools, and (4) fix the system. (p. 1)

The authors aver that the fourth strategy, fixing the system, is the most apt approach to effective educational change. They explain that a comprehensive "restructuring" approach combines the strategies of fixing the parts, people, and the school, incorporating both the rational-scientific and the political perspectives (Sashkin & Egermeier, 1992).

Sashkin and Egermeier's assertions about effective management of change are echoed by others who have written specifically and generally about transformational leadership (e.g., Bass & Avolio, 1990; Burns, 1978; Senge, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1999). Cummings and Worley (2014) focus mainly on the business world; however, their perspectives on transformational change are applicable to educational organizations. They state that, when organizations attempt more than minor adjustments, the process requires change leaders to consider the dynamics of transformational change:

> Organization transformation implies radical changes in how members perceive, think, and behave at work. These changes go far beyond making the existing organization better or fine-tuning the status quo. They are concerned with fundamentally altering the prevailing assumptions about how the organization functions and relates to its environment. Changing these assumptions entails significant shifts in corporate values and norms and in the structures and organizational arrangements that shape members' behaviors. Not only is the magnitude of change greater, but it can fundamentally alter the qualitative nature of the organization. (p. 530)

Zaltman, Florio, and Sikorski (1977) underline the importance of considering both the rational and the non-rational aspects of change. "The success of a rational strategy depends very much on getting the user to accept change for itself rather than for some other reason. Thus, the change must be tied clearly and directly to perceived needs" (p. 318). This research highlights a core concept in the literature: voluntary change often connects to perceived needs more easily than mandated change, which is often perceived as unneeded. Johnson (1996) supports this idea as well, explaining that locale and context influence educational change.

School Leadership and Administrative Behavior

That a principal's leadership is critical to the success of a school is reflected in much of the work that discusses principals as instructional leaders (Joyce, Wolf, & Calhoun, 1993; Lieberman, 1995; Marzano, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1987, 1999; Tschannen-Moran, 2013). Lashway (1997) synthesized an extensive body of research on leadership. He found that three broad strategies appear in most discussions of leadership: hierarchical, transformational, and facilitative. He concluded that different problems require different approaches. Joyce and Calhoun (1996) corroborate Lashway's work: a single system or way of doing things is not necessarily effective. Much of the research on traits, behaviors, and skills has contributed to our understanding that effective leadership is highly contextual (Barth, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1990; Bowers & Seashore, 1966; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; House & Mitchell, 1974; Mintzberg, 1973; Morse & Wagner, 1978; Page, 1985; Senge, 1990; Wilson, O'Hare, & Shipper, 1990; Yukl, Wall, & Lepsinger, 1990).

Transformational leadership was conceptualized by Burns (1978) from research conducted on political leadership. He described transforming leadership as a process by which "leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation" (p. 20). Transformational leadership appeals to, "an existing need or demand of a potential follower. . . . The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (p. 4).

Yukl (1998) and Leithwood (2007) contrast this picture of leadership with "transactional" leadership. Yukl (1998) explains that transactional leadership "motivates followers by appealing to their self-interest" (p. 325). Leithwood (2007) adds, "[Transactional] approaches relied heavily on extrinsic forms of motivation, an exchange of extrinsic rewards such as salary, social status, and perks of various sorts for employees' work on behalf of the organization" (p. 185). Transformational leaders, by contrast, attempt to get followers to follow by winning their trust, admiration, mutual respect, and willingness to work hard to accomplish more.

Administrator Cognition

How administrators cognitively frame reality, or how they make sense of organizational variables, is central to this study. Leaders both consciously and unconsciously process (i.e., perceive, categorize, and interpret) situations as they define reality and design plans

of action. Because schools are complex organizations, leaders are often faced with ambiguous or conflicting situations that must be mentally processed to develop plans of action. Successful school leaders have learned to use cognitive schemata that weigh the most critical organizational factors in the social, structural, political, and symbolic arenas (Bolman & Deal, 1993).

Glidewell (1993) described research into the cognition of 69 CEOs between 1969 and 1983. The research sought to describe the factors that influenced CEOs to change their minds. The results from this longitudinal study reveal that the subjects in the study were significantly influenced by cognitive constructions: value conflicts, their beliefs about what was effective, what they perceived as their social networks' opinions, and social pressures. In a similar vein, Raun and Leithwood (1993) reviewed the relevant literature about the impact a leader's values have on decision-making and concluded that, for the leader, the influence of values is an inseparable element of decision-making. "Values" is a construct, a set of core internal beliefs that define an ideal reality; these values are used by leaders to develop action plans for aligning actual reality with their "ideal" reality. "What principals do depends on what they think" (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1993, p. 106).

Symbolic Interactionism: Creating Meaning Leads to Actions

Blumer (1969) dismisses the underlying behavioristic view that humans create action based on stimulus-response interpretations of problems and objects, where there is a causal line drawn between the object, event, or problem and the action taken to address it. Actions are a result of meaning-making that people accomplish during a process of interpretation that is built on a long history of social interaction with others and with the self (Blumer, 1969).

> First, the actor indicates to himself the things toward which he is acting; he has to point out to himself the things that have meaning. . . . Second, by virtue of this process of communicating with himself, interpretation becomes a matter of handling meanings . . . . (p. 5)

Whereas a behavioristic view of decision-making sees a direct causal link between an object, problem, or event and the action taken to address it, symbolic interactionism sees a link between the object, problem, or event and the meaning that a person assigns to it. After an interpretive process that assigns meaning, a causal link is created between the meaning of the object, problem, or event and the action that is taken by the person.

All actions are intentional. People internally account for things they perceive and then act based on their perceptions. However, the link is not between the thing and the action, but between the internally-created meaning and the action (Blumer, 1969).

Change Themes

It is well established that change creates cultural resistance (Fullan, 1996, 2001; Joyce, 1990). The research of both Fullan and Joyce shows that change initiatives often fail due

to managers' failure to recognize and deal with the cultural norms and needs that shape the organization. In organizations, observable activities and processes are driven by a huge, largely hidden, mass of interrelated cultural norms and issues. ". . . A school's culture has far more influence on life and learning in the schoolhouse than the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal can ever have" (Barth, 2007, p. 159). To manage mandated change effectively, a leader must consider how the initiative affects the culture of the organization. Since change frequently elicits resistance, the administrator must anticipate it, knowing that it will be more intense when change comes as a mandate, especially if the mandate does not clearly connect to teachers' core values and beliefs. When educators do not see the connection between state mandates and what they think they are supposed to do, an environment of resistance may well ensue (Goldman & Conley, 1997).

Methodology

This study uses a mixed-method approach (Creswell, 2014; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010). Since the researchers focused on core values and external mandates as experienced by administrators at the secondary level, participants identified for the current study were chosen based on their experiences as assistant principals and principals in middle schools and high schools. The population for the study was determined purposefully through criterion sampling (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010), based on the belief that participants selected have particular knowledge or experience related to the study's focus. The researchers asked school superintendents and other upper-level district administrators to nominate principals and assistant principals whom they considered to provide a benchmark for ethical, well-reasoned decisions. Balance and variety were priorities that guided the nomination process (Stake, 1995).

These reputational nominations identified sixteen administrators currently serving as secondary principals or assistant principals. Of these, nine agreed to participate: one middle school assistant principal, one middle school principal, one high school assistant principal, and six high school principals. Of these, two were female—one a middle-school assistant principal and one a high school principal. All nine participants identified themselves as between 35 and 45 years of age, with a median experience in education of 16.5 years. They have served in school administration an average of 6.9 years.

Survey Data

Initial data for the study were collected using a survey instrument that was emailed to participants. In addition to seeking information about each participant's age, gender, number of years of experience in education, years in education administration, title of current position, and college or university where the participant completed her or his principal preparation, the survey posed 10 questions. These included yes/no queries: Two of the key questions used were: "Do you ever feel compelled to set aside your personal/professional values in decision making?" and, "Do you ever feel compelled to

set aside your personal/professional core beliefs and values because of mandates emanating from district, state, or federal policies?"

Other questions asked the participant to identify a ratio that represented the percentage of daily decisions that would be considered black/white, or right/wrong, versus the percentage of situations that called for the participant to exercise her or his judgment based on personal or professional core beliefs. The survey also allowed the participant to provide open-ended examples of circumstances that she or he deemed black/white or right/wrong, as well as examples of nuanced decisions for which no clearly prescribed policy might serve as a guide.

The researchers aggregated the survey responses, including the narrative reflections offered by participants. Discipline of students and evaluation of teachers were among categories identified by some respondents as representing black/white or right/wrong examples; however, other respondents identified these same examples as requiring a nuanced approach. These divergent perspectives, and others like it, led the researchers to conduct a focused interview with participants in an effort to probe the thinking of secondary school administrators.

Focused-Interview Data

In order to tease out the meaning behind some of the narrative data, four of the nine participants took part in an hour-long conversation with the researchers, responding to open-ended questions (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010; Stake, 1995), providing detailed descriptions and explanations concerning ideas advanced by participants in the survey instrument. As Stake (1995) explains, "The purpose [of the focused interview strategy] for the most part is not to get simple yes and no answers but description of an episode, a linkage, an explanation" (p. 65). With the permission of the participants, the conversation was recorded and then transcribed verbatim.

Both the survey data and the transcript of the focused interview were analyzed using standard qualitative research strategies of constant-comparison and coding (Creswell, 2014; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010; Strauss, 1987). The researchers combed the survey data for evidence of themes; similarly, the transcript from the focused interviews invited a systematic examination of recurrent topics. Initial open coding guided axial coding (Strauss, 1987). The examination of data from the focused interviews allowed the researchers to triangulate the data from the survey responses with perceptions shared by the focused-interview participants (Creswell, 2014; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010; Stake, 1995).

Discussion

The researchers first considered the data that emerged from the survey that participants completed. On the survey, respondents reported that a mean of 36% of the decisions they face are black or white, right or wrong. One outlier reported only 5% of her/his decisions permitted a black-and-white approach, while two respondents said 70% of their decisions had unambiguous dimensions. Kidder (1995) helps provide perspective on these polar positions by explaining that, when a leader holds an apparently hard-edged perspective

like this, it is unlikely to demand that the leader examine her or his most fundamental values: "If you've already defined one side [of a decision] as flat-out, unmitigated 'wrong,' you don't usually consider it seriously" (p. 17).

On the survey, several themes emerged as examples of decisions offering the administrator black-and-white clarity: evaluation of teachers; discipline of students; school budget; the requirement to report suspected child abuse; parent custody issues; issues related to employee contracts; teacher assignments based on certification/qualifications; administering the annual state assessment; and athletic code issues. A bright line between black-and-white and "nuanced" decisions might be inferred from these themes. However, when asked to identify decisions or circumstances that would require one to use her or his own personal/professional values in lieu of relying on law, policy, or procedure—which might lead to simple black/white decisions—respondents stated that some of the very decisions in the preceding list were, in fact, tinged with ambiguity.

Teacher Evaluation

Evaluation and discipline of staff were recurring themes among examples that require one's thinking to be grounded in her or his values. In the survey one respondent wrote about staff discipline: "Very seldom are two [situations] the same. Most are not cut and dried. You have to really think through what is the appropriate response for each situation." Another participant asked, "How do you handle a below-average employee who wants to transfer to another school in the district?" Participants in the focused interview similarly identified evaluation of teachers as grounded in their personal and professional core beliefs and values. For instance, while state law may clearly dictate steps the evaluator must follow in staff evaluations, application of those steps may be less well defined. One participant noted,

> You have to do the process. You have to do the evaluation. But then it becomes more of a gray issue in terms of how you actually evaluate, how you choose to use the framework. There is a lot of subjectivity within that, so that comes back to your personal values and core values.

State-prescribed rubrics used in post-observation conferences might seem to offer a degree of objectivity that would tend to standardize how an evaluator frames her or his feedback to the teacher. However, participants in the focused interview shared the perspective that inter-rater reliability may call into question how a particular evaluator assesses a teacher's classroom skills. The female high school principal explained: "At [my school], we had a situation where we had rumors going around about staff members hearing each other's [evaluation] scores, and wondering if we have certain evaluators that are, I guess, being more subjective than other ones." The solution for her administrative team was to confer with each other and other administrators in the school district "so we can try to be on the same page." Another participant in the focused interview added, "There's going to be subjectivity from person to person because people are going to interpret [the same set of observation data] differently."

Participants also noted that the student population in a teacher's classroom may require that the principal apply a discriminating lens to the process. A female high school principal said,

> I have a special education teacher who has very low students; so I go in with a different point of view than I would in an Advanced Placement classroom. I consider the students and also the curriculum that's being taught. I try to be as objective as possible, but those variables ultimately play into my decision and where I score a particular teacher on the rubric.

To this, a male high school principal added,

> I think you can try and build in objectivity, but I don't think you can get away from the subjective component. We have our own experiences as educators, and things we look for, things that we value as being successful teachers. I don't think we leave that at the door when we walk in. I don't think that's possible.

Student Discipline

Another area of surface-level contradiction can be found in the survey data, where participants identified student discipline among the administrative decisions that offer the clarity of black/white; yet, upon deeper analysis of the data, the vagaries and challenges of student discipline also bespeak the need for a nuanced approach.

Focusing on one aspect of student discipline, one survey respondent said:

> I have to set aside my own personal beliefs and values, especially when working with choices students are making. Drug use is an example. I disagree with this lifestyle, but sometimes parents do not stand in the way of their son's or daughter's actions. I must focus on what happens at school only and not [try to] control what they do when they are at home.

Concerning discipline of students, another survey respondent noted, "[There are] many gray areas that don't fit the mold. Harassment issues between middle school girls come to mind." Highlighting an ongoing concern about students vandalizing school property, one respondent asked, "Should we shut down a school bathroom that is regularly being vandalized?" Yet another noted,

> Harassment, intimidation, and bullying is one [sic] concern that comes to mind right away. We have a clear school and district policy, as well as state law, surrounding this. It is complicated, especially with social media and students remaining connected outside of school. We have to investigate each allegation and look at both sides of the issue before deciding what action to take. It is complicated, and not a black-and-white issue.

Without specifying that discipline was an underlying concern, one participant said enforcement of the school's athletic code might require a deft touch, especially where, for one student, "special circumstances" may have to be considered.

The focused interview reinforced the nuanced nature of student discipline. School administrators may develop matrices or other strategies to help ensure that, from one manifestation of student misconduct to the next similar episode, consistency guides the consequence assigned. However, one participant explained the difference between the ideal and the reality:

> Typically there is a range of consequences you could have, and there's a black-and-white rule against a certain action a kid, the student, does. And your reaction could fall within a range. You get to decide within that range. I think just about every situation is somewhat nuanced. You try to be consistent from student to student, but then there's a difference in just about every situation.

Another participant in the focused interview framed each disciplinary situation as a "learning opportunity" for the student. For each instance of student misconduct, school policy or the student handbook may prescribe a range of possible consequences. "You're treating these [circumstances] as opportunities for growth for your kids. These are learning opportunities, too." He added, "That's where the nuanced part comes in. What's the school's response, and . . . and how do you keep the dignity of the student in putting the response in place?"

Considerations arising from a student having an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) may further complicate a secondary school administrator's decision as to the consequence appropriate for misconduct. Whereas another student discipline scenario where the violator has no IEP might suggest a consequence with little ambiguity, the presence of the IEP poses additional challenges. One participant in the interview said,

> You get a student on an IEP [who] has already reached 10 days [of suspension]. So the next step on the discipline matrix would be a 10-day suspension, but you've already reached 10 days. So, how do you adjust it? What do you do there? Here's a situation where there's a lot of nuances in how you deal with something that is a black-and-white situation for just about any other student.

A middle school assistant principal reflected on the possibility of a legal challenge of a student discipline issue. She noted that "I love boobies" bracelets, more often worn by middle-level boys than girls, appear likely to require the attention of the courts as students and their supporters explore the range of appropriate student speech. "I know my meter on inappropriateness can sometimes jump pretty high," she said. Recognizing the potential for a legal challenge, she asked, "Seeing that [this could] go all the way to the Supreme Court, is this really what I want to do with my career?" Thus, though her moral compass may direct her to take a stand against what she considers offensive student expression, she may be inclined not to choose this particular battle.

School Budget and Other Issues

Budget issues surfaced in survey responses as examples of black-and-white decisions. Yet some participants also identified budget as requiring one to rely on one's personal or professional values. One respondent noted that, even with the school budget established, the school administrator must decide what to give priority within the constraints of that budget. Even though the school's site council may provide input, "what to prioritize is a yearly, monthly, and daily decision [for me]." Another noted that deciding "when to spend building budget money and when not to" to purchase items for the school requires the principal to consider more than stark numbers on a spreadsheet. A hint of the ambiguity that may attend budget-related questions arose from another response: "Should we allow a team that is playing a state regional game four hours from the school to stay overnight?" Finally, one participant lamented that, in placing budget-related issues in the hierarchy of mandates, "it's auditors first, kids second."

Other topics appeared among participants' reflections on circumstances that require the school administrator to consult her or his moral compass. Among these are: working with facilities maintenance on project timelines and considering how the schedule will affect academics or athletics; developing the master schedule for the coming school year; counseling students; unfunded mandates from the state and federal levels; using data from state assessments; and collective bargaining agreements and their impact on quality education.

One participant noted that, to date, the state where the study was conducted has not aligned curriculum with Common Core Standards; thus, the respondent noted, the administrator has no clarity of direction. Another participant said that, while the necessity to administer the state assessment is unquestioned, the resulting data are "nebulous and impossible to garner any conclusions from data analysis that would inform decision making." Regarding the master schedule, one commented that "building the schedule and how teachers are placed into it is a reflection of my priorities." One response seemed particularly poignant: "[There are] hundreds of other issues that could arise on a daily basis—upset parents, lunchroom issues, staff concerns, office procedures, safety procedures, testing schedules, etc."

Mandates

Of those who responded to the survey, only one said that she or he never feels compelled to set aside her or his personal or professional values in making decisions. The other participants not only affirmed that they *do* feel compelled to set aside their fundamental beliefs but also provided examples of these situations. For instance, they explained that they have felt pressure to make decisions that others might consider to be professionally, politically, or socially correct; but those "correct" decisions would be in conflict with what they hold as essential to *their* personal or professional values. As one participant noted, "I may not always agree personally with how some things have to happen, but politically that is what I have to do." Another participant said, "Unless you want to be sued or fired, you shouldn't put your personal opinions on anything—which may be counter-productive to quality leadership."

Regarding curriculum and staffing, another participant lamented, "When I have to approve putting student number 34 in a social studies class that already has 13 IEP students in it, that is not good for student achievement." Respondents suggested that today's secondary school principals and assistant principals must be willing to advocate for what seems right for the student, even though a parent may protest that her or his rights are trammeled as a result.

Participants expressed similar angst when they considered circumstances in which they felt compelled to set aside their core values because of mandates arising from district, state, or federal policy. One said, "Mandates are what drives this profession. Education is less of an art [and] more prescribed than 10 years ago." Another averred, "Depending on the week and what is going on at the school, I definitely feel my own beliefs and values are in conflict with mandates." Most of the participants fretted over the impact of externally imposed mandates on their perspective as educators. One noted,

> [It] seems like all we talk about in meetings are new mandates that seem to make our job more difficult. I'm worried that new [mandated] practices are going to take me away from what I have a passion to do—and that is to educate students.

Others offered circumstances in which their personal or professional priorities might take a back seat to what they feel is required of them. One participant in the focused interview highlighted the effect on his time necessitated by a state mandated evaluation process. Acknowledging that new procedures employed in observation and post-observation of teachers are designed to improve teachers' practices, this high school principal asked, "How do we do that day-in and day-out when we don't have time? For me, it's a loss of family time. You work longer *outside* of the school day. So it comes out of your hide." Another survey respondent expressed disagreement with the new evaluation requirements, but added, "I don't have a choice because of state policy." Some survey respondents said that policies that drive teacher evaluation and transfer are ineluctable realities of their work. One lamented having to "take a teacher that everyone knows is a lemon from another school because there is no other place for that teacher to go—and I have an open position."

A disconnect between the mandates of school-improvement policies and the practical challenge of policy implementation can be seen in one survey response:

> I believe my time should be spent working with students and staff. Due to federal [and] state policy, I find myself spending a lot of time revising school improvement plans (completed three in the past eight months and need to complete the fourth in three months), and working with school improvement coaches. I have had four different school improvement coaches in five years, none of whom has had experience or success with our type of school.

This theme of managing mandates surfaced frequently. Echoing that theme, one participant in the focused interview said, "Oftentimes what I feel is best for students is not what is prescribed for them. Various policies, mandates, and constant assessment

accountability have limited the scope of good teaching [in deference to] test achievement strategies." Another survey respondent said:

> The less politically-driven mandates the better. Kids should be safe, and schools should educate every child with fidelity. These are the two mandates that are indeed important. Funding should not be legislatively tied to mandates. Kids should be first, not mandates tied to whatever is the whim of the legislature.

Another secondary administrator reflected, "Mandates drive education; unfortunately, they are driven by politicians and not by educators."

Student assessment mandates were a source of concern for several participants. One respondent focused on testing of students with disabilities, noting that, under current assessment requirements, even students with profound impairments—including high-school-age students functioning at the first-grade level or below—are included in a school's assessment profile. A school that may be struggling to show improvement on state-mandated assessments may find that including the test results for *all* students further tarnishes an already grim picture of student proficiency.

Emerging Themes

The research questions that guided this study focused on identifying and describing principals' core beliefs, and how their decision-making is impacted by balancing the moral dilemma of leading mandates while maintaining their core beliefs. When the data from the study are compared to the research questions, the conceptual framework, and the existing literature, the picture that emerges is that secondary principals spend a significant amount of their mental capacity looking deeply into decisions and weighing them in relation to their core values and beliefs. Specifically, they are looking at the surface variables of mandates while comparing these prescriptions against their core values; simultaneously they are considering how to meet the mandates and maintain their commitment to their core values.

The first research question guiding the study was concerned with how beliefs and values were manifested as principals talked about their decision-making. The principals are attempting to maintain their sense of equilibrium: they want to balance their moral obligation as a public servant—tasked to lead mandate implementation—with their obligation to provide moral leadership, guiding the organization using their core professional values and beliefs that are primarily aimed at keeping kids, relationships, flexibility, and variability as priorities. This thinking is seen in their vocalized perspectives, in which they expressed their internal conflicts with mandates that do not always mesh with their core values. The core values of the administrators in this study are summarized below.

Core Values and Beliefs

In the responses of the participants, we see three major core values expressed: (1) students' needs should be first; the expectations of mandates should be second; (2) the

organization must maintain flexibility to meet the demands of variability; and (3) relationships are of primary importance. Though much could be said about the first value, that students' needs should be first, that concept seems to be fairly transparent, in light of participants' responses. However, the concepts of flexibility and relationships warrant some explanation.

Administrators in this study believe that they should have the flexibility, or more pointedly, the authority, to decide what parts of mandates match their context, and what parts do not. They hold variability as the rule, and standardization as the exception. Mandates—and, indeed, all decisions—should not be rigid. Participants felt that that they should have the flexibility to make decisions guided by context. In the words of one participant, an administrator needs the flexibility to consider "special circumstances."

Administrators in the study described how they develop internal priorities, which are organically connected to their core value that relationships are important. They explained how they consciously compare all mandates and outside pressures against their internal commitment to keep relationships as a primary focus. Furthermore, this process of cognitively considering mandate requirements against their internal commitments and values seemed universally applicable to all three core priorities: students, flexibility, and relationships.

The second guiding question for the study sought to explore whether the impact of mandates might displace core values in decision-making. The data suggest that secondary administrators broadly define the "political" realities in mandates as that which most often causes them to experience conflict with their core values in day-to-day decision-making. Participants offered several descriptions of what "political" implies, but this area still presents an opportunity for further research. One key conclusion seems supported from the data: secondary administrators think about and consider their core values related to students and relationships as they navigate the "political" issues in mandates. This reveals the deep cognitive process of a principal attempting to internally create meaningful decisions that balance a commitment to core values, while managing the pressure to respond to mandates. Secondary principals weigh how students and relationships will be impacted in their final decision choices. Furthermore, they consider the potential backlash that may ensue if their decisions prioritize students and relationships at the expense of the requirements of mandates.

The final guiding question for the study seems to present the greatest challenge for further research. Just because secondary-school principals' decision-making seems to be informed by commonly held core values and beliefs, it does not follow that all participants used similar strategies to resolve cognitive dissonance related to implementing mandates. This seems to be related to their belief that leaders must consider local context while managing mandates; that organizational variability is expected; and that rigid adherence to mandates is unrealistic. This is not a new revelation for educators or researchers. Both Moore-Johnson (1996) and Fullan (1993, 1996, 1999, 2001) aver that context and variability are key leadership issues in managing change and school organizations. However, in the current study secondary administrators identified "political" influences as particular challenges in decision-making because of the often public arena in which mandates are promulgated. Though a mandate may present a conflict with the principal's core values, "politically that is what I have to do." Although

this seems to be a common experience, responses from participants did not provide a compendium of common strategies to resolve the cognitive disequilibrium that a mandate, which has "political" aspects, creates when it conflicts with their espoused core values. This may reinforce that context and variability are key factors to consider in a leader's thinking about mandates as she or he designs actions that balance mandate demands and deeply-held values and beliefs.

Future research aimed at defining this "political" concept may help us to better understand this dimension of leadership. However, we anticipate that a key finding from past research will also be reinforced, which we see in the RAND studies. We began the literature review by noting the RAND studies, and it is fitting to end by revisiting two key findings from that research. The RAND change agent studies in the 1970s showed that change initiatives must be adapted to fit the organizational context, and that non-rational aspects of change impact outcomes (Berman & McLaughlin, 1975). The secondary principals and assistant principals in this study think deeply about the non-rational aspects of the organization, and they consider context and the need for variability in decision-making. This study gives us a glimpse of administrator cognition related to mandate leadership. However, it also reveals that more research is needed to better understand how administrators balance moral leadership in an age of centralized mandates.

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Superintendents' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Newly Hired Principals

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

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This study investigates the frequency of research-based leadership strategies utilized by newly hired school principals in the workplace. Public school superintendents in Indiana were asked to respond to two open-ended research questions. Through the use of content analysis, their comments were coded for the occurrence of effective leadership practices. The Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards were used as classification categories. The findings revealed that collaboration and skills in instruction, curriculum, and evaluation were the most frequently observed leadership skills. Management skills were identified as the area in greatest need of improvement, especially a noted lack of budgetary skills. The content analysis identified categories of responses in addition to the ELCC standards. Superintendents repeatedly commented on new principals' strong interpersonal skills and suggested that additional years of experience would enhance the principals' development of the most influential leadership skills.

Introduction

In the last 50 years, researchers have provided ample evidence that effective school principals have a positive influence on student achievement and overall school success (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Rice, 2010). Numerous studies have led to the identification of various leadership traits or behaviors that have been documented as contributing to school improvement (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Recognizing the importance of this research, the purpose of this study was to determine if Indiana's newly hired principals exhibited these effectiveness skills in their assigned schools. This assessment is based on the observations and opinions of the superintendent and centered on the Educational Leadership Constituent Council Standards (2011) for building-level leaders. In Indiana, a Master's degree comprised of a standards-based university administrative preparatory program, is required in order to receive a principal's license. This license is necessary for employment as a public school principal in the state (Indiana Department of Education, 2013).

Researchers recommend investigating the performance of new principals in relationship to shared standards for leadership preparation programs (Andenoro et al., 2013). The study that follows is a companion study to one completed by Boyland, Lehman, and Sriver (in press), which used quantitative data to assess the standards-based proficiency of newly hired principals. This study uses content analysis to further examine the behaviors of newly hired principals within the framework of the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) Standards and research-based principles of effective leadership. The ELCC Standards focus on the following areas of leadership: vision, instructional program, management, collaboration, ethics, and political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts.

Background

In 1966 the US Department of Education commissioned James Coleman and several other scholars to conduct research on the topic of educational equality in the United States. A fundamental premise emerging from this study suggested that the primary determinants of academic success are a student's background and socioeconomic status. Coleman et al. wrote, "It is known that socioeconomic factors bear a strong relationship to academic achievement. When these factors are statistically controlled, however, it appears that differences between schools account for only a small fraction of differences in pupil achievement" (p. 21).

Soon thereafter, bureaucrats, educators, and researchers started questioning these findings in terms of the school's influence on student achievement and began subjecting the results of Coleman's study to intense scrutiny (Cain & Watts, 1970; Moynihan, 1968). The seeds of the effective schools reform era were sown in this reaction by initiating a search for the key elements of successful schools and ultimately validating the importance of specific school practices and the fundamental role of the principal.

Weber (1971) conducted one of the earliest studies designed to determine the characteristics of an effective school. He focused on reading programs in inner city schools and cited strong building leadership as one element of a successful school. Berman and McLaughlin (1978) found that educational innovations were more successful when supported by the building principal. In Brookover and Lezotte's (1979) analysis of

schools with improving student achievement, principals in improving schools were cited for their assertiveness in the role of instructional leader. As the decade concluded, Edmonds (1979) offered this compelling argument for the importance of the building principal:

> I want to end this discussion by noting as unequivocally as I can what seem to me the most tangible and indispensable characteristics of effective schools (a) they have strong administrative leadership without which the disparate elements of good schools can neither be brought together nor kept together, . . . (p. 22).

During a presentation in 1983, Finn declared, "First, schools make a difference in how much children learn. Second, principals make a difference in how effective schools are" (p. 3). In 1987, Cawelti wrote, "Research of effective schools has validated the vital role of principals in schools that consistently achieve above expectations" (p. 1). He identified four behavioral patterns of leaders: vision, organization developer, instructional support, and monitoring learning, deemed to be essential in improving school productivity.

Milstein, Bobroff, and Restine (1991) emphasized the importance of the principal in school improvement, reporting that successful school reform requires, "… site-based administrators who have vision, beliefs, abilities, and energy required to lead others toward shared objectives" (p. 2). In synthesizing research on principal effectiveness, Hallinger and Heck (1998) agreed, concluding: "Schools that make a difference in student's learning are led by principals who make a significant and measurable contribution to the effectiveness of staff and in the learning of pupils in their charge" (p. 158).

As research efforts continued into the next decade, multiple studies contributed to the growing body of evidence linking school leadership with student achievement (Cowie & Crawford, 2007; Duke, Grogan, Tucker, & Heinecke, 2003; Tucker, Henig, & Salmonowicz, 2005). In 2004, Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, and Wahlstrom reported that school leadership was second only to classroom instruction among the school-related factors that contributed to student learning. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of 35 years of educational research and found a statistically significant relationship between principal effectiveness and student achievement, stating that, "… school leadership has a substantial effect on student achievement" (p. 12). A recent study conducted in Texas found that a highly effective principal raised the achievement of a typical student between two and seven months (Branch et al., 2013). Several other recent reports have substantiated the importance of principal effectiveness in regard to student achievement (Horng & Leob, 2010; The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

Guided by the belief that principals do make a difference, educational researchers turned their attention to attempting to determine which behaviors are most influential in the quest for school improvement. Acknowledging that there is a lack of consistency in the terminology used to describe effective behaviors, a typical list of effective leadership strategies includes: creating a vision, possessing integrity, knowing oneself, sharing success, developing leadership in others, utilizing effective problem solving skills, and understanding the organization and the forces that shape it (Bennis, 1989; Carnegie,

1936; Collins, 2001; Covey, 2004; Maxwell, 1998). An analysis of noteworthy studies in educational leadership yields a comparable list of effective leadership behaviors with some important additions. Specifically, effective school leaders must also be adept at creating a climate to promote learning; improving, monitoring, and evaluating instruction; demonstrating expertise in curriculum and assessment; making data-based decisions, and fostering community relationships (Langley & Jacobs, 2006; Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2013; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2013; The Wallace Foundation, 2013).

The challenge in identifying cause and effect relationships between specific elements of principal leadership and student achievement may be due to the complexity of the role. The value of a principal can manifest itself in multiple ways, both directly and indirectly. From their review of the research, Horng, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2009) proposed that a variety of school outcomes, may be influenced by the effectiveness of a principal who recruits and motivates quality teachers, identifies and articulates a school vision and goals, allocates resources efficiently, and develops instructional support structures. Rice (2010) found that the behaviors of skillful principals influenced several areas, including teacher satisfaction and parents' perceptions about the school, with the combined results contributing to improved student academic performance. Hallinger (2003) concluded that the importance of effective principal leadership in contributing to successful change was a consistent finding in the research on school improvement.

Without doubt schools are complex and dynamic organizations. The variables that influence the success of schools are numerous. In addition to effective school leadership, Shannon and Bylsma (2007) list clear and shared vision, high expectations for all students, collaboration and communication, alignment with state standards, frequently monitored learning and teaching, focused professional development, supportive learning environment, and a high level of community involvement as characteristics of a high performing school. Each variable contributes to, or detracts from, the effectiveness of the school. Multiple studies grounded in effective schools research have identified the building principal as a key variable in the operation of an effective school. Today, we can state with reasonable assurance that the performance of the building principal greatly influences student achievement and other variables that contribute to the success of a school.

Standards-Based Educator Preparation

There are several organizations and multiple assessment strategies that have served to create a baseline of standards and expectations for educator preparation. One such organization, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) was founded in 1954 and has been pivotal in providing research-based benchmarks for quality teacher and administrator preparation programs in the United States. In 2013, NCATE and TEAC (Teacher Education Accreditation Council) merged to become CAEP (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation). Nationwide, there are over 650 accredited institutions participating in CAEP as one measure of assurance that educator training programs are of satisfactory relevance and quality (CAEP, 2013).

High quality preparatory programs are grounded in the implementation of pertinent and rigorous standards. For school leadership training programs, the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC, 2011) or the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC, 2008) are the national standards commonly adopted (CCSSO, 2012; ELCC, 2011). Of the four major Indiana universities offering principal training, all follow ELCC Standards, which requires a rigorous curriculum with a clinical internship under the supervision of a university supervisor and onsite mentor. ELCC Standards are considered Indiana's primary standards for principal preparation, serving accreditation purposes and also guiding best practice.

Theoretical Framework

There is a growing body of empirical evidence supporting the link between principal effectiveness and student achievement, which provides the theoretical framework for this study (Leithwood et al., 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Rice, 2010). In Indiana, the ELCC Standards are the formally adopted standards by the major universities for principal preparation programs. Research shows that certain skills, knowledge, and behaviors, as outlined in the ELCC Standards, are known to increase student achievement (Young & Mawhinney, 2012). However, in Indiana, there is a research deficit in the area of new principals, meaning that no recent studies could be found examining the performance of principals in their first, second, and third years in the position. Our theoretical framework, which links principal effectiveness with student achievement, prompts the question; do recently hired school principals demonstrate the skills, behaviors, and knowledge as outlined in the ELCC Standards? Currently, very little is known about the performance of Indiana's new school leaders after they finish their required university preparation, providing the catalyst for this study.

Purpose

The ELCC Standards provide a research-based framework for university school leadership preparation programs. Empirical research thoroughly and consistently supports the ELCC Standards as foundational in developing leadership effectiveness, as documented by noted educational leaders and scholars like Michelle Young, Hanne Mawhinney, Dianne Taylor, Margaret Orr, Diana Pounder, Gary Crow, and Pamela Tucker (as cited in Young & Mawhinney, 2012). However, in Indiana, although candidates are being prepared using the ELCC Standards, there is a lack of follow-up on candidates to determine their effectiveness once they are hired as principals. Researchers recommend exploration of shared standards for preparation programs in order to develop a deeper understanding of leadership education outcomes (Andenoro et al., 2013). Accordingly, our purpose was to assess the effectiveness of recently hired principals by comparing their performance with the ELCC Standards. Our investigation sought to determine if newly hired principals, those in their first, second or third year, demonstrated the knowledge, skills, and behaviors identified as necessary contributors to school improvement.

Methodology

Survey methodology was deemed most appropriate for exploring our research questions. Surveys are recommended as an economical and efficient method of collecting data from a large sample (Scholls & Smith, 1999). We sought feedback directly from Indiana's 289 public school superintendents because these are the individuals responsible for the hiring and evaluation of principals.

Survey Instrument and Participant Selection

A three-part electronic survey was developed for use in this study. The research team developed the survey instrument using the ELCC Standards and specific questions regarding new principals' strengths or areas for improvement, which were derived from our research questions. Prior to gathering data, a six-member panel consisting of university faculty, superintendents, and principals with experience in survey development vetted the instrument and submitted feedback regarding face and content validity. Based on the panel's feedback, several revisions were made to wording and sequencing, which improved the survey's clarity and focus. The survey was then pilot tested using a similar panel consisting of former school superintendents, principals, and university faculty members who suggested no additional revisions. The survey was administered using the platform Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com) and emailed to each of the 289 Indiana superintendents in the spring of 2013.

The first section of the survey gathered basic demographic information about the school to which the new principal was assigned including the school's grade levels, population characteristics, and type of school community (rural, suburban, or urban). In the second section of the survey, superintendents were asked to rate the effectiveness of the new principal using the six categories of the ELCC Standards as assessment criteria. In this section of the survey there were 33 forced choice items designed to gather the superintendent's perceptions about the new principal's effectiveness.

The third section of the survey served as the source of data for this study. In this section of the survey, superintendents were asked the two following research questions:

1. What strengths does this newly hired principal possess that makes him/her a highly effective building leader?
2. In what areas does this newly hired principal need to improve his/her level of effectiveness?

Following Institutional Review Board approval, all 289 public school superintendents in Indiana were invited to participate in the study. In May of 2013, an introductory email with the survey link was sent to all superintendents, asking them to complete a survey for each principal hired who had completed a university leadership preparation program since 2009. The survey responses were anonymous and no identifying information was requested. From a total of 289, 53 usable surveys were returned, yielding a response rate of 17%, which is considered acceptable for electronic surveys (Sheehan, 2001). The

survey responses were anonymous and no identifying information was requested. If identifying information was voluntarily provided it was not maintained.

Data Analysis

A content analysis of the responses to the two research questions listed above was conducted following the principles outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1981) and Holsti (1969). The general research process is defined as, "Content analysis is any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages" (Holsti, 1969, p. 14).

Coding data is a key function in content analysis research. In this study, the ELCC Standards were used as the content analysis categories because they afforded alignment with the research questions and a functional and systematic focus for investigation. Since most responses were in the form of one or several sentences, a single word or theme was selected as the recording unit. Coding reliability was achieved by using multiple reviewers and applying the Kappa Statistic to measure interrater reliability. The team of reviewers met to decide upon the following coding rules: definition of research problem in terms of categories, coding unit, and coding enumeration (Holsti, 1969). After agreement was reached on the coding requirements, each reviewer worked independently, and used the same printed set of the ELCC Standards for reference. The results of the coding process were submitted to the authors for compilation.

Since more than one reviewer was utilized in this research, there was a need to assess interrater reliability. The kappa statistic was selected as the measure of reliability (See Table 1).

Table 1
Interpretation of Kappa

	Poor	Slight	Fair	Moderate	Substantial	Almost Perfect
Kappa	0.00	0.20	0.40	0.60	0.80	1.00

Kappa	Agreement
< 0	Less than chance agreement
0.01-0.20	Slight agreement
0.21-0.40	Fair agreement
0.41-0.60	Moderate agreement
0.61-0.80	Substantial Agreement
0.81-0.99	Almost perfect agreement

The importance of this statistic is that it represents how frequently the data analyzed by the coders are assigned to the same category. According to Carletta (1996), Kappa is widely accepted, is interpretable, and allows for different results to be compared. It is typically used to assess the degree to which two or more raters agree when assigning data to categories. Kappa provides a numerical rating of the degree to which observers agree when evaluating the same item. There are various scales used to describe the level of agreement for kappa values. The one used in this study is derived from Viera and Garrett (2005).

Results

In the spring of 2013, Indiana public school superintendents were asked to complete a survey on the effectiveness of each new school principal hired in their districts. There were a total of 53 usable surveys returned for analysis; however, 15 of the new administrators were assigned to positions at the district level. Our focus for this report was specifically building-level leaders. Therefore, we will be reporting on the 37 responses from superintendents regarding new building-level administrators. Of these 37 building-level leaders, 51.4% (n = 19) were identified as principals, 43.2% (n = 16) as assistant principals, and 5.4% (n = 2) as "other building-level administrative" positions. Because 35 of the 37 building-level leaders were assistant principals or principals, we refer to the group as "principals." All of the principals whose performance is reported on were in their first, second, or third years in the positions.

Demographic Profile of Principals' Schools

Superintendents were asked to provide demographic information about the schools where the new principals were assigned. The grade levels of the principals' schools were evenly divided with 48.6% (n = 18) being elementary or intermediate-level schools, and 48.6% (n = 18) being middle or high schools. There was one school (2.7%) that housed all grades levels, K-12. Most of the schools, 91.4% (n = 34) enrolled 20% or less minority students, with 5.4% (n = 2) enrolling 21 - 40% minority students, and one school (2.7%) enrolling 61 - 80% minority students. The percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced meals indicated that 5.4% (n = 2) of the schools had less than 20% qualifying, 51.4% (n = 19) had 21 - 40% qualifying, 32.4% (n = 12) had 41 - 60% of students qualifying, and 10.8% (n = 4) had 61% or above qualifying for meal assistance. The last demographic question was on community type, revealing that the majority of the schools were in rural areas at 78.4% (n = 29), with suburban at 16.2% (n = 6), and urban at 5.4% (n = 2). In general, the demographics of the schools and communities presented an accurate representation of Indiana in terms of typical population distributions and characteristics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). For the most part, Indiana is a rural state, with only 16 areas classified as "large urban" (Indiana State Government, 2009).

Analysis of Responses to Open Ended Questions – Standards

In response to the first research question, which asked superintendents to cite the ELCC standard areas in which newly hired principals were more effective, all six categories were mentioned (See Table 2).

Table 2

Frequency of superintendents' comments noting principals' strengths

Std	Description	n	%	Kappa	z	P
1	Vision	20	9.3%	0.36	1.87	0.061
2	Culture and Inst Program	64	29.9%	0.72	8.42	0.000
3	Management	41	19.2%	0.32	2.76	0.006
4	Collaboration	67	31.3%	0.67	7.79	0.000
5	Integrity, Fairness, and Ethics	15	7.0%	-0.04	-0.18	0.857
6	Pol, Soc, Econ, Legal & Cul	7	3.3%	0.23	0.47	0.638

Note. n = number of comments received from superintendents

Standard four, the education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, was the most frequently cited (n = 67, % = 31.3). Examples of comments typical of this category include, "He creates a very positive climate for students and parents," and ". . . ability to work with teachers on their level, relates well to the community, trusts employees to do the jobs she gives them." The kappa statistic for this standard is 0.67 which classifies the interrater reliability as having substantial agreement.

Behaviors aligned with standard two, the education leader applies knowledge that promotes the success of every student by sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning, was the second most often cited (n = 64, % = 29.9) category. Typical remarks associated with this category include, "Ability to analyze data, ability to identify appropriate strategies, create a culture of high expectations, strong disciplinarian," and "knowledgeable in instructional leadership and evaluation." The kappa statistic for this standard is 0.72 which classifies the interrater reliability as having substantial agreement.

Standard three, the education leader promotes the success of every student through monitoring and evaluating the school management and operational systems, was mentioned in nearly one-fifth (n = 42, % = 19.2) of the responses. Superintendents routinely described these behaviors in the following manner, "project management, logistics" and "operations skills." The kappa statistic for this standard is 0.32 which classifies the interrater reliability as having fair agreement.

Of the remaining three standards, one, five, and six, all were mentioned less than 10% of the time. This of course is not meant to suggest that the newly hired principals do not possess these traits, but simply that their superintendents may have observed other behaviors more frequently. The kappa statistics for standards one (0.36) and six (0.23) suggested fair agreement among the coders. There was less than chance agreement for standard five.

The second research question asked superintendents to suggest areas in which the newly hired principals needed to improve their level of effectiveness. Similar to the responses to the identification of strengths, areas for improvement included all six standards categories. By far the most frequently cited area in need of improvement was related to standard three (n = 49, % = 30.6), management (See Table 3).

Table 3
Frequency of superintendents' comments noting areas for principals' improvement

Std	Description	n	%	Kappa	z	P
1	Vision	18	11.3%	0.36	1.87	0.061
2	Culture and Inst Program	31	19.4%	0.72	8.42	0.000
3	Management	49	30.6%	0.32	2.76	0.006
4	Collaboration	32	20.0%	0.67	7.79	0.000
5	Integrity, Fairness, and Ethics	4	2.5%	-0.04	-0.18	0.857
6	Pol, Soc, Econ, Legal & Cul	26	16.3%	0.23	0.47	0.638

Note. n = number of comments received from superintendents

Over thirty percent of the superintendents commented that newly hired principals needed to improve in this area. Of the 49 coded responses under the heading of standard three, 28.6% described the newly hired principal as needing to improve in time management. Nearly one-fourth, 24.5%, of the respondents identified limited skills in school finance and budgets among new hires. Approximately one-fifth, 20.4%, of the recently employed principals needed to improve their communication skills. The kappa statistic for this standard is 0.32 which classifies the interrater reliability as having fair agreement.

A nearly equal number of suggestions to improve leadership behaviors classified under standards two (n = 31, % = 19.4) and four (n = 32, % = 20%) comprised the second tier of areas for improvement. With regard to standard two, superintendents routinely remarked about the principal's inability to effectively evaluate teachers, a lack of recognition of good teaching, and a lack of familiarity with academic standards. The kappa statistic for this standard is 0.72 which classifies the interrater reliability as having substantial agreement.

The need to improve the skills described in standard six (n = 26, % = 16.3), an education leader promotes the success of every student by evaluating the potential moral

and legal consequences of decision making in the school, merits a comment in this discussion. Over 25% of the statements noting the need to improve were related to an understanding of the law. Slightly less than 25% of the suggestions for improvement centered on the need to acquire a better understanding of the political environments that influence schools. The kappa statistic for this standard is 0.23 which classifies the interrater reliability as having fair agreement.

Analysis of Responses to Open Ended Questions – Other Performance Measures

During the content analysis it became apparent that a number of comments were not aligned with the six ELCC Standards but still merited consideration. To accommodate a review of these data, the coders collaborated on the development of other categories that appeared in the analysis then followed the content analysis protocols described above to further derive frequently cited suggestions from survey respondents. This process yielded four categories: interpersonal skills, personal traits/attitude, experience, and miscellaneous. To be consistent with the data classified according to the standards, the other categories were divided into areas of strength and those in need of improvement.

Superintendents listed interpersonal skills as a strength in more than 50% (n = 29, % = 55.9) of the responses assigned to this category. Descriptive phrases such as, "has a positive attitude and personality that connects with kids, teachers, and parents," "people skills," and "excellent judgment," were routinely found in written responses. The kappa statistic for this standard is 0.36 which classifies the interrater reliability as having fair agreement. Closely associated with interpersonal skills is the second most often cited catergory, personal traits/skills. The distinction was made because these comments depicted a different attribute. Of the 13 comments assigned to this category, 61.5% complimented the new hire as "dedicated" or having a strong work ethic. Being a good listener or having an eagerness to learn were other informative remarks. The kappa statistic for this category is 0.72 which classifies the interrater reliability as having substantial agreement. The data reported as other measures of the strengths of newly hired principals appear below in Table 4.

Table 4

Frequency of superintendents' comments noting principals' strengths

#	Description	n	%	Kappa	z	P
1	Interpersonal Skills	29	55.9%	0.36	1.87	0.061
2	Personal Traits/Attitude	13	25.0%	0.72	8.42	0.000
3	Experience	0	0.0%	0.32	2.76	0.006
4	Miscellaneous	10	19.2%	0.67	7.79	0.000

Note. n = number of comments received from superintendents

Other Performance Measures

In the categories listed as other measures, areas of needed principal improvement, there is only one item of note. From the comments submitted by the superintendents, experience will be the key to more effective performance. Repeatedly the phase, "more experience" was cited in response to the research question.

In this context, more experience referred to longevity in the role as opposed to a broader range of tasks or responsibilities on the job. There were some instances in which this term was associated with "confidence," but the message of gaining experience was clear in an overwhelming number (n = 25, % = 64.1) of responses. The kappa statistic for this category is 0.32 which classifies the interrater reliability as having fair agreement (See Table 5).

Table 5
Frequency of superintendents' comments noting areas for principals' improvement

| #	Description	n	%	Kappa	z	P
1	Interpersonal Skills	3	7.7%	0.36	1.87	0.061
2	Personal Traits/Attitude	4	10.3%	0.72	8.42	0.000
3	Experience	25	64.1%	0.32	2.76	0.006
4	Miscellaneous	7	17.9%	0.67	7.79	0.000

Note. n = number of comments received from superintendents

Summary and Discussion

The overarching goal of this study was to determine if newly hired principals are demonstrating the skills and behaviors research has identified as necessary ingredients for school improvement. A synthesis of these skills and behaviors typically includes: creating a vision, developing leadership in others, utilizing effective problem-solving strategies, promoting a climate for learning, evaluating and improving instruction, making data-based decisions, and forging strong community relationships. These factors are closely aligned with the ELCC Standards, which guide administrator preparation programs in over 650 universities throughout the nation. The findings contained in this study are equally important for university administrator preparation programs to prompt an assessment of curriculum and training strategies. There is evidence from this study that effective leadership practices are being utilized by newly hired principals.

A summary of the results depicts a contrast of the leadership traits and practices public school superintendents identified as effective and those in need of improvement while observing the performance of newly hired principals. These data provide evidence that all categories of standards-based leadership practices were observed under job conditions. It is also apparent that these practices are being employed with varying frequencies. The data document areas of strength with regard to the utilization of

effective leadership practices. The data also suggest areas where the use of these practices should be improved. A summary of the data is illustrated in *Figure 1.*

Frequency of ELCC Standards-based Leadership Practices Identified by Content Analysis
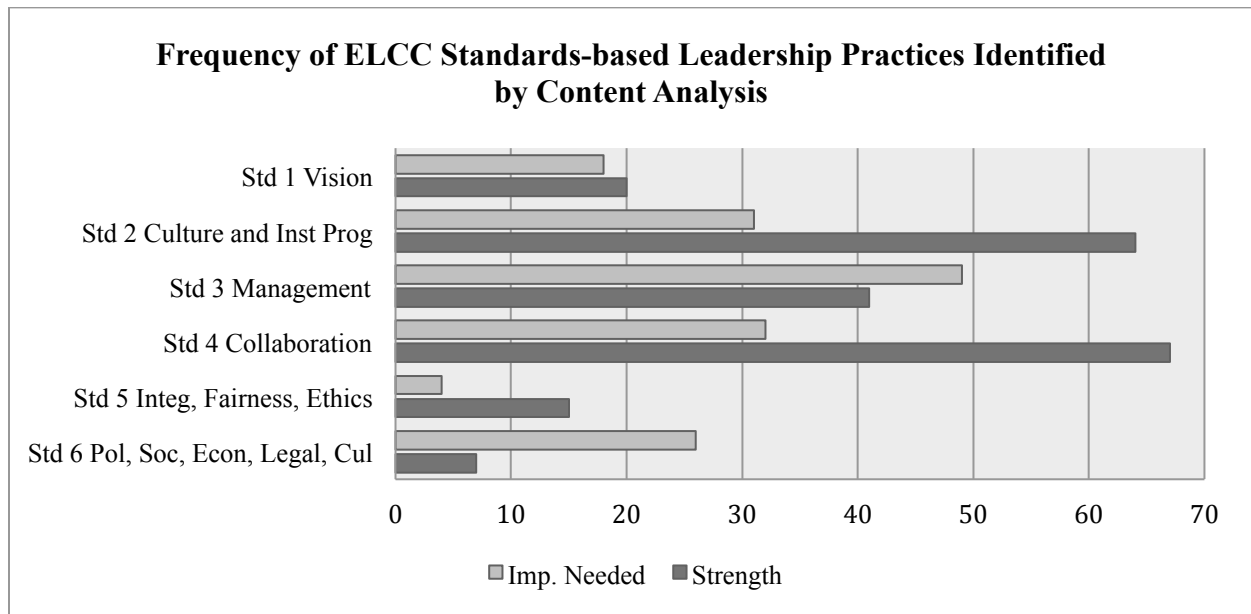
Figure 1

One of the more encouraging results is that principals were more frequently cited for demonstrating practices associated with improving student achievement. Specifically, utilizing leadership strategies related to standards two and four were identified more often than the remaining standards. Both categories are aligned with strategies known to positively influence school performance; monitoring and evaluating instruction, and fostering community relationships (Clifford, Behrstock, & Fetters, 2012; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2013; The Wallace Foundation, 2013). These findings are related to the first research question.

Behaviors classified under standard four were identified as strengths of newly hired principals more than any other trait (n = 67). This standard is described as promoting the success of students by collaborating with faculty and community members. There were also some suggestions for improvement under this heading (n = 32) but the descriptions of collaboration as a strength more than doubled the number of remarks about needing improvement. The second most often (n = 64) mentioned category described behaviors grouped under standard two. This standard is characterized by the development of a rigorous curricular program and supervision of instruction. Comments identified as describing this standard as a strength of newly hired principals also doubled the number of observations indicating a need for improvement. It is important to note that for the content analysis of these factors, the interrater reliability kappa statistic was in the substantial agreement range for all four classifications.

Responses depicting skills related to standard three, monitoring and evaluating the school management and operational systems, routinely (n = 41) identified these behaviors as an area of strength. Comments such as having organizational and management skills

and being detail oriented were typical descriptive phrases. However, the need to improve management skills received the greatest number of needs improvement comments (n = 49) of any standard. This difference of nearly 20% is due primarily to the superintendents' assessment that newly hired principals need to improve in the areas of budging and school finance. The interrater reliability range for both measures was in the fair agreement range.

The content analysis identified a nearly equal number of classifications as strengths (n = 20) and needs improvement (n = 18) under standard one, vision. Some principals were viewed as visionary; others were described as being limited in their ability to effectively plan for school improvement. The kappa statistic for these measures placed the interrater reliability in the fair agreement range.

Regarding standard five, which deals with fairness and integrity of administrative actions, the acknowledgement of this characteristic as a strength surpassed it being a weakness by a count of nearly four to one. It is important to note here that just because the concept of fairness and integrity was less frequently cited overall by superintendents, it should not be viewed as less evident or unimportant. Our companion study found that newly hired principals bordered on performing at a distinguished level when ethical behavior was considered (Boyland et al., in press). The need to improve in the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural areas yielded the highest percentage disparity when compared to contexts in which these behaviors were viewed as strengths. Limitations in this area centered on a lack of proficiency in the political arena and in dealing with legal matters.

A review of the other categories identified through content analysis generated two noteworthy factors. In the distillation of other strengths, twenty-nine comments, almost three times as many as the second most mentioned category, were recorded as interpersonal skills. The notion of being able to develop positive working relationships with members of the faculty, community, and student body remains an integral factor in school leadership (Langley & Jacobs, 2006).

The analysis of the need for improvement categories under the other heading also identified one dominant response. Nearly 65% of the comments suggested that newly hired administrators would improve with experience. This is a logical conclusion but prompts a number of important considerations, including two key questions. First, can newly hired principals be better prepared so that the progression of skills from novice to proficient can be accelerated? Second, can we count on the mentors currently in the field to provide proper guidance?

Implications and Recommendations for Practice

Research clearly documents that effective school principals play an important role in improving student achievement. At the same time, there are criticisms of university preparatory programs responsible for training principals. For example, Cowie and Crawford (2007) called principal preparation programs an "act of faith" (p. 129). Levine, a strong critic of university administrator preparation programs, referred to them as "... the weakest of all the programs at the nation's education schools" (2005, p. 13). Hess and Kelly stated, "Because preparation of principals has not kept pace with changes in

the larger world of schooling, graduates of principal preparation programs have been left ill equipped for the challenges and opportunities posed by an era of accountability" (2005, p. 40). These and other reports challenging the quality and relevance of university principal preparation programs raise questions regarding how well new principals function once they are on the job.

Consequently, the outcomes of this study create implications for practice and research because our results document standards-based areas in which new principals, per their superintendents, were perceived as effective. Our results suggest that university preparatory programs in Indiana, at least to the extent measured by our instrument and per the ELCC Standards, are preparing candidates for the real-world of leadership as seen through the eyes of their superintendents. In addition, many of the areas that superintendents reported as strengths for new principals, for example, collaboration with faculty and the community, supervision of instruction, and development of rigorous programs, are directly related to areas necessary in establishing conditions for improving student achievement.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. One limitation is that the survey response rate was only 17% of the superintendents in the state. Although this is considered acceptable for electronic survey research, it limits the generalizability of results. Therefore, the reader is advised to view these results as exploratory.

Another limitation is that the survey was conducted only in Indiana. It seems logical that there is some similarity throughout the nation in the challenges facing new administrators in their first administrative assignment. Certainly other authors have enumerated these challenges from a universal perspective, but this study does not presently contain evidence to extend this assumption beyond state boundaries.

Need for Further Research

The results of this study were encouraging because superintendents largely reported that newly hired principals were demonstrating behaviors and skills aligned with effective leadership practices (Kaplan, Owings, & Nunnery, 2005; Marzano et al., 2005). Nevertheless, there is a call for further research. The goal of using national standards in the development of administrator preparation programs is to create a framework for designing curricula better aligned to the challenges a novice administrator will face on the job (Hambrick-Hill, Tucker, & Young, 2012). University preparation programs should explore means by which knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom can be more effectively transferred to the workplace (Barnett, 2005). To accomplish these goals, studies designed to assess the effectiveness of new principals should directly capture their voices, needs, and opinions regarding their own performance and preparation. These data should then be used for programmatic and curricular planning at the university level, and also to provide supportive assistance and resources.

In addition, further studies encompassing wider geographic areas and using larger sample sizes are necessary in order to better understand the preparatory needs of new

school leaders and their additional needs for professional development and support once they become principals, as well as to monitor their effectiveness after they have been on the job for several years. Since a conspicuous number of superintendents' remarked that additional years of experience was what newly hired principals needed to improve, it would be interesting to test this assumption.

The induction of the novice administrator into the profession is also in need of further study. The chance meeting with a superintendent or the routinely scheduled districtwide administrators' meeting is not sufficient for the professional development required for today's principals to make a difference in the lives of the students being served. According to Kearney (2010) induction programs should be standards-based, including coaching, and collect data to document the effectiveness of the newly hired principal. Each of these strategies has the potential to improve the likelihood that novice principals will more readily demonstrate effective leadership behaviors.

In summary, this study provided evidence that effective leadership practices are being utilized in Indiana. The ongoing question is, of course, can these strategies become pervasively employed in all schools by every school leader?

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"Forgottonia"? The Status of Rural Schools in Illinois' Principal Preparation Reform

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Since the fall of 2012, Illinois principal preparation programs have been operating under new state requirements intended to produce highly qualified and effective school principals capable of leading Illinois schools to higher levels of student academic performance. The rules guiding new program development are applied with a broad stroke, attempting to meet the instructional needs of all students in Illinois' diverse public schools located in diverse public school settings. While the rules explicitly state that early childhood, English language learners, students with disabilities, and gifted students should be a focus, the rules overlook meeting the needs of students from academically struggling schools and districts in sparsely populated areas of the state. "Forgottonia," (Bibo, 2013) a name applied over 40 years ago to a group of rural counties in western Illinois, suggested the region's transportation needs had been forgotten by state and federal government officials. Perhaps the name applies today, not only to western Illinois but to all of Illinois' rural regions where developing school leaders for rural school leadership has been forgotten in the reform effort. This paper examines the current reality as Illinois implements new principal preparation programs in regions of the state regarded as fringe, distant, or remote rural areas.

Introduction

"Forgottonia" is a name long-associated with the rural, west central region of Illinois. In its original use in the 1970s, the name and its grassroots movement asserted this area of the state was forgotten by political decision-makers when it came to department of transportation development. The name Forgottonia brought attention to the disparate distribution of tax dollars supporting infrastructure in Illinois and suggested that counties in this area of the state secede from Illinois (Bibo, 2013). Over time Forgottonia has continued to be used in political and policy development contexts to denote areas that are "remote" (Best, 1990, p. 1A), "isolated from the rest of the state" (Hillig, 1999, p. 1), "overlooked by state economic-development initiatives" ("Opportunity returns," 2005, p. 47), "nearly forgotten by time when it came to growth and development of any kind" (Sommer, 2005, p. C3), and "neglected" (Dettro, 2012, p. 11). Forgottonia today could be used to describe similar, but larger rural regions of the state where new principal preparation legislation has failed to consider how this reform could best be suited to the needs of these areas. This paper examines the potential impact of Illinois principal preparation reform on opportunities for aspiring principals in rural districts of Illinois.

Methodology

This paper seeks to answer several important research questions. The questions guiding the study were structured using Creswell's taxonomy (1998). The Topical questions were:

Topical one: What is the impetus for national reform of principal preparation and how does it address principal preparation with regard to the complex nature of school leadership in rural areas?
Topical two: What are the preparation requirements of the new Illinois rules?
Topical three: What is the context of the new principal preparation programs with regard to schools and districts in rural Illinois?

The Issue question guiding this study was: What challenges are present with the implementation of the new rules in rural Illinois schools? The Central question guiding this study was: What is needed in Illinois to ensure that aspiring principals in rural areas are not disadvantaged or marginalized?

In order to answer the Topical questions, background literature on principal reform at the national level and in Illinois was reviewed to paint a historical picture of the current context. To answer Topical question three, demographic data about Illinois were reviewed and data were obtained from the state of Illinois about the geography of approved programs across the state.
The Issue question was answered by applying the expectations of the program rules to the settings of rural schools throughout Illinois and by assessing anticipated challenges. The Central question was answered by reviewing principal preparation

programs that have a specific focus on leadership development in rural schools and making recommendations for principal preparation more likely to meet the needs of rural schools in Illinois.

Findings

Principal Preparation Reform

At no other time in our country's history have the measured and monitored results of student achievement in the nation's schools been so important. Legislators, educators, and economists lead the voices of national concern as to whether U.S. schools are preparing their students for the future's global competition. Studies have linked high levels of student achievement to effective leadership of building principals (Cotton, 2003; Leithwood, K., Seashore Louis, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K., 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Yet, analysis of principal preparation programs at the turn of the century found they "are too theoretical and totally unrelated to the daily demands on contemporary principals" (Hale & Moorman, 2003, p. 5). This disconnect led to sweeping national reforms in principal preparation programs in an effort to increase student achievement across the states. Illinois joined this reform effort in July 2010 when Governor Pat Quinn signed into law Senate Bill 226 requiring new and more stringent requirements for endorsement of principals in Illinois. The bill charged the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) with drafting rules by which institutions offering principal preparation programs would design their new programs.

Nationally, rural education challenges have never received the attention that urban education challenges have received (Ayers, 2011; Hill, 2014; "Formula Fairness Campaign," 2014). Since 2000, a biennial publication titled *Why Rural Matters* has attempted to grab the attention of policy makers by providing comprehensive data analysis of the status of rural education in each of the 50 states. The publication provides a descriptive definition of rural education, state-by-state, reporting funding for rural schools, diversity of rural schools with regard to ethnicity, socioeconomic level, and students with special needs, while emphasizing the marginal educational outcomes for rural school students.   The goal of the publication has been

> (1) to provide information and analyses that highlight the priority policy
> needs of rural public schools and the communities they serve, and
> (2) to describe the complexity of rural context in ways that can help policy
> makers better understand the challenges faced by their constituencies and
> formulate policies that are responsive to those challenges (Johnson,
> Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014, p. 1).

In addition, another policy brief titled *Preparing Leaders for Rural Schools: Practice and Policy Considerations* (2005) should have grabbed attention with its focus on the preparation of leaders for rural schools. This important brief represented the collective wisdom of practitioners from rural areas across the nation and asserted that "…each rural situation is unique, there can be no one size fits all approach to either rural education or

to the preparation of leaders for rural schools" (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2005, p. 1). As principal preparation reform models swept the nation, South Dakota (Cowan & Hensley, 2012) and Alaska (Rural Alaska, 2014) were examples of states with high numbers or percentages of rural students and/or schools, that assigned priority to the preparation of rural principals with programs unique to rural school leadership. Illinois was not one of these states. The reform of principal preparation in Illinois has been painted with a broad stroke, giving little or no attention to the unique challenges of school leadership in rural areas of the state.

Illinois Principal Preparation Program Rules

The program rules clarify the purpose of the law: "to prepare individuals *to be highly effective in leadership roles to improve teaching and learning and increase academic achievement and the development of all students...*" (emphasis in original) (Title 23, Section 30.20, 2014). Senate Bill 226 and the subsequent rules for principal preparation were a predictable and expected next step following other Illinois reform efforts to raise student achievement, including more stringent endorsement standards for teachers, evaluation of teachers based on professional skills and student growth, and retention of teachers based on student performance rather than tenure. A primary goal of the new principal preparation program rules is to develop the instructional leadership capacity (Title 23, Section 30.20, 2014) of building principals for Illinois schools.

The rules are specific about preparing principals to work with all grade levels from preschool through grade 12. Literacy instruction and numeracy instruction are emphasized. School improvement preparation is focused on "all students, with specific attention on students with special needs (e.g., students with disabilities, English language learners, gifted students, students in early childhood programs)" (Title 23, Section 30.30, 2014). But, the rules fail to recognize the needs of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, some from remote, rural areas, whose schools deserve targeted school improvement efforts.

The rules are explicit about providing principal candidates opportunities to intern in diverse settings, which is one of the few times the rules cite economic and cultural conditions as an area of specific leadership development:

> The internship portion of the program shall be conducted at one or more public or nonpublic schools so as to enable the candidate to be exposed to and to participate in a variety of school leadership situations in settings that represent diverse economic and cultural conditions…(Title 23, Section 30.40, 2014).

Candidates are required to engage in leadership experiences working with teachers in preschool through grade 12 "general education, special education, bilingual education and gifted education settings" (Title 23, Section 30.40, 2014), but are not specifically required to have internship experiences that include students from low socio-economic backgrounds or from rural communities.

Under the new rules, candidates must meet state admission requirements that include preparation of a candidate portfolio and participation in an interview seeking to assess candidates' instructional leadership potential. These requirements, additions to university admission requirements, have specific purposes: to limit student self-selection to the program and to promote university and district partnerships that result in succession planning. While school leadership succession planning is considered important to sustaining school improvement initiatives (Hargreaves, 2005), succession planning is hindered in high-poverty districts and in rural and small town districts where retention of principals is lower (Fuller & Young, 2009). In some rural districts retaining principals as instructional leaders is a challenge when principals have multiple responsibilities and duties beyond curriculum, instruction, supervision, and evaluation. For instance, other duties like those associated with bus transportation and athletics rob principals of instructional leadership time. As well, the culture of some rural communities ensures that locals are retained and promoted with little regard for their effectiveness as principals in deference to being stable members of the community.

The Context of Rural Illinois and Principal Preparation

Many counties in Illinois contain a combination of rural, suburban, or urban populations. The Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs uses the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) definitions for determination of metropolitan and non-metropolitan or rural counties. With the OMB definitions, of Illinois' 102 counties, 66 or 65% are considered rural (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2000). Considering these rural counties' land area, they make up 35,000 square miles, 62% of the state's area (55,518 square miles) (Index Mundi, 2010). Figure 1 shows the distribution of metropolitan and rural counties in Illinois.

Figure 1. Distribution of rural and metropolitan counties in Illinois. Light-shaded counties are rural; dark-shaded counties are metropolitan (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2000).

Despite the substantial size of Illinois' rural area, *Why Rural Matters 2013-14* reported 23.8% of Illinois schools are considered rural and enroll 13.4% of Illinois' students (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014). The authors noted, "Illinois has one of the largest absolute rural student enrollments…" (p. 45) among the 50 states. The 2011-12 report indicated the percentage of rural students in Illinois had increased by 30% from 1999-2000 to 2008-2009 (Strange, Johnson, Showalter, & Klein, 2012).

The distribution of wealth aligning with metropolitan areas and of poverty aligning with rural areas is typical. But as noted in Strange, et al. (2012) poverty "tend[s] not to be distributed evenly across a state but…concentrated variously in specific communities within the state" (p. 3). That is certainly the case in Illinois. Illinois child poverty rates in metropolitan counties range from 6.3% to 31.2% and in rural counties from 12.7% to 35.3%. When the mean poverty rates of metropolitan and rural counties are compared, the rural mean is over 4.5% higher than the metropolitan mean (Social IMPACT Research Center, 2011). The greatest concentration of high poverty counties is located in the far south and southeastern counties of Illinois.

The new rules require institutions that previously offered principal preparation programs to redesign their programs and apply for program approval from the Illinois State Educator Professional Licensure Board. Prior to fall 2012 when newly approved principal programs could begin accepting students, Illinois had 32 approved principal preparation programs. Twenty of these university programs were located in Cook County, where Chicago is located, and in collar counties, those that border Cook County. Nearly two-thirds of the principal preparation programs served the metropolitan area that surrounds Chicago. Ten university programs served the central and southern Illinois area. As of October 2013, 20 programs had been approved. Figure 2 shows the institutions or entities with newly approved principal preparation programs and their county locations.
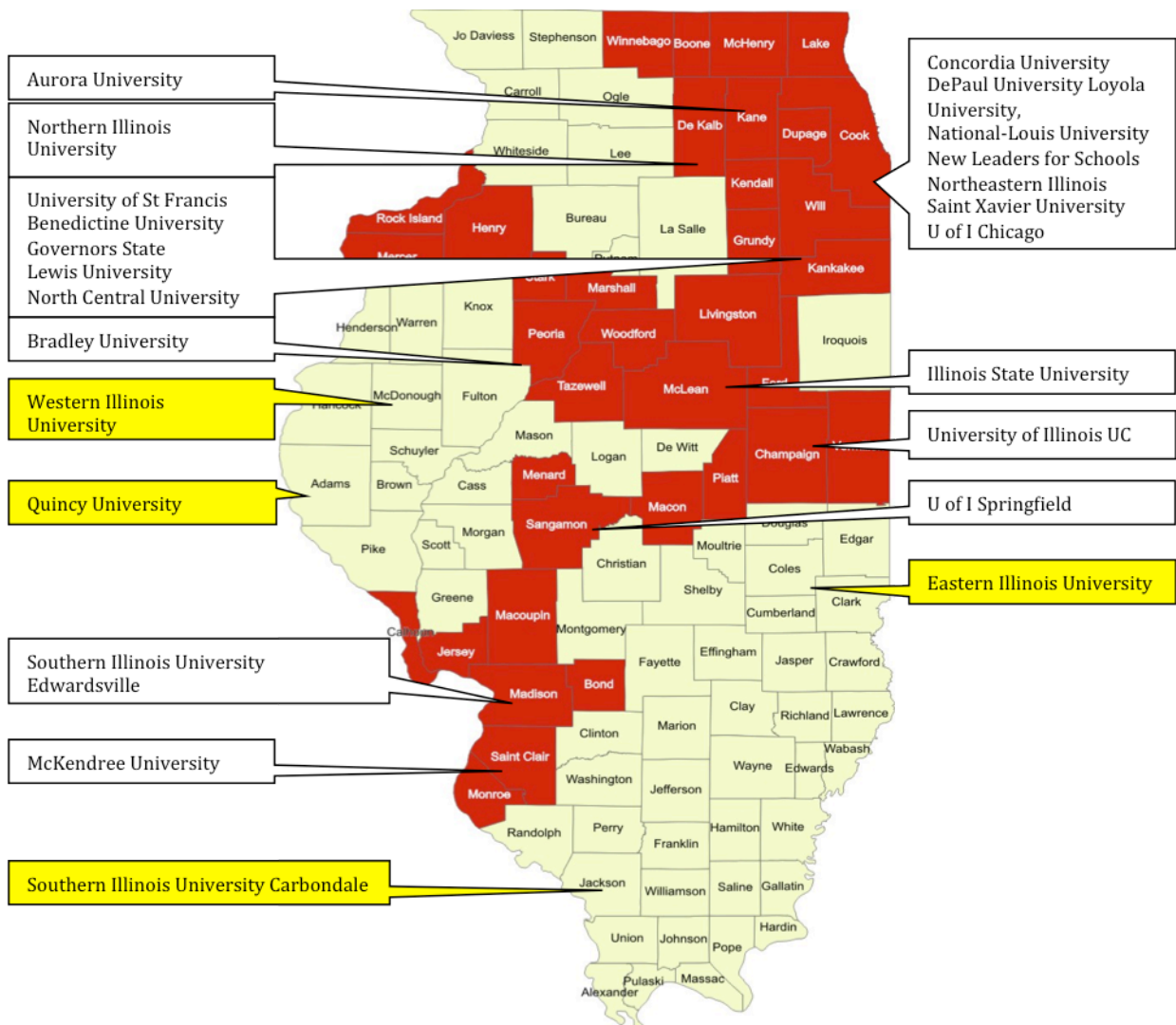
Figure 2. Distribution of institutions or entities with approved principal preparation programs in Illinois in October, 2013. Organization textbox tags are linked to the county where the organization is physically located. Light-shaded organization textbox tags denote organizations located in rural areas. (Illinois State Board of Education, *Directory of approved programs,* 2013).

Fifteen programs are approved to serve the greater metropolitan Chicago area, down from the previous approved number of 21. The 10 central and southern programs successfully reapplied for program approval and remain the same, leaving them primarily responsible for principal preparation in rural areas of Illinois.

Discussion

The new principal preparation legislation and rules present new challenges for schools and aspiring principals in rural Illinois.   There are three specific access issues limiting opportunities for aspiring principals in rural areas.   The first of these is the access to principal preparation programs in remote and rural areas.   A decline in enrollment in principal preparation programs, driven in part by the large number of candidates who completed the program before the new rules went into effect, has impacted the ability to offer programs off-campus at satellite locations in rural or remote areas.   Access to a qualifying internship site with a successful building principal, as required in the rules, may limit many candidates.   As well, limited access to work with specific student populations during internship, such as students in English Language Learner (ELL) classes, is a challenge in many rural areas of Illinois.   The new rules also create a challenging paradigm shift for persons who choose to work with interns, from being a supervisor to being a mentor.   This new role creates an additional challenge, increased responsibilities associated with mentoring interns, that requires direct involvement with interns as they lead specific internships activities.

Limited Access

Distance.   Aspiring leaders in rural areas may have limited access to principal preparation programs.   Institutions in Illinois that serve rural areas have a history of delivering principal preparation programs to groups of candidates in isolated areas at a centrally located district or an independent satellite location as evening classes.   These programs, situated in the midst of several rural communities, have been likely to attract several principal candidates from each of the surrounding schools or districts.   With the current numbers of candidates in decline because of the influx of candidates completing principal preparation in advance of the new rules, institutions may not have the necessary number of students to make it financially feasible to deliver programs in rural areas.   A brick and mortar campus as an only option is a time and distance obstacle.   Given the locations of the limited number of approved programs in southern Illinois, the development of aspiring principals in this area of the state is almost non-existent.

Online program delivery is an option for rural candidates since the new principal program rules allow for a program to provide 50 percent or more of the program coursework online.   There are, however, requirements.   Program candidates must be observed by a tenure track faculty member "a minimum of two full days each semester, and for a minimum of 20 days throughout the length of the program" (Title 23, Section 30.50, 2014).   This perhaps solves the distance issue for candidates, but creates administrative issues associated with creating predominantly online programs requiring reallocation of money and reprioritization of faculty time from face-to-face instruction to online instruction and travel.

Successful principals.   Another factor limiting access to aspiring rural candidates is the rule that requires the principal of the internship site to have "two years of successful experience as a building principal as evidenced by relevant data, including

data supporting student growth in two of the principal's previous five years" (Title 23, Section 30.40, 2014). Many principals of rural schools with a high number of students from poverty face a significant academic achievement challenge. The effects of poverty are well-established as having a negative effect on student achievement (Marzano, 2004). Seven of lllinois' nine counties with the highest childhood poverty rates are rural and located in the far southern area of Illinois, with rates ranging from 27.2% to 49% (Social IMPACT Research Center, 2011). The districts in these seven counties report student low-income rates from 51.5% to 99.1% (Northern Illinois University, 2013). Of the 17 school districts in these seven counties, none is making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), an annual progress goal established for schools and districts (Northern Illinois University, 2013). Four districts have some of the highest low-income district percentages in this area and are identified as 10 Years in School Improvement, a U.S. AYP status. Under these circumstances, the determination of a successful building principal in our most at-risk rural school settings may well be an obstacle for aspiring principal candidates from these schools and districts. The critical need to develop leadership capacity of candidates from such districts is limited by whatever way a given principal preparation program interprets the state requirement that a mentor be "successful" at improving achievement.

Required experiences with specific populations. Opportunities related to required experiences in course field work and in the internship are limited for many in rural, remote districts of Illinois especially when they focus on instruction related for English Language Learners (ELL). Candidates from the southernmost rural counties of the state will have difficulty finding ELL teachers and schools with transitional bilingual programs. The problem is finding ELL populations in rural area schools that are being served by transitional bilingual programs. While Illinois' percentage increase of rural Hispanic students over a 10-year period from 1999 to 2009 was 437% (Strange, et al., 2012), this growth in rural Hispanic students is situated in specific areas and communities in Illinois and is not largely distributed throughout large rural areas. The majority of the state's ELL students are enrolled in districts in metropolitan counties near Chicago and Rock Island/Moline (Northern Illinois University, 2013). Yet, there are six districts scattered across five central counties with Hispanic enrollments that would require transitional bilingual programs (Northern Illinois University, 2013). School code in Illinois requires 20 or more children of limited English-speaking ability in an attendance center of a school district to have a transitional bilingual education program (Title 23, Section 228, 2013). There are only two districts among the 74 in southernmost rural Illinois counties that have a high enough district Hispanic enrollment that may require a transitional bilingual program (Northern Illinois University, 2013). Their location near the Illinois/Missouri border makes them an unlikely internship opportunity for candidates from districts several hours away. The central counties with Hispanic students and transitional programs would be too great a distance for a majority of interns from remote, rural districts in southern Illinois. Therefore, it will be very difficult to provide internship experiences with English language learners for candidates living in most of rural Illinois.

New Roles and Responsibilities: A Paradigm Shift

Another challenge is the paradigm shift that is presented in the new preparation rules with regard to the role of the mentor and the relationship between the mentor and the intern. New principal preparation rules are intentional in using the term mentor to identify the administrator who works with the intern. Being a mentor to an intern is quite different from being a supervisor of internship experiences. The shift represents moving from perceiving the principal as a manager to perceiving the principal as a school leader. In past practice, it was not unusual for principals to supervise several interns who were assigned a variety of administrative duties and logged hours performing them. Some of these duties were hours of supervising school activities, which, by today's rules, are not considered leadership activities. A purposeful shift has been made in the new rules requiring internship activities that are more focused on school improvement planning and instructional leadership. The rules are specific about the roles of the intern and mentor. The new rules "require the candidate to work directly with the mentor observing, participating in, and taking the lead in specific tasks…" (Title 23, Section 30.40, 2014). This language reflects the research on the value of quality mentoring provided "by professional practitioners who have the knowledge, time and commitment" (Gray, Fry, Bottoms, & O'Neill, 2007, p. 13) to model competencies, shape dispositions, and coach to reach potential. In larger districts, typically metropolitan districts, interns would have a choice of administrators who may qualify as a mentors, assistant principals, directors, coordinators, capable of fulfilling the new mentor role and/or being assigned by the mentor to work with the intern in this person's area of expertise. Rural administrators often perform multiple roles, superintendent/principal, multiple building principal, athletic director, or transportation director, making it possible that an intern at a rural school district would not have access to someone with the time and or capacity to mentor them.

In addition to the transition to an intensive, professional coaching relationship, there are greatly increased expectations for interns in the new rules. Over 30 specific leadership activities must be performed by the intern under the consultation of the mentor over a one- to two-year period. To measure performance on these authentic tasks, three, multi-item rubrics are used to assess the internship experience. The following rubric description for Meets the Standard, serves as an example of one internship requirement every intern must complete.

> The candidate presents to the school's leadership team a comprehensive examination of the progress made by the staff and principal toward the identified goals of the SIP. The presentation clearly explains the data used to analyze the impact of various interventions toward the goals identified in the SIP. The candidate's recommendations are based on an analysis of interventions implemented in support of the SIP, faculty input, and are aligned with the mission and vision of the school. The presentation focuses on the work of the staff and principal to attain improved and increased student achievement and demonstrates significant logical and

practical improvements for future planning by the school's leadership team
(Title 23, Section 30.APPENDIX A, 2014).

This example highlights the specificity of experiences a mentor and intern must engage in and suggests many hours of mentor and intern work are required for successful completion.

As noted previously, it is not unusual for building principals in many rural districts to wear many hats and perform many functions. Rural areas have some of the state's smallest district enrollments, and these small districts do not have multiple principals. As a result, 34% of the state's rural districts are served by persons in the dual role of superintendent and principal (Illinois State Board of Education, *Directory of educational entities,* 2013). If we look at the 23 most rural counties in southern Illinois, we find the largest concentration of rural districts, 74, compared to 40 in northern Illinois, 41 in western Illinois, and 32 in eastern Illinois. School leadership in far southern, rural Illinois counties is further strained by shared responsibilities. Of the 74 rural districts in southern Illinois, 20 districts employ a principal serving two or more schools designated as elementary, junior high, or high school, and 29 employ a superintendent who also serves as the principal for all schools in the district (Illinois State Board of Education, *Directory of educational entities,* 2013). Given these facts, the expectation that a superintendent/principal or a principal serving two or more schools be able to work directly with a principal candidate may be impractical. The number of prescribed internship experiences and their associated assessments may be more than school principals will want to add to their work load.

Finally, given the specificity of the internship requirements, the explicit expectations of the candidate taking the lead in these activities, may be implausible in small, rural districts. It may be a question of whether the mentor sees them as appropriate for his or her school at this point in time. As well, a common characteristic of rural school districts is having a school board who is informed and involved in the day-to-day priorities of its schools (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009, Fusarelli & Militello, 2012). In some rural districts, the prescribed internships activities may not be among the board's expectations. As a result, some principals and interns may be unwilling to expose themselves to these activities as they are not priority activities in the current school or district culture.

Similarly, the number of required internship experiences raises a question about how likely it would be for an intern to lead a collaborative activity in a school other than the one in which he or she works. In the 74 southernmost rural districts in Illinois, nearly half of them are elementary districts. This would require candidates to secure a mentor in a nearby unit or high school district to conduct internship experiences at that level. It would be a challenge to be accepted as a leader of activities in a district where you are not a stakeholder in the school or school community.

Recommendations

All Illinois students, regardless of where they may live in the state, deserve the best instructional leaders in their schools. The reform of principal preparation programs in

Illinois was overdue and necessary to meet ever-increasing demand to have the best instructional leaders to ensure that our students are meeting and exceeding state goals for academic achievement.   However, the reform ignores rural demographics, failing to address principal preparation needs in vast areas of the state with a number of rural districts, creating a newly defined Forgottonia (Bibo, 2013) in Illinois. A reform agenda focused on building capacity in rural regions of the state in place of unwieldy policy that is a one-size-fits-all can be a solution.

When areas identified as metropolitan, suburban, cities, or towns are removed from the map, what remains is rural. The most likely candidates for sustained school leadership in rural Illinois are aspiring principal candidates from these vast rural areas. The unique characteristics of a rural area define for the inhabitants their sense of place (Bushnell, 1999; Howley, Harmon, & Leopold, 1996).   Sense of place in a rural area is what keeps someone there or what causes someone to leave and then to return. It is an attachment to a place, a relationship with a place. Howley et al. defined it as "aspirations for cherishing and cultivating their local communities…" (p. 151).   Similarly Budge (2006) asserted, "…leadership of place is leadership that specifically aims to improve the quality of life in particular communities" (p. 8).   Rural school leadership must be developed locally from among the people who cherish the community and want to improve the quality of life there.   If a principal candidate is only interested in the position in a rural district to gain experience to move on, it is unlikely that principal will advocate for the academic achievement of the community's students for the long term. The cultivation of localized leadership talent is critical in rural areas.

Principal preparation programs designed to prepare principals for rural school leaders in other states have been successful because they were customized to rural needs. The Principals Excellence Program (PEP) in Pike County, Kentucky addressed the rural concerns of developing a cadre of well-prepared school leaders, of cultivating a commitment to stay in the rural area, and of increasing students' academic success (Browne-Ferrigno & Maynard, 2005).   The Oregon Leadership Network focused on developing school leaders trained with an emphasis on cultural competency to help all students succeed regardless of ethnic or socioeconomic differences ("What is the Oregon Leadership Network," 2014).   The Northeast Leadership Academy instituted by North Carolina State University developed leaders in the state's rural, high-poverty districts with attention to rural context, specialized training, and weekly release time from teaching to practice leadership skills during the school day (Fusarelli & Militello, 2012). The Rural Alaska Principal Preparation and Support Project delivered distance education and face-to-face coaching through a federally-funded five-year program to develop and sustain principals in rural Alaska (Rural Alaska, 2014).   In all these examples, customized preparation and on-site support was essential.

Customized Principal Preparation Programs for Rural Illinois

When developing principal leadership and raising student achievement in rural areas of Illinois become a priority, a customized principal preparation program is necessary to reach most rural areas of the state. Such a program is quite different from preparation programs previously delivered on campus and at satellite sites. This means "more than

tinkering around the edges of the program or shuffling the metaphorical deck of cards" (Fusarelli & Militello, 2012). A custom program for rural principal development requires many hours to develop online course work, recruitment plans, and marketing materials for possible district partnership. The program has to provide instruction through distance learning to bridge the distance from program sites to rural communities. Faculty skills must be honed in developing robust online instruction. The technology necessary for distance learning has to be supported by sustainable funding. On-site faculty supervision at the mentor/intern school throughout the program's coursework and the internship is imperative. Programs have to re-evaluate how faculty will use time that includes frequent trips to distant internship sites and full days of face-to-face collaboration with mentors and interns. Successful marketing can promote this kind of principal preparation program as one that develops leadership capacity, saves district resources of time and money, and provides sustained leadership. Illinois principal preparation programs that had previously reached remote, rural areas of the state through satellite programs, have curtailed their reach. Without a new vision for delivering programs or providing access to a program, remote, rural areas of the state will continue to be underserved.

Culturally Responsive Principal Preparation for Rural Illinois Schools

The new program rules require program and district partnerships, an effort to ensure that candidates were developed responsive to district needs. This partnership requirement has had limited reach into rural areas of Illinois because of limited numbers of candidates and distance. With a customized rural principal preparation program the primary objective of the program/district partnership, the joint approval and selection of promising principal candidates, culturally responsive to rural school needs, can be realized. A program preparation focus must be on developing leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are responsive to the culture of the rural schools. Whether these candidates come from within the district or not, a culturally responsive program takes into consideration developing leaders acquainted with challenges unique to rural schools. High poverty, low property values, and isolation are factors which impact the degree to which rural, remote schools are able to find and retain effective principals (Fusarelli & Militello, 2012). As well, the culture of the community, its co-dependency with the school district, and the rural school board's close governance practices, require programs to prepare leaders for responding to rural stakeholders. A culturally responsive principal preparation program focuses on preparing leaders able to address these factors. It is possible that a principal preparation program developing principals in tune with the demands and expectations of rural schools, will see successful school leaders who will contribute to raising student achievement in rural schools of Illinois.

As Illinois has joined the nation's reform of principal preparation, so should Illinois follow initiatives of other states supporting principal preparation and development specific to rural areas. Illinois' best intentions for preparing highly effective school leaders must recognize and not forget the remote, rural areas of the state if Illinois truly expects "…*to improve teaching and learning and increase academic achievement and the development of all students…*" (emphasis in original) (Title 23, Section 30.20, 2014).

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Puppets and Puppeteers: External Mandates and the Instructional Practice of Two First-Year Teachers

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

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This longitudinal study examined how the approach leaders in two schools took to implementing the Common Core State Standards shaped the way that two first-year teachers constructed meaning related to being a teacher. Instructional leadership constructs and threat rigidity theory were used to analyze qualitative data gathered over a nine-month period. Findings indicate that the way schools as organizations respond to external mandates can influence the way that beginning teachers conceptualize, and approach, their work in the classroom.
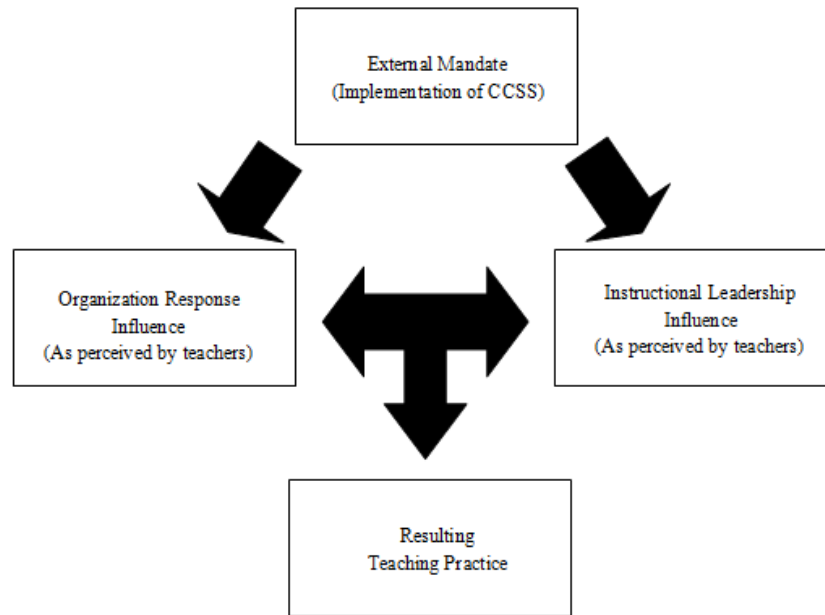
Introduction

School leaders hold the onus of ensuring that students receive an adequate and meaningful education. This responsibility has increased the importance of instructional leadership which is driven, in part, by the school reform movement that imposes a phalanx of accountability measures on public schools internationally (Hallinger & Lee, 2013; Hallinger & Murphy, 2013). At the heart of the reform movement in the United States is the concept of standards, the most recent manifestation of which, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), is perceived by some as a strong attempt at a national curriculum (Tienken & Zhao, 2010). Others dispel this claim, arguing that the CCSS do not aim to establish a national curriculum, but rather define what "students should know and be able to do at the end of the year" (Rothman, 2011, para. 2).

In this paper, we are not concerned with the affordances and constraints of the CCSS. Instead, we examine the relationship between how schools as organizations implement the CCSS and the way that first-year teachers deliver instruction. Drawing on data from a longitudinal study that followed two beginning teachers through their first year of teaching, we argue that the way school leaders respond to external mandates such as the implementation of the CCSS can influence how beginning teachers conceptualize their work as teachers.

Conceptual Framework

The study grew out of a larger grounded theory project (Bengtson & Connors, 2013) that necessitated a closer examination using the frameworks of instructional leadership (Hallinger, 2003; Southworth, 2002) and threat rigidity theory (Staw, Sanderland, & Dutton, 1981). In this sense, the conceptual framework for this paper emerged as we engaged in ongoing conversations with, and conducted observations of, the participants. True to the grounded theory approach, the sensitizing concepts of organizational response (i.e., threat rigidity) and instructional leadership experienced by the participants became our conceptual framework (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The emerging theory that shows the relationship of the two emerging sensitizing concepts that formed the conceptual framework for the study.

The concept of threat rigidity, introduced by the seminal work of Staw, et al. (1981), and its relationship to instruction is the focus of this inquiry. The primary research question asked: How, if at all, does the way that organizations respond to the external mandate of implementing the CCSS influence how first-year English teachers deliver instruction? To answer this question, we conducted a two-case study in which two first-year English teachers were followed through their first year of teaching.

The prevailing trend in both leadership preparation programs and active principals' role expectations suggest that the ability of school leaders to influence the quality of instruction plays a key role in the leading of a successful school as measured by the current accountability mandates (Hallinger, 2005). Therefore, we identify instructional leadership as carrying the responsibility of guiding the change process required by the external mandate of implementing the CCSS, and our data gives us the opportunity to examine the nature of instructional leadership that is occurring in these two cases through the lens of our two participants' perspectives and descriptions of their reflected and observed experiences.

Secondly, we directed our attention to the way schools, as organizations, respond to the demands of implementation of the CCSS as it might be related to threat rigidity theory (Staw, et al., 1981). Again, it was through the perspectives of Elizabeth and Terry that drew us to understand that the manner in which organizations, and in this case the schools and their systems, responded to the required implementation of the CCSS influenced the way instruction occurred in the classrooms of these two novice teachers.

Instructional Leadership

The implementation of the CCSS poses challenges for school leaders and teachers as it represents yet another educational reform initiative introduced with an expectation that schools will be held accountable for performance outcomes. With the increased emphasis given student performance on standardized tests, the school principal has been identified as second only to classroom teachers as an influence to student learning (Leithwood, Seashore Lewis, & Wahlstrom, 2004). More recently, instructional leadership has been found to be a fundamental contributor to student achievement (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013; Shatzer, Caldarella, Hallam, & Brown, 2014). Therefore, we argue that instructional leadership plays a significant role in the implementation of any initiative that is designed to improve student achievement.

Instructional leadership emerged from research on effective schools in the early 1980s (Hallinger, 2003). Since then, increased accountability for school performance has drawn attention to how school administrators lead instruction. Interestingly, there is still a question as to what instructional leadership really looks like, as there are contradictory criteria and characteristics that have led to a sense of vagueness regarding what constitutes sound instructional leadership and what does not (Rigby, 2014). For example, Hallinger (2003) highlights one popular image that suggests that, "instructional leadership focuses predominantly on the role of the school principal in coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the school" (p. 331). Of concern here is the concept of *controlling* instruction and the extent to which this is conflicts with the professionalism of teachers (Kohl, 2009; Milner, 2013).

Contrasting the idea that instructional leadership is a top-down practice that controls instruction, Southworth (2002) emphasizes the nurturing of effective two-way communication regarding teaching and learning issues amongst all educators in a collaborative school community as a critical characteristic of instructional leadership. In such a culture, open debate about student learning issues is considered essential. Effective instructional leadership allows teachers to "build repertoires of flexible alternatives rather than collecting rigid teaching procedures and methods" (Blase & Blase, 1999, p. 359). Instructional leadership grants teachers the flexibility to develop a variety of approaches to instruction that can better accommodate the needs of the learner in a given context (Hoy & Hoy, 2003; Mombourquette & Bedard, 2014).

The proposition of giving teachers the latitude to make decisions calls into question the level of "control" that is presented by Hallinger (2003). Furthermore, a model of instructional leadership consistent with Southworth's (2002) vision should embrace student-centered teaching strategies which are more constructive in nature than traditional teacher-centered strategies (Nelson & Sassi, 2005). In the present accountability era, the failure of principals to be effective instructional leaders might be attributed to how they (or their systems) respond to external mandates such as the CCSS.

Threat Rigidity

As conceptualized by Staw, et al. (1981), threat rigidity describes how organizations respond to external threats. According to threat rigidity theory, organizations that

perceive themselves as coming under attack by outside forces may respond in an inflexible manner. From an open systems perspective, the goals of the organization shift from the organization's stated goals to the primary goal of survival (Scott, 2002). As a threat becomes more prevalent, organizations that respond in a rigid way are less likely to tolerate risk-taking practices (Shimizu, 2007), resulting in a "constriction of control, such that the opinions of the dominant members may prevail and their influence may become more centralized. Such changes in information and control processes may, of course, lead to faulty group decision making" (Staw, et al., 1981, p. 511). Importantly, the way an organization responds to external threats shapes expectations concerning how workers perform their duties and responsibilities as the work of the organization unfolds.

Olsen and Sexton (2009) examined threat rigidity in regard to a California high school labeled underperforming by the surrounding community. While they did not consider the influence that threat rigidity had specifically on beginning teachers, they did identify recurring patterns in the way that school leaders responded to outside threats (e.g., school closure, loss of jobs, critique from the larger community). These included pressure on teachers to conform to a prescribed way of teaching; constricted communication; administrator favoritism toward new teachers as a result of their perceived malleability; valuation of teacher conformity; an increase in administrative control; and a corresponding decrease in teacher autonomy.

Having studied the relationship between rigid response and school leadership, Daly (2009) surmised that there are dimensions of leadership that contribute to a decrease in threat rigidity. Trust, shared decision making, and the encouragement of diverse opinions and innovation were found to be predictors of less rigid responses to outside threats. In contrast, restriction of innovative thought, top-down delivery of expectations and mandates, and a constriction of communication were identified as characteristics of rigid responses. We see these characteristics of a rigid response as being contrary to effective instructional leadership.

Context of the Study

This longitudinal study examined how the experiences and perceptions of two first-year English teachers were influenced by the expectations placed on them by their respective school administrations. Purposeful sampling was used to identify two participants who were starting their first year of teaching and who had recently completed the same teacher preparation program. Both of the participants – one male (Terry), and the other female (Elizabeth) – graduated from the same graduate teacher education program in 2012. As students in the program, the participants took the same courses, completed three student teaching rotations over the course of one year, and were observed by the same supervisor throughout their student teaching practicum. Moreover, university faculty identified them both as strong English teachers with promising career trajectories. After graduating, the participants accepted positions teaching middle-level English language arts in two school systems, one rural and the other suburban.

Elizabeth. As a non-traditional student, Elizabeth came into teaching after having changed careers. During her time in the teacher preparation program, Elizabeth was

described by the faculty as someone who could be trusted to complete all assignments with thoroughness, and, according to her university faculty supervisors, she had developed the ability to successfully enact student-center teaching methods that were promoted by her preparation program. It was during her third (and final) rotation of her student teaching experience that Elizabeth was asked to fill in as a long-term substitute at Heights Junior High School. At the end of the 2011-2012 school year, Elizabeth was offered a full-time teaching position at Heights.

Terry. As a more traditional student, Terry entered the graduate teacher preparation program immediately after completing his four-year undergraduate degree in English. Like Elizabeth, Terry was highly regarded by the both university faculty and his peers. He was considered a bright student with a keen intellect and he exhibited a desire to learn about teaching English, as evidenced by his interest and involvement with national professional teaching association conferences as a graduate student. Although Terry admitted to having experienced a more traditional, teacher-centric view of teaching when he first started the graduate preparation program, he came to appreciate, and then embrace, the constructivist student-centered approach supported by the university graduate teacher preparation program. Terry was hired to teach 8th-grade English/Language Arts at Brownsville Middle School starting in August of 2012.

The Research Sites

The research sites were situated within easy driving distance of the university campus which proved optimal for the researchers as the study design required multiple visits to each site. Table 1 presents the demographic data of the two schools. Heights Junior High School, one of two junior high schools in the larger school system, is situated in a small city of approximately 75,000 and is nestled in an established suburban-style neighborhood made up of middle income, ranch style homes. Among the families served by the school system were parents who were employed by the local university. Elizabeth was the newest of three 9th-grade English teachers at Heights Junior High School.

Brownsville Middle School, in contrast to Heights Junior High School, is a small school that is typical of many rural school systems in the state. The town of Brownsville has a population of approximately 1,300 made up of primarily working-class families. All three of the Brownsville schools are located on the same small campus. Terry was hired as the lone 8th-grade English/Language Arts teacher in the middle school.

Table 1.

Descriptive Data on Research Sites

	Grade levels	Student enrollment	White Students	Free and Reduced Lunch	AYP Status
Heights JHS	8-9	720	82%	24%	"Achieving"
Brownsville MS	5-8	268	91%	63%	"Needs Improvement"

Elizabeth and Terry's Teacher Preparation Program

Situated at the state's flagship university, the graduate teacher education program Elizabeth and Terry completed is a yearlong licensure program that culminates in students' earning a Master of Arts in Teaching degree. Like students in other teacher education programs in the United States, Elizabeth and Terry were encouraged to practice student-centered, constructivist teaching. Students begin taking classes in July and complete their program of study the following May. During that time they meet weekly with faculty of their university. The remainder of their time is spent completing a prolonged field experience that places them with mentor teachers in three different school systems. Students in the program consequently graduate having interned for a total of 33 weeks in both suburban and rural schools. Faculty, alumni, and school personnel routinely cite the field experience component as the program's greatest asset, as it ensures that interns enter the job-market having gained a full year of teaching experience.

Method

Qualitative inquiry requires researchers to be instruments of inquiry which calls for direct involvement in the design of the study, data collection, and analysis (Maxwell, 2013). We believe that, as researchers, being immersed in these three processes allows for the opportunity of thorough and informed interpretation (Davies & Dodd, 2002).

Study Design

To gain a deep understanding of how Elizabeth and Terry constructed what it meant to be a teacher in the context of their respective schools and school systems, we determined

that it was important to design a study that would allow us to spend time with the participants. That is, to not only have multiple conversations, but to also observe both participants on a recurring basis throughout their first year of teaching. This immersion in the field over a period of nine months allowed us to get an extensive view of Elizabeth's and Terry's experiences during their first year of teaching. The study design was focused on how the participants experiences of being a teacher, and how that experience influenced their construction of what it meant to be a teacher.

Data Collection

Data were collected using methods associated with qualitative research, including: an initial semi-structured interview; monthly observations of the participants teaching; open conversations with each of the participants immediately following each observation; collected artifacts the participants volunteered to share; and email correspondence (See Table 2). Field notes were taken during each of the observations. All conversations and initial semi-structured interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed in their entirety.

Table 2.
Summary of Data Sources and Analyses

Sources of Data	Focus of Analysis
Initial interview (N=1 per participant)	- Perceptions of teacher education program - Initial perceptions of new school - Goals for teaching English language arts
Classroom observations during first year of teaching (N=6 per participant)	- Instructional methods and decisions - Social context of teaching
Post-observation conversations (N=6 per participant)	- Decisions made during observed lesson - Self-evaluation of lessons - Social context of teaching - District, school, and departmental issues - Sources of influence on teaching - Perceived agency to make curricular changes
Artifacts (e.g., lesson plans, instructional materials, district/school policies, etc.)	- Evidence for planning - Sources of influence on teaching - Evidence of teaching orientation (i.e., constructivist, transmission)

The conversations with Terry and Elizabeth were purposefully designed to be open-ended with the dialogue often starting with "So, tell us how this past month has gone?" or simply, "How are things going?" Without exception, the conversations unfolded into exchanges that lasted up to an hour in length. Transcriptions were completed as soon as possible following each interview/conversation. The observations were scheduled so that Elizabeth and Terry could be observed teaching the same group of students over the course of the year. This also allowed for us to meet with them immediately after observing the class session.

Data Analysis

As researchers, we found great value in meeting weekly to discuss the data, and we feel strongly that one of the strengths of this study was the abundance of debate and argument between the two of us as we moved toward making sense of the data. These weekly research meetings also allowed us to identify concepts and ideas to be pursued, if subsequent conversations with the participants permitted, to check for understanding (i.e., member checking). Initial analysis of the interview and conversation transcripts involved open coding that was descriptive in nature. This was followed by a second cycle of sub-coding (Saldaña, 2013) as we determined that the initial codes were more categorical in nature (e.g. the categorical code of "curricular influences" was fractured into multiple sub-codes such as "curricular influences: district driven," "curricular influences: self-driven," etc.). Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the analysis process.

While Figure 2 appears to be highly sequential with distinct steps in the analysis process, the reader is reminded that, as with all qualitative analysis of this type, there was a constant recursive movement between elements of the analysis. Constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was ongoing during weekly meetings throughout the coding process. The authors subsequently determined that the frameworks of instructional leadership and threat rigidity theory were useful in further interpreting the thematic findings that emerged in regard to the research question this study sought to answer.
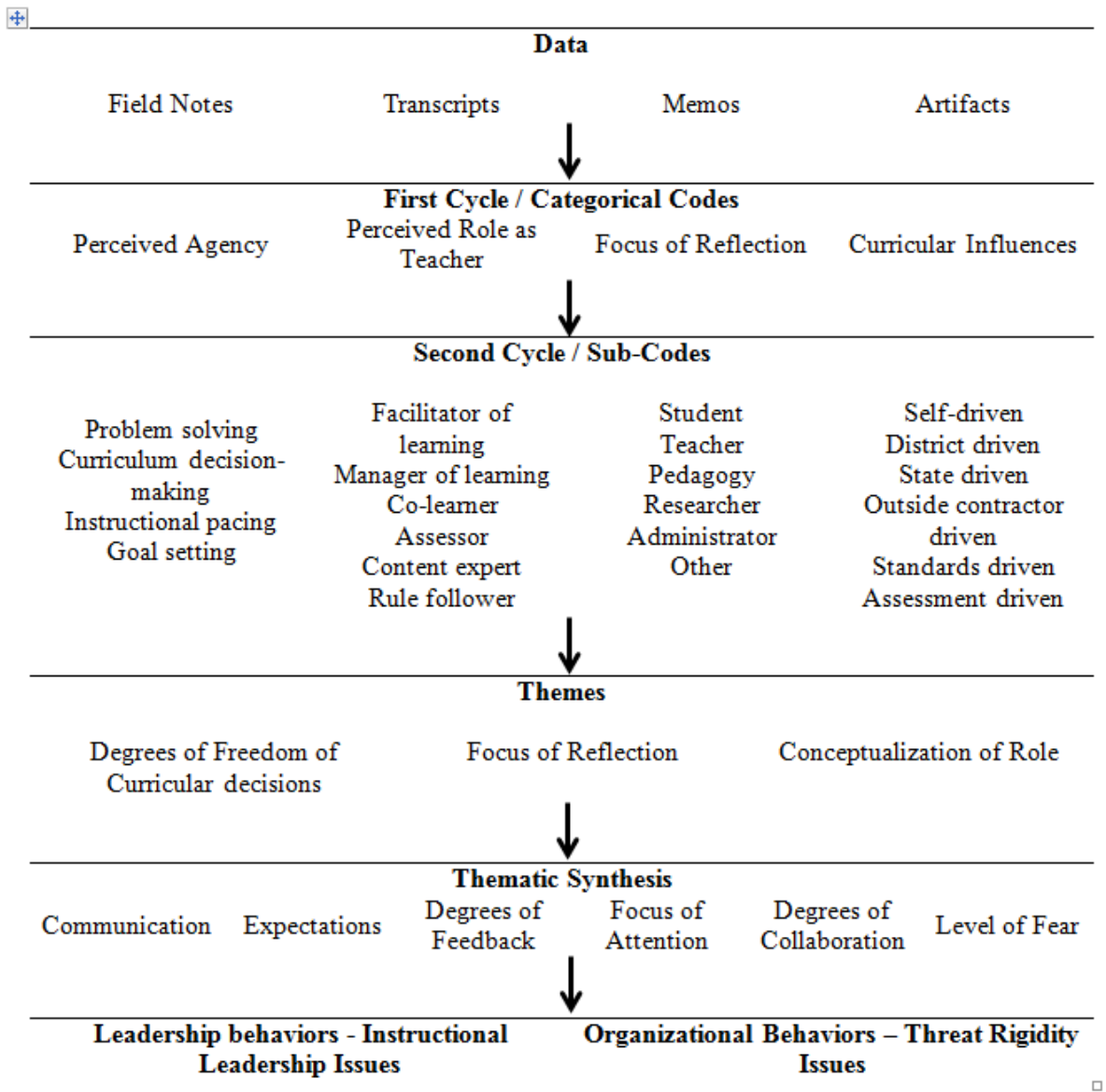
Data

Field Notes	Transcripts	Memos	Artifacts

↓

First Cycle / Categorical Codes

Perceived Agency	Perceived Role as Teacher	Focus of Reflection	Curricular Influences

↓

Second Cycle / Sub-Codes

Problem solving Curriculum decision-making Instructional pacing Goal setting	Facilitator of learning Manager of learning Co-learner Assessor Content expert Rule follower	Student Teacher Pedagogy Researcher Administrator Other	Self-driven District driven State driven Outside contractor driven Standards driven Assessment driven

↓

Themes

Degrees of Freedom of Curricular decisions	Focus of Reflection	Conceptualization of Role

↓

Thematic Synthesis

Communication	Expectations	Degrees of Feedback	Focus of Attention	Degrees of Collaboration	Level of Fear

↓

Leadership behaviors - Instructional Leadership Issues	**Organizational Behaviors – Threat Rigidity Issues**

Figure 2. The data analysis flow leading to the initial findings reflecting three themes and eventually arriving at issues of instructional leadership and threat rigidity.

Given the considerable differences in how Elizabeth and Terry made sense of being a teacher, and consequently how they performed their work, we were compelled to tackle the obvious question: Why was a difference evident between two new teachers who had graduated together from the same teacher preparation program, and who had appeared to adopt a constructivist, student-centered approach to teaching during their pre-service experiences?

Findings

Three themes emerged in this study: variations in the degree of freedom the participants felt they had to make curricular decisions, the impetus for (and focus of) their reflections, and how they thought about their role as English teachers. Each of these themes was represented differently by Elizabeth and Terry, and it was the synthesis of these contrarieties that led us to realize that school leaders and organizational behavior influenced the way the participants thought about teaching over the course of their first year. What follows is an account of the differences found in each theme.

Degrees of Freedom in Curriculum Decision Making

The extent to which Elizabeth and Terry had freedom in choosing what they did in terms of how materials were chosen, instruction was delivered, and student learning was assessed varied from what was perceived as being a high level of autonomy in their individual decision-making to being highly controlled by the school/district. While Elizabeth was part of the Language Arts team's curriculum decision-making process, overall, she felt that she had little autonomy in determining how the curriculum played out in her classroom. This was evidenced, in part, by tensions that often arose around meeting the needs of the district and meeting the needs of the students. Elizabeth explained:

> I'm concerned about the pace. I wonder if we're flying through so much material. For them trying to read *The Odyssey* was nearly impossible. Students would say "I just read it and I have no idea what that says." The problem is that these students didn't start out with the Common Core and so we're asking kids to jump several grade levels and mine are already behind so you know that's why I end up in the middle trying to be the one who makes sense of it and who turns around and translates it for them.

The school district had created a pacing guide that not only described what concepts should be covered and when, but also stipulated materials to be used during instruction (e.g., *The Odessey*). Elizabeth interpreted the pacing guide as a mandate that could not be strayed from or ignored, and as a result, it influenced the way she chose to teach. Continuing, she explained:

> You're walking around [the classroom] trying to get them to read something they can't understand in little pieces at a time. You're explaining a lot of it to them, which puts it all back on the teacher. It forces a little bit of a shift back to a traditional teaching style where you're just giving them all the answers.

By January, her sense of urgency to cover previously laid-out material that would appear on a district quarterly assessment led Elizabeth to claim, "…if it's not going to be on the quarterly assessment, then I don't care about it." Contrast this with a statement Elizabeth made during the initial interview in August:

So I'm just hoping I can sort of juggle it all and keep what's most important the focus, which is getting the students what they need and seeing them grow and seeing them learn. I'm excited to come up with new ideas of how to do things and try new things.

We see, from the beginning of the year to mid-year, a shift in Elizabeth's focus on what gets taught and how things are taught in her classroom. We would argue that this shift from a student-centered to a curriculum-centered approach was due to the lack of agency or autonomy that Elizabeth felt in the decision-making process.

Terry, on the other hand, regarded himself as having considerable agency at Brownsville Middle School when it came to curriculum decisions. He explained:

I have a lot of support, but at the same time, I don't feel like I'm being [prescribed] or forced about what I have to teach or how I need to teach. I feel like I have a lot of room to do kind of what I want or what I think is best for the students.

Our monthly observations revealed Terry's continuing use of student-centered, constructivist approaches with his students. Even during the weeks leading up to the spring test, when teachers at Brownsville were encouraged to concentrate on test preparation, Terry believed he had the freedom to determine how much test preparation he would actually do. What follows are field notes taken during a conversation after an observation conducted in March just before the administration of the annual standardized assessment:

Terry explained that test preparation had begun the previous Monday when the students returned from Spring Break. Asked to talk about his experiences with it, he suggested that he'd been struggling with a tension of sorts. On one hand, he felt guilty about devoting so much time to an activity that he didn't think was fostering any learning, that disengaged his students, and that he found "boring" as a teacher. Terry went on to explain that, while he believed the reading and writing activities he'd asked students to participate in throughout the year had adequately prepared his students, there remained a part of him that felt like he ought to devote time to test prep just in case.

I indicated that, in spite of the pressure Terry felt to devote class time to test preparation, he nonetheless devotes the first 15 minutes of class to independent reading, time that could have been spent working on the open response writing assignment that followed. Asked to justify his decision to do so, he explained that the decision was motivated by the fact that he wasn't comfortable devoting an entire period to test preparation without the students learning anything.

Tyler not only felt that he had sufficient agency to decide what he needed to do in class, he actually acted upon that agency to determine what his students needed to learn and how to go about teaching them to meet that end.

Focus of Reflection

There was also a difference in terms of how Elizabeth and Terry reflected on their work. In Elizabeth's case, reflection revolved around meeting the demands of the administration and other teachers. Elizabeth attached importance to the assessments which was relative to the expectations of the administration and her fellow teachers. Elizabeth explained:

> If you think about everything else that we do in this room on a day-to-day basis, all the things that I assess and put in the grade book, none of it is going to speak louder than the papers [students] write at the end of each quarter. Everything else is going to seem like stuff we did to get to the papers. If the principal is looking to evaluate you, or the district is looking to evaluate you, in my opinion that's what they're going to look at.

In general, Elizabeth seemed to spend much of her time in our conversations reflecting about assessments and how her students' performance would reflect on her. When asked about this seeming obsession with the quarterly assessments, Elizabeth agreed that it had taken over her thinking about teaching and learning. She offered that, compared to her internship experience the year before, the implementation of the Common Core State Standards had resulted in a rigid approach to teaching and learning. She explained, "I mean so much of what I saw even when I was interning last year … none of it was this regimented." It was apparent that Elizabeth spent much of her time thinking about the demands placed upon her regarding instructional pacing and assessment with the concern centered on how she might be perceived as an ineffective teacher if her students did not perform well on the quarterly assessments.

For Terry, student learning needs, and the extent to which he met them were at the forefront of his reflective thinking. During one of our conversations, we asked Terry what he was thinking about while he watched his students participate in a Socratic Circle activity. He responded:

> As I was observing I was really kind of watching the students individually and comparing them in my mind to the past two times we've had a Socratic Circle and trying to look for where they were digging into the text and thinking deeply about things and where they were just kind of skimming over things or not digging deeply. So I was trying to analyze their discussion and look at what we needed to work on.

Terry did not appear to be captivated by the fear of failing as a teacher, as Elizabeth seemed to be. Instead, Terry explained that while there were occasions when he felt his lessons had gone wrong, or when he failed to manage his classroom, those experiences presented him with learning experiences, the result of which led him to improve his teaching.

Role Conceptualization

Finally, there was a difference in how the participants conceptualized their role as teachers. Elizabeth regarded herself as a manager of student learning – a result having to keep pace with other English classes and prepare students for quarterly district assessments. Elizabeth also saw herself as filling the role of a rule follower, and she explained that, in her mind, the administration valued teachers "who work very hard. Who, I don't want this to sound bad or negative – who follow the rules." When asked why it was important to be a "rule follower," Elizabeth explained that the Heights Junior High faculty had received very firm directives from the administration regarding the administration of the quarterly assessment. Elizabeth did not want to be perceived as doing anything that was not sanctioned by the administration at either the school or district levels.

Elizabeth's concern over fitting in and being a team player predominated and it led her to comply with curricular decisions that she recognized were not always in the students' best interest. Throughout the study, Elizabeth lamented that she was not able to meet the needs of her students through the student-centered teaching approach that she had experimented with in her teacher preparation program. At one point she reflected:

> I feel like I never have time to do the things that I know are important because I either learned them in the [teacher education program] or they were the things that I admired most about my mentor teachers, like trying to help develop a love for reading.

This self-assessment was consistent with our observations throughout the year. What appeared to be at the center of her teaching energy was keeping up with the pacing guide and addressing only what was assessed.

Terry viewed himself as a facilitator of learning, and he administered formative and summative assessments to diagnose where he needed to supplement and change his instruction to meet students' needs. He continued to experiment with progressive teaching practices he encountered in his teacher education courses and he used this approach to support his students' learning that went beyond what was measured on mandated tests. For example, he explained one lesson that we observed related to students reading about the experiences of Holocaust victims as they were being transported to the concentration camps by train:

> So I wanted to do something today that got their attention, and helped them
> to empathize a little bit and understand what these people [Holocaust victims] were going through, and like Paige [student] said at the end – to kind of understand what they're feeling and put yourself through that instead of just thinking they were people you know, [who] went through this. So that was my goal – to really get them into it so they would understand the emotions that these people were going through when they [the students] started reading the play.

We asked Terry if empathy was a concept outlined in the new Common Core State Standards and he confirmed that it was not. When pressed to explain why he chose to devote his time to teaching it, he responded:

> I think it's something that they have to be able to do… just on a human level. Even ignoring all the English/Language Arts stuff, on a human level they have to be able to empathize with what other people are facing around the world or in history in order not to repeat that. Going back to the Holocaust, that was probably one of the biggest problems – people didn't empathize with the Jewish people and understand what they were going through.

Here, Terry moved away from the mandated CCSS curriculum to teach something that he felt his students needed and could benefit from as they developed into mature human beings. We see this as an example of the agency Terry feels in having the power to make decisions about what his students learn and how they are taught.

Discussion of Initial Findings

Heights Junior High School and Brownsville Middle School represent two distinct contexts that contributed to Elizabeth and Terry's construction of what it means to be a teacher. The norms and values of each school system played a role in shaping our participants' understanding. Somewhat unanticipated was the seemingly dramatically different experiences of Elizabeth and Terry; however, we are reminded that research on pre-service teachers (Smagorinsky, Rhym, & Moore, 2013) and first-year teachers (Bickmore, Smagorinsky, & O'Donnell-Allen, 2005) indicates that there can be conflicting paradigms represented by preparation programs on the one hand and the schools on the other. Our research questions led us to ask what was behind the differences between Elizabeth's and Terry's experiences.

The difference between Elizabeth and Terry's experiences can be explained as two different contexts where, consistent with organizational threat rigidity (Staw, et al., 1981), Elizabeth's school system responded to external accountability mandates by making a marked effort to control the curricular materials teachers used, the pace at which they taught, and how they assessed student learning. In doing so, the system valued a uniform implementation of the CCSS and placed the standards movement at the center of the school's instructional concerns.

In contrast, teachers at Brownsville Middle School were afforded more autonomy to make curricular and assessment decisions. In the latter context, the CCSS were considered important, but teachers constructed them as guiding principles that informed, rather than dictated, the curricular decisions they made.

Our conceptual framework focused on the characteristics of instructional leadership and threat rigidity. Using these two constructs, Table 3 presents how each of the schools might be represented. Heights Junior High School emulated a school that was being instructionally led by a more restrictive instructional leadership style and was rigidly responding to the implementation of the CCSS. Brownsville Middle School, on the other hand, showed traits of instructional leadership as defined by the preponderant

literature (Blase & Blase, 1999; Hoy & Hoy, 2003; Nelson & Sassi, 2005; Southworth, 2002).

The leadership of Heights Junior High School and the leadership from the district, as experienced by Elizabeth, appeared to be rigid in nature and seemed to align with conceptualization of instructional leadership emulating a top-down managerial approach.

Table 3

Instructional Leadership and Threat Rigidity Matrix

	Heights Junior High	Brownsville Middle
Instructional Leadership		
Continuing development of best practices and strategies		X
Controlling curriculum and instruction	X	
Culture building		X
Promoting quality instruction		X
Narrow mission	X	
Nurturing two-way communication		X
Teacher flexibility (autonomy)		X
Top-down directive approach	X	
Threat Rigidity		
Centralized influence	X	
Constricted communication	X	
Increase of administrative control	X	
No risk taking	X	
Pressure to conform	X	
Valuation of teacher conformity	X	

Heights Junior High, Threat Rigidity, and Instructional Leadership

The leadership of Heights Junior High School and the leadership from the district as experienced by Elizabeth appeared to be rigid in nature and seemed to align with conceptualization of instructional leadership emulating a top-down managerial approach. While Elizabeth had the utmost respect for her principal, and described the administration at Heights Junior High School as: "…wonderful. They are very good at handling the kids. We don't have a lot of discipline problems…it's never out of control;" she also expressed

concern that they rarely came to observe her teach. During our conversation in March, Elizabeth offered:

> …in the last couple of weeks, a few different times the principal has congratulated me on what a great job I'm doing. And realistically, my first question was, "How did you
> know? How do you know that I'm doing a great job?" And I say that only because in the whole year there have been only two visits, one by the principal, one by the assistant principal, and one time when there was a committee of five people…. I hope I'm meeting her [the principal's] expectations, she seems like I am. I don't know. But my question is: why aren't they in here more?

When asked about any feedback that she had received as a result of those three visits, Elizabeth explained that they look for specific things such as level of student engagement and "transitioning every 7 to 12 minutes:"

> They walk through, they get a glimpse, they tell you what their glimpse was and sort of what they saw you doing. Hopefully we're trying to plan lessons that will fit into that, because we know they are going to be looking for those things…. I don't know if that helps me as a teacher.

From Elizabeth's account, school administrators were exhibiting management behaviors predominantly over instructional leadership behaviors. With the demand from central office to follow a uniform pacing guide regardless of the needs of the individual student reflected a top-down managerial approach that was controlling the curriculum through prescribed teaching materials and assessments. We considered this to be a link to threat rigidity as the organization was responding to the mandated implementation of the CCSS. On the other hand, according to Elizabeth, there was no evidence of meaningful conversations over instructional issues between the school administration and Elizabeth.

In one conversation, Elizabeth spoke of the term "anti-Common Core" being used by the administration and other teachers as a label for those teachers who have spoken out about how the implementation of the CCSS might be different. Controlling what teachers said and did in relation to the implementation of the CCSS was confirmed by an email from the principal to the teaching staff stating that any complaining or adverse comments to what was occurring in the school would not be tolerated. The constriction of communication reinforced organizational behavior that was consistent with the threat rigidity found in schools by Olsen and Sexton (2009) and Daly (2009). This valuation of conformity was important to Elizabeth as she identified herself as being a "rule follower" or "team player," and felt that for this reason, she was highly valued by her principal. The fact that Elizabeth had abandoned any student-centered constructivist pedagogy for a more traditional teacher-centered approach in order to be a rule follower or team player did not seem to be an issue for the administration.

Brownsville Middle, Threat Rigidity, and Instructional Leadership

Terry's experience at Brownsville Middle School contrasted with Elizabeth's experience at Heights Junior High School. Terry shared:

> …one of the things that struck me when I first interviewed here … a lot of the interview questions were about the Common Core and [we] were discussing the CCSS, but it didn't seem like it was a cloud hanging over me or like that it was going to be expected that I rigidly adhere to those standards. I do feel like there is a lot of autonomy for teachers and there's a lot of room to choose what I think is best for my students without feeling like I have to rigidly adhere to a set of standards or a set of expectations by the school district.

Later in the year, Tyler noted that the CCSS invited teachers to address the kinds of things he thought good teachers were already addressing. There was no evidence that Terry was being directed to teach in a certain way or to assess his students in a prescribed fashion. He explained:

> I have a lot of support, but at the same time I don't feel like I'm being forced about what I have to teach or how I need to teach. I feel like I have a lot of room to do what I want or what I think is best for the students. Being a teacher at Brownsville Middle School, it feels like I have a lot of freedom. It feels that no matter what I do, I have the support of my administration. It feels like I have room to experiment and do what I want as a teacher. I don't feel pressured to follow a certain curriculum map or to have prescribed lessons or anything like that.

The freedom Terry felt serves as a meaningful contrast to Elizabeth's experience at Heights Junior High School. Brownsville had a culture that supported risk-taking and honored the professionalism of teachers.

Terry mentioned that his principal had frequently been in his classroom. During these visits, the principal not only observed what Terry was doing, but also talked with students to determine if they understood what was happening with the day's instruction. Terry reported that the principal constantly told him, "We're glad you are here. Let me know how I can support you." Terry interpreted this type of feedback as affirmation that exercising his freedom as a professional teacher was not only valued, but using progressive pedagogical strategies such as Socratic Circles and assimilations were recognized as good teaching.

Terry felt that he had a voice regarding instructional matters at Brownsville. He cited several instances where he had the opportunity to share what he was doing in his classroom with during faculty meetings and in turn was able to learn from the experiences shared by his fellow teachers. While there was never a situation where Terry felt a conflict with what the administration presented in terms of instruction, he felt confident that he would be able to debate any issues without retribution. In other words, Terry was describing what we interpreted as being the antithesis of a rigid response

where there is a constriction of communication and a lack of innovativeness or risk-taking (Staw et al., 1981; Olsen & Sexton, 2009).

Discussion

Emergent theories raise two questions concerning causality: 1) Does the rigid response of an organization lead to more of an instructional management practice by school leaders (see Figure 2), or 2) Does the nature of leadership approach cause a rigid response (see Figure 3)? One theory might explain the nature of leadership practice is dependent on the degree of rigid response to external mandates on the organization. It could be possible that at Heights Junior High School (represented by the left hand side of Figure 2), the rigid response of the school system to the implementation of the CCSS caused the principal to act more as an instructional manager or "puppeteer" pulling the strings in such a way that Heights Junior High School teachers (i.e., Elizabeth) were serving as a puppets – following rules and feeling constricted in their approach to teaching.
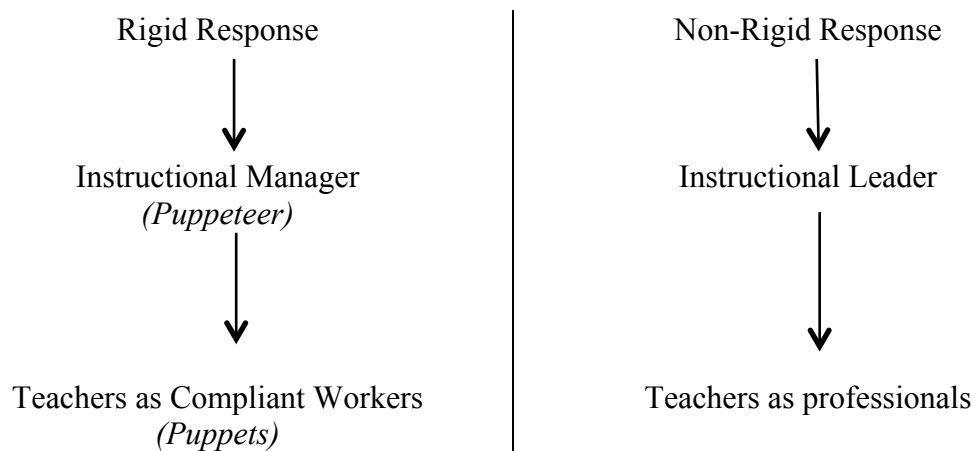
Rigid Response	Non-Rigid Response
↓	↓
Instructional Manager *(Puppeteer)*	Instructional Leader
↓	↓
Teachers as Compliant Workers *(Puppets)*	Teachers as professionals

Figure 2. The difference between the influence of rigid response and non-rigid response on leadership styles and teacher outcomes.

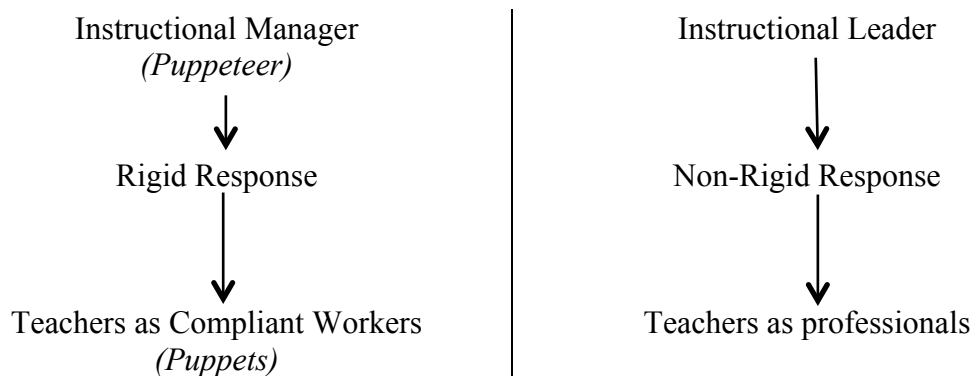| Instructional Manager (Puppeteer)	Instructional Leader
↓	↓
Rigid Response	Non-Rigid Response
↓	↓
Teachers as Compliant Workers (Puppets)	Teachers as professionals

Figure 3. The difference between the influence of leadership typologies on degrees of rigid-response and teacher outcomes.

On the right side of Table 2, a possible representation of what might be happening at Brownsville Middle School shows that the seemingly non-rigid response of the system allowed for instructional leadership to exist allowing teachers (i.e., Terry) the opportunity to make decisions, try new strategies and in general practice as professional educators. The second emerging theoretical question suggests a different causal theory (Figure 3). Perhaps it is the leadership typology that influences the organization's response to an external mandate.

What we were not able to discern from our data was the relationship between the degree of rigid response and leadership practices at Heights Junior High School and Brownsville Middle School. However, we do see a causal relationship possibly existing between rigid response and leadership behavior. Framing this relationship through process theory as an explanation of organizational behavior presented originally by Mohr (1982) we propose an explanation that allows for the analysis "of the causal *processes* by which some events influence others" (Maxwell, 2012, p. 36). What we do know is that there were two very different responses to the implementation of the CCSS. Heights Junior High School exhibited a rigid response and Brownsville Middle School exhibited a non-rigid response.

Admittedly, we acknowledge that a limitation in this study does not allow us to examine the thought processes of school leaders. The confirmation of either of the two theories presented Figure 2 and Figure 3 would require talking with those who lead schools and school systems –
which is a focus for further planned study; however, we do feel that the experiences of teachers captured through conversations and observations over time do afford us the opportunity to realize what was occurring in each case.

There are obvious limitations to examining just two cases. The context of each participant and each school site are unique unto themselves. For this reason, we are not suggesting a generalizability of these findings; however, this study does allow for us to consider the possible ramifications that the response of an organization produces when confronted by an external mandate.

Significance of the Study

The two cases examined in this study direct attention to the way that school leaders respond to external mandates in the accountability era. The findings suggest that school leaders influence the way that beginning teachers think about, and approach, teaching. This study suggests the current accountability policy might very well be responsible for a rigid response in some schools that interferes with what we know as sound leadership and classroom practices. While the educational leadership field has stressed the importance of instructional leadership, this study suggests that adopting a rigid response to external mandates can produce instructional *managers* rather than instructional *leaders*. By adopting the role of puppeteer, and by positioning teachers as marionettes, instructional managers aim to enforce how the curriculum is taught, when it is taught, and how student learning is assessed. In doing so, they may establish a culture of surveillance (Authors, 2013). Such a response can lead beginning teachers to abandon what research suggests are effective teaching practices in order to comply with the demands of school leaders.

Additionally, the issue of professionalism comes into question. Teaching, as a profession, entails the knowledge, skills, and attributes involved in determining what students need to learn, how to get them to learn it, and how to assess their learning. Having the ability to create an environment conducive to learning where the individual student is at the forefront of being a professional educator. Much like a medical professional has the freedom to diagnose and treat patients, teaching professionals should be permitted to diagnose and solve the learning needs of their students. We see the rigid response that existed at Heights Junior High School as contributing to the de-professionalization of Elizabeth, who found it more important to "follow the rules" that had been established than to address the actual needs of her students. In a real sense, Elizabeth learned to value her ability to follow the rules imposed on her rather that the sense of agency of being a professional educator.

Although the concepts of instructional management and instructional leadership have been used interchangeably in the past, we argue that a difference between the two has evolved in the accountability era. We attribute this difference to the manner in which school leaders respond to external mandates. This, coupled with a push toward standardization at the national level, can decrease the likelihood that beginning teachers will embrace alternatives to the traditional instructional practices that predominate in many schools (Smagorinsky, et al., 2013).

Implications and Conclusion

This study serves as a starting point in the examination of how schools respond to the neoliberal accountability policies that continue to influence the field of public education.

While we recognize that there are limitations to this study, the findings do suggest that further examination of the thought processes of instructional leaders as they implement externally driven mandates is warranted. Based on these two cases, several questions for the field of practice and future research emerge.

First, the relationship between instructional leadership and how teachers make sense of their roles should not be ignored. The cases of Elizabeth and Terry paint contrasting pictures of the influence of leadership on how two young teachers constructed meaning of being an educator. We argue that Elizabeth developed a sense of being a puppet that follows rules dictated by the puppeteer – the system leadership. During the same period of time, Terry developed a sense of professionalism in his role as a teacher with the leaders of Brownsville Middle School providing support through the nurturing of an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning. This calls into question the purpose of sound leadership in a school setting – is it to promote professionalism among teachers or is it to promote compliance to a set way of doing things, where individual professional agency is eradicated?

Secondly, while this study does not take into account student achievement, it does raise the question as to how we define success as educational leaders. The center of attention for Elizabeth was assessment. How well her students performed on the quarterly assessments served as the measurement of her success. If something was not on the assessment, then she did not address it in her classroom instruction. This is much different than Terry's approach to student learning. Terry's concept of success was much broader and perhaps more difficult to measure; nonetheless, he felt it to be his professional obligation to give his students meaningful experiences that would allow them to develop attributes that are deemed important for success as adults. This calls into question the role of instructional leadership – are we satisfied as educational leaders to simply be content with learning how to play the accountability game and "win" by having the highest student achievement as measured by standardized tests?

Thirdly, one interesting aspect of the findings of this study is that Heights Junior High School had a history of performing at or above the expectations of the state in terms of student achievement. Brownsville, on the other hand did not. We concede that there very well may be other external factors that are unique to each school studied and that may be related to their past performance; however, typically, those systems that are identified as underperforming feel the greatest threat of facing sanctions; therefore, might be more prone to responding in a rigid manner to outside accountability mandates (Staw, et al., 1981). The opposite appears to be happening in this study and the question emerges as to why – have we reached a tipping point in how schools respond to external mandates? Are we entering an era where *all* schools perceive any new mandate that comes from the state or federal government may be prone to responding in a stifling rigid manner even though they might not be threatened with consequences as a result of failing performance?

Finally, there are possible implications regarding school system size and the tendency to respond in a rigid manner that might play a role in the quality of instructional leadership that exists. Elizabeth worked in a larger system than did Terry. Elizabeth's system had a more complex bureaucracy with 23 leadership positions in the central office – one of which carried the title of Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction and

others that were Directors of English Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science. In comparison, Terry's system had three leadership positions at the central office level. In this two-case study, the larger system responded to the implementation of the CCSS in a more rigid manner than did the smaller system. This suggests the question – is there a relation between system size and the type of control or response in relation to instructional matters and how does this difference either support of negate what is known about effective instructional leadership?

It is our hope that coming to the realization that threat rigidity as a response to external mandates might indeed influence the quality of instructional leadership and, thus, affect the way teachers go about their instructional practice will provide a framework for thinking about leading schools and preparing those who lead schools. Simply put, we feel that it is important to reflect on the questions: Are principal and other central office personnel indeed instructional leaders or are they puppeteers? Are teachers professional educators or are they merely compliant puppets?

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Leadership for All Students: Planning for More Inclusive School Practices

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

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Educational policies and leadership practice has evolved to support efforts for inclusive education for students with disabilities. This article focuses on how leaders support and develop inclusive practices for students with disability through engaging institutional norms and inertia; developing inclusive practice as a planned organization-wide reform; making meaning and developing purpose; aligning structures with purpose; supporting a culture of learning as an organizational feature; planning for teacher capacity and professional development; and sustaining commitment to risk, innovation, and learning.

Introduction

Education for students identified as having special needs had historically been the purview of families, special schools, parochial schools, or separate institutions. Subsequently, as students came to be integrated into k-12 school systems, they were educated in segregated classrooms supported by a separate bureaucratic infrastructure with distinctly trained and certified teachers and administrators functioning within departments of special education (Kleinhammer-Tramill, Burrello, & Sailor, 2013; Pazey & Yates, 2012). Much of this infrastructure of insular and segregated set of delivery options remains operational today (Kleinhammer-Tramill, et al., 2013) and as a result education for students with special needs is often conceptualized as a primarily a concern for special educators and parents (Kavale & Forness, 2000). More recently, educational accountability policy initiatives, including Response to Intervention initiatives and the 2004 reauthorization of the *Individuals with Disability Act* (IDEA), have prompted educational leaders to consider how to ensure that all students in K-12 settings obtain the most effective instruction possible in a natural school and community ecology in which students and their parents reside (Black & Burrello, 2010; Pazey & Yates, 2012; Sailor & Burrello, 2013). Additionally, withparent and educator interest group advocacy for inclusion (Itkonnen, 2009; Reynor, 2007), ethical arguments for inclusion (Capper & Fratturra, 2009; Nausbaum, 2006; Ware, 2002; White, 2013), and collaborative activities undertaken to unify rather than segregate systems of support (Burrello & Sailor, 2013; Gravois, 2013; Sapon-Shavin, 2008), many more k-12 educational system leaders now envision and support inclusion as an organizational leadership goal. These leaders seek to build the capacity of all teachers to teach students with exceptional needs in more fully inclusive settings (Capper & Frattura, 2009; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Theoharis, 2010; Shields, 2010). School-based leadership initiatives that prepare teachers to work effectively with all students in integrated schools can lead to equity commitments, high standards for meeting diverse student needs, and desired achievement outcomes (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Hoppey & McClesky, 2013; Jackson, Ryndak, & Wehmeyer, 2010; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; McClesky & Waldron, 2002).

In this article, we focus on school-based leadership work that supports and develops inclusive practice. We begin by recognizing that definitions of inclusion vary broadly and discuss what constitutes inclusive practice for the purposes of this article. We then highlight and frame seven salient arenas for leadership activity that supports more inclusive practice in schools: engaging institutional norms and inertia; developing inclusive practice as a planned organization-wide reform; making meaning and developing purpose; aligning structures with purpose; supporting learning as an organizational feature; planning for teacher capacity and professional development; and sustaining commitment to risk, innovation, and learning.

What is Inclusive Practice?

Since the 1960's education policymakers, school-based leaders, teachers, parents, and individuals with disability have advocated for broadening access to the general education curriculum to all students (Dunn, 1968; Manset & Semmel, 1997; Taylor, 2004; Will,

1986). Many of these individuals have recommended making accommodations and modifications in curriculum and instruction, pushed for better training and empowerment of teachers and principals in order to promote educating students with disabilities as a shared responsibility. They envisioned shifting roles for educators in order to promote greater collaboration between special and general educators (Dunn, 1968; Sailor, 2009; Will, 1986). As early as 1968, Dunn spoke forthrightly regarding the need to include students with disabilities in general education curriculum and instruction, as he lamented the unfavorable impact of segregating students with disabilities in special education classes on the attitudes and perceptions of teachers towards the students as well as the students towards themselves.

While efforts to include students with disability in general education settings have been forwarded in schools throughout the United States, definitions of inclusion and school-based inclusive practices vary broadly (Billingsly, 2012; Crockett, 1999; Douvanis & Hulsey, 2002; Hoppey & McCluskey, 2013; Idol, 2006; Raines, 1996; Sailor & Blair, 2005; Yell, Drasgow, Bradley, & Justesen, 2004). Jackson, Ryndak, and Wehmeyer (2010) state that inclusion entails concerns with context and curriculum, as "the inclusive education approach [is one] in which the child is educated with his or her typically developing peers and with supports and skill training provided as needed to facilitate participation with peers and with the curriculum" (p.180). Taylor (2004) notes that services for students with disabilities should come with a "…presumption in favor of environments that are least restrictive and most normalized, independent, and integrated" (Taylor, 2004, p.222). Similarly, others view inclusive practices as residing within a framework of decision points that are evoked when making decisions regarding individual needs of students with disabilities (Nelson, Palonsky, & McCarthy, 2004). This appears consistent with current language in the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004* (IDEA) that pinpoints general education settings as preferable, as they offer the best opportunity for students with disabilities to interact with typically performing peers and the general education curriculum (Farrell, Dyson, Polat, Hutcheson, & Gallannaugh, 2007; White, 2013; Yell & Katsiyannis, 2004), when appropriate (Taylor, 2004). This approach addresses the environmental setting aspect of the equation for service delivery, normally interpreted as inclusion, or in other words, students spending some or all of the school day in general education settings.

Others emphasize concerns with aspects of service delivery of supports (Cole, 1999; Crockett, Billingsley, & Boscardin, 2012 ; Douvanis & Hulsey, 2002; Idol, 2006). With a focus on building all teachers' capacity to teach inclusively, Huber, Rosenfeld, and Fiorello (2001) imply a strong role for educational leaders when they define inclusive practices as "training and curricular support in general education" (p. 497), while Farrell, et al., (2007) refer to the importance of "participation and learning" when discussing inclusive practices (p.340). Capper and Frattura (2009) assert that inclusive education is not the appropriate framework and use the term *integrated comprehensive services* to describe an approach that rejects special education/general education dichotomies and is characterized by a fluid system of supports that attends to the wide range of students in a school, not just those labeled with a disability. As such, they pursue a goal of integrated education in which "all students receive small-group or individual help at some point in the day to maximize their learning potential" (p.xix).

These and similar definitions attempt to move the debate beyond considerations of "place" and further into the realm of "service" for all students who are considered in need of specialized support services. For the purpose of this article, reference to inclusive practice denotes the institutionalization of practices and policies in which all students enjoy unfettered representation, opportunity, access, participation, and success in culturally responsive educational programs in a unified system of delivery of supports. This position draws upon Silverstein's (2000) assertion that educational policies for Students with Disabilities have 4 goals as articulated in the American's with Disability Act—equality of opportunity, full participation (empowerment), independent living, and economic self-sufficiency, as well as Rochelle Gutiérrez's (2002) conceptualization of equity as "the goal of being unable to predict student patterns (e.g., achievement, participation, the ability to critically analyze data or society) based solely on characteristics such as race, class, ethnicity, sex, beliefs and creeds, and proficiency in the dominant language" (p. 153), and Kleinhammer, et al. (2013) and Capper & Frattura's (2009) articulation of a unified and flexible system of supports for all students.

Leadership in Support of Inclusive Practices

The insistence of some that all students should be educated in the general education setting has often met with resistance by general educators and has only experienced moderate success in changing special education (Kavale & Forness, 2000). In this context, educational leaders continue to wrestle with concerns regarding institutional norms, resources, and the capacity of educators to meet the needs of students with disabilities through inclusive educational approaches (Crockett, et al., 2012; Yell et al., 2004). Developing schools that provide wide and flexible systems of supports for students with variable and sometimes significant support needs is recognized as a complex and significant challenge within educational leadership (Rayner, 2007; Sanzo, Clayton, & Sherman, 2010; Shields, 2010; Theoharis, 2010). Such complex and comprehensive leadership work often resides at the intersection of various arenas of reform activity (Kozleski, Artiles, & Lacy, 2012). In this paper we analyze and highlight seven such intersecting arenas that leaders should attend to in order to support the development of more robust and sustainable inclusive schooling practices: engaging institutional norms and inertia; developing inclusive practice as a planned organization-wide reform; making meaning and developing purpose; aligning structures with purpose; supporting learning as an organizational feature; planning for teacher capacity and professional development; and sustaining commitment to risk, innovation, and learning.

Engaging Institutional Norms and Inertia

Pervasive institutional practices that provide separate spaces and supports outside the general education setting remain a significant challenge for educational leaders. Current placement trends indicate that, for many students with disability labels, between 80 and 98 percent of students with disabilities spend part of their school day outside of the general education setting (USDOE, 2010). Leaders should recognize that reforms that support inclusive practice can run counter to broad institutional scripts that are the result

of professional norms developed and sustained in separate institutional cultures (special education and general education teacher), and policy structures, such as state and federal regulatory systems which set up distinct special needs programs and funding (Burrello & Sailor, 2012). Such segregated systems and long-standing socially approved practices become interwoven into that which Rowan and Miskel (1999) term the grammar of schooling.

One example of the grammar of schooling for students with disabilities is highlighted by Taylor (2004), who contends that current policy language allows for school-based personnel to focus on the restrictiveness of placements in individual educational plans (IEPs) to continue to justify placing students with disabilities in separate educational environments. Skrtic (2012) points out that while IEPs were originally conceptualized as a community activity, they have become overly private, competitive, compliance driven rituals. When applying "practical" and "intensive needs" rationales, proponents of traditional programs can always defend students with disabilities need for separate specialized services, as discussions of supplementary aids and services are conceptualized in terms of intensity, with the assumption that the most intensive services cannot occur in general education settings (Cole, 1999; Jackson, et al., 2010; Taylor, 2004).

Another pertinent example of the grammar of schooling that leaders should recognize as a challenge is the belief that inclusion will negatively impact typically performing students in general education programs (Huber, et al., 2001; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Sailor, 2009). In this context there may be incentives for "leaders within institutionalized educational environments actually sustain homogeneity by constraining innovation" (Rusch, 2005, p.89), since variations in institutionalized scripts and patterns of behavior can lead to conflict and a potential loss of legitimacy for leaders, special education and general education teachers. Theoharis (2010) notes that leaders should expect significant resistance for multiple reasons "such as staff attitudes about students with diverse need, a lack of understanding by staff and families about the inequities in schools, privileged parents advocating against reforms that are equity oriented, and the pressures of testing/accountability environments against holistic views of students" (p.92). Skrtic (2012) argues that there is a need to directly name the institutional norms around private nature of the IEP process, least restrictive environment discourses, and procedural safeguards that lead to individualized and technical framing of issues. Strong democratic leadership that institutes more collective advocacy for students with disability, their families, district personnel, and community groups is then necessary to crack the ossified nature of non-inclusive ideologies and practices (Skrtic, 2012).

Developing Inclusive Practice As a Planned Organization-wide Reform

Mayrowetz and Weinstein (1999) posit that inclusion is "at its core, a planned organizational reform" (424) that requires substantial commitment on the part of school leaders (Keys, Hanley-Maxwell, & Capper, 1999; Zeretsky, 2005). Mayrowetz and Weinstein's (1999) in depth analysis of a school-based reform for inclusion noted that it took five years for inclusion to become institutionalized, as evidenced by redundancy in leadership function multiple individuals were in a variety of roles, including those with

less formal authority. Federal and state-level policies aim to compel educators to provide students with disabilities access to general education curricula and instruction and to ensure that all students meet state academic standards (Bryant, Linan-Thompson, Ugel, Hamff, & Hougen, 2001; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; McLeskey, & Waldron, 2002). Nevertheless, how policies are implemented vary widely and leadership at local levels matters greatly in successfully planning and implementing a reform organization wide, particularly when the reform touches a sub-field (such as special education) that has not historically occupied a central position in the organization (Fullan, 2005; Hubbard, Mahan & Stein, 2006; Rayner, 2007; Sailor, 2009).

In particular reference to reform for inclusive practice, leaders may need to expand broader educational reform agendas that often either lack attention to students with disabilities and/or have promoted deficit thinking models around disability (Williams, Shealey, & Blanchett, 2009). In planning a school-wide reform in support of inclusive practice, educational leaders are additionally tasked with greater knowledge requirements, including knowledge of legal dimensions of practice that involve students with disabilities (Birnbaum, 2006), knowledge of collaborative teaching and support arrangements (Sailor, 2009; Zeretsky, 2005), and skill in leveraging accountability requirements in NCLB and IDEA to develop professional development initiatives that support inclusive practices (Hochberg, 2010; USDOE, 2002). Planned organizational change is sustainable in organizations if moral purpose and an express desire to alter the social environment underpin reform initiatives. Thus, leaders help to create conditions for a community wherein powerful beliefs about the benefits and moral imperative of inclusion would be come to be viewed as practical, highlighted, and nurtured (Fullan, 2005; Gravois, 2013; Reyner, 2007; White, 2013).

Making Meaning and Developing Purpose: Understanding and Articulating Support for Inclusive Practice.

English (2008) argues that leaders initiate reforms and further sustain practice through engagement with central moral questions around them. They examine who they are, what they value, what they believe to be good and true, and ponder over their ability to render decisions about a human being. Sapon-Shevin (2008) further argues that leaders should consistently articulate a vision for inclusive communities and highlight and celebrate inclusive practices as a means to work against differentiating norms constructed and maintained through the duality of special education versus general education conceptualizations. Zaretski (2005) posits that reform for inclusive practice requires understanding of inclusive theories in action. Unexamined notions of "natural limitations" and what is practical can be reinterpreted as leaders help a community contest the limiting interpretations of disability and come to understand their own complicity in limiting the humanity of students with disabilities (Ware, 2002). White (2012) notes that too often students with disabilities are continuously constructed as academic burdens and are compartmentalized as "special education" students. She argues for the need to do the deep community-level work required to reconceptualize the worth of all individuals as a moral stance in which all students are recognized for the various ways they contribute to school communities.

In addition, various iterations of research on educational reform implementation strongly suggest that learning is central to implementation and that implementers (primarily teachers) should understand why an initiative is useful in order to ultimately take ownership and shape the initiative itself (Drago-Severson, 2007; Hubbard, et al., 2006). School leaders' ability to articulate philosophical perspectives that underlie the debates around inclusion are important in order to guide school communities deliberations around the purposes and vision for inclusive practices. Reyner (2007) concludes that inclusive educational management is praxis-oriented in that communities do need to deliberate about the ideas behind inclusion and the means appropriate to a particular context. Likewise, leaders may have a responsibility to make meaning of inclusive practices, engaging in "cognitive acts of taking information, framing it, and using it to determine actions and behaviors in a way that manages meaning for individuals" (Evans, 2007, p. 161). Professionals' understanding of purpose and ability to persuade others helps to sustain commitment to ongoing reform for inclusive practice over time, as well as their ability to consider counterevidence (Black & Burrello, 2010; Keys, et al., 1999; Marsh, 2007; Zeretsky, 2005).

Aligning Structures with Purpose

Consideration of who is responsible for teaching students with disabilities and concurrently establishing equitable structures and routines for the location and delivery of educational services is central to planning professional development for inclusive education (Anfara, Patterson, Buehler, & Gearity, 2006; Enemoto & Conley, 2008; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Stanovich & Jordan, 2002). Most school variables, considered separately, have little effect on student learning, rather it is the leadership effect of pulling those variables together in a cohesive fashion that matters (Seashore Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson 2010). Higher performing schools tend to award more influence to teacher teams, parents, and students (Hubbard, et al., 2006; Ingersoll, 2007; Seashore Louis, et al., 2010). Similarly, successful inclusive programs are characterized by changes in school and classroom structures and clever obtainment of alignment of resources with purpose in order to support diligent and consistent work toward full participation and membership by students with disabilities (Capper & Frattura, 2009; Idol, 200; Skilton-Sylvester & Slesaransky-Poe 2009).

Drawing from Skrtc (1991), Mayrowetz and Weinstein (1999) argue that schools implementing inclusion need to shift from bureaucracies to professionalized "adhocracies" capable of constructing fluid systems of support. Uncertain role definitions might mean less authority to the principal as a role, but greater organizational efficacy and power. Obtaining resources, such as aides and technology supports, is a critical leadership function. Principals can provide substitutes for students' teachers to confer with previous teachers and experts that help them to understand the nature of specific disabilities. For reform for inclusion, planned adaptation of standard operating procedures, such as placing students with some of the same friends and adaptations to curriculum, instruction, and assessment become critical and action teams responsible for supporting and monitoring adaptations can be created to meet multiple times a week (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999).

Being attentive to opportunities for mutual adaptation of district and state level policies undergirds successful local reforms in general (Hubbard, et al. 2006; Olsen & Sexton, 2009). School administrators' roles in strategically marshaling the right information to support and motivate each teacher to work for all students despite external influences and challenges is at the heart of making professional development work for *all* students in their schools. Therefore, leadership that catalyzes ownership over inclusive practices powerfully influences the consistency with which those practices are implemented in classrooms and schools (Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Little & Houston, 2003). The consistency of implementation also warrants the development of a culture of inquiry, evaluation, and learning (McLeskey, & Waldron, 2002).

Gravois (2012) argues that schools typically serve students with disabilities under a triage system of resources with three sources of resources. The classroom teacher (which is the most plentiful), ad-hoc services, which include providers such as reading specialists, intervention specialists and school counselors that can be used at some discretion of the schools. The third source is programmatic resources for Special Education that tend to be highly regulated and target highly specialized purposes (Gravois, 2013). Therefore principals need to work creatively with the first two sets of resources in order to align school structures with purposeful inclusive practice. Schools should seek to "distinguish professional needs (i.e. instructional support) from child-centered needs (i.e. disabilities). For a new system to be sustainable, this distinction must be parceled out as part of an integrated planning process and well before resources are allocated to students" (Gravois, 2013, p. 120). As more services become involved, personnel, individual skills, time, responsibility, accountability, and philosophical alignment become more important (Gravois, 2013).

Developing a Culture of Learning as an Organizational Feature

In moving toward more inclusive organizational practices, learning should be positioned as a core activity (Reyner, 2007). Critical reflection, self-evaluation, and individual and collective reflexiveness pervade learning organizations, as leaders commit to strategically and continuously invest resources in cycles of problem posing, decision making, activity enactment, and problem solving (Fullan, 2005; Reyner, 2007). Various stakeholders are sought out and engaged around the work of inclusion (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Reyner, 2007), as effective leaders of learning use networks to share information and build capacity (Fullan, 2005). Risk taking is encouraged and failure that leads to deep learning is expected (Olsen & Sexton, 2006; Smylie, Mayrowetz, Murphy, & Seashore Louis, 2007).

Shulman (1997) recognizes the incredible complexity of teaching and notes that educational leaders should focus on the quality of the pedagogical interaction between teacher and students, as "efforts at school reform must give as much attention to creating the conditions for teacher learning as for student learning" (90). Shulman goes on to say that teachers learn from their own laboratory, so the leaders' work can be to appropriately support laboratories of inclusionary practice through reasoning and inquiry. Thus the work of leadership is not only to support, but also to legitimize and nurture high levels of reflection, emotion, and collaboration (Shulman, 1997). Learning to move toward

inclusive educational practices requires critical reflection on assumptions and behaviors, and principals often need to lead a process that requires teachers to examine their values and build partnerships with parents and community groups with shared values around inclusive practice. Otherwise, the push towards reform would not be sustained and revert to more comfortably understood practices of non-inclusion (Drago-Severson, 2007). While a myriad of approaches and strategies may be employed by school leaders, planning for and sustaining teacher professional development remains a fecund arena for supporting planned organizational reform towards more inclusive schooling environments (Cook & Cameron, 2010; Fisher, Sax, & Grove, 2000; Fratttura & Capper, 2009; Furney, Hasazi, & Clark-Keefe, 2005).

Planning for Teacher Capacity and Professional Development

Many teachers do not feel equipped to meet the needs of students with disabilities (Yell et al., 2004). Leaders can utilize professional development as a means to provide needed training for teachers, particularly in effective instructional and behavioral intervention strategies and collaboration skills that address the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities (Duhaney, 1999; Fisher et al., 2000; Idol, 2006; Katsiyannis, Ellenberg, & Acton, 2000). Teachers that identify as general education teachers often articulate professional development needs in curriculum and instruction modifications as well as progress monitoring (Buell, Hallam, Gamel-McCormick, & Scheer, 1999). McLeskey & Waldron (2002) note that general education teachers often have to first experience inclusive teaching in order to acknowledge and identify areas where they need professional development. Thus, professional development for inclusive education should begin with providing teachers opportunities to gain new knowledge, practice learned skills, and receive feedback from trainers and colleagues over extended periods (Little & Houston, 2003; VanTassel-Baska et al., 2008).

   Teacher capacity. Generally, teachers require procedural knowledge as well as craft knowledge that allows them to differentiate instruction in response to the variable learning needs among diverse students, including students with disabilities (Buell et al., 1999; Vaughn, Hughes, Schumm, & Klinger, 1998). Even with high quality professional development, educators vary in conceptions of self-efficacy and proficiency in adopting and adapting recently acquired knowledge and practices to their own context (Brownell, Adams, Sindelar, Waldron, & Van Hover, 2006; Katsiyannis et al., 2000; Vaughn et al., 1998). High adapters and adopters would seem to be particularly suited for inclusive education, as Brownell and colleagues (2006) found that high adopters had the most knowledge of curriculum and pedagogical approaches, student centered dispositions about managing student behavior and delivering instruction, and the ability to deeply consider students' learning processes. Early adapting teachers engage in experimentation with instructional strategies, while others request longer-term supports such as in-class modeling and in-service training provided over a significant length of time (Bryant et al., 2001). Educators are apt to adopt and adapt strategies they believe align with high-stakes standardized test preparation or other school reform initiatives (Desimone et al., 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Katsiyannis, Zhang, Ryan, & Jones,

2007).

Teachers participating in one study of eight schools undergoing reform towards more inclusive practice expressed appreciation for increased professional development in effective teaching and accommodation intervention strategies. Professional training activities not only helped teachers gain valued teaching skills, but also increased feelings of efficacy concerning working with students with disabilities with diverse learning needs. Additionally, these teachers valued additional support, particularly from paraprofessionals and special education resource teachers, so much that they considered loss of such support as a deal-breaker in continuing inclusion. As inclusion progressed in the school, general education teachers increasingly viewed students with disabilities as their own and considered it their professional responsibility to teach students with diverse learning needs (Idol, 2006). In each case study school, teachers used strategies learned in professional development to meet the needs of students with disabilities, often realizing that these strategies were effective for all students (Idol, 2006).

Teachers obtain knowledge and skills in multiple contexts in addition to teacher education courses and workshops (Coombs-Richardson & Mead, 2001). According to McLeskey & Waldron (2002), professional development for inclusive practice includes a sequenced set of learning opportunities specifically designed for individual school contexts. Initially, professional development efforts engage teacher and administrator beliefs, understandings, and attitudes towards inclusion. Zeretsky (2005) notes that many school leaders fail to understand the theoretical underpinnings that inform their own orientation toward inclusive practice and the role of special education. Therefore, designers of professional development must consider teachers' individual learning as well as the assumptions principals and other school leaders bring to bear in shaping the context in which professional growth occurs (Borko, 2004).

Growth can be best be monitored by leaders not only through direct observation and measured student growth, but also in the informal conversations and daily routines that reveal meaning and cultural norms in a school (Donaldson, 2006). Thoughtful and meaningful planning and development of learning through multiple groupings is important to ensure consistent understanding and delivery of reforms. Often, fragmented and multiple definitions of initiatives can be present, with administrators being more likely to believe full implementation rather than those most responsible for implementing a reform, the teachers (Sanzo, et. al., 2011; Smylie, et al., 2007).

In designing teacher professional development for inclusive schooling practices, the lived experiences, value orientations, and dispositions of individual teachers need to be considered (Brownell, et al., 2006; McLeskey, & Waldron, 2002). Teachers typically have to differentiate instructional material and methods to meet the diverse needs of all students including students with disabilities and teachers come to those efforts with varied skills and orientations to the worthiness of differentiated instructional approaches (Hochberg & Desimone, 2010). Leaders that attend to coordinating systematic and school-wide systems of support and resources are more likely to have teachers whose sense of efficacy and willingness to work with students with disabilities tends to increase (Stanovich & Jordan, 2002). Over time, full implementation and maintenance of learned knowledge about inclusive practices depends on minimizing the degree of divergence between teachers' preconceptions about the inappropriateness or inherently

insurmountable challenges of inclusion and the new knowledge and skills that provides individuals a greater sense of moral purpose, as well as competence and efficacy (Black & Burrello, 2010; Brownell et al., 2009; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010).

      Ongoing and job-embedded professional development. There is growing consensus that professional development should be ongoing and should incorporate training in various contexts, including the classroom. Drago-Severson's (2007) review of professional development literature argued that principal's role is often one of facilitation of embedded and practice-derived professional development that is ongoing, school-based, integrated with school reforms, and developed in a culture that encourages teachers to try new approaches.

      Teachers need multiple opportunities to implement knowledge, strategies and skills, and leaders should design support systems that promote consistent reflection and highlight material successes in order to produce change in teachers' beliefs and practices that will help facilitate academic success for students with disabilities in inclusive settings (Birman, Desimone, Garet, & Porter, 2000; Brownell et al., 2006; Bryant et al., 2001; Desimone, Porter, Birman, Garet, & Sukyoon, 2002; Desimone, 2009; Garet, et al., 2001; Kazemi, & Hubbard, 2008; McLeskey, & Waldron, 2002; Rayner, 2007). Teachers are more likely to adopt instructional practices when they have received professional development focused on specific instructional practices in their work setting because transfer of practices across contexts rarely occurs (Desimone et al., 2002). School administrators can provide opportunities to sustain embedded professional development over time through intensive study of content, which offers opportunities for collegial collaboration between general and special education teachers (Borko, 2004; Brownell et al., 2006; Buell, et al., 1999). This collaboration is associated with purpose-driven task enactment associated with distributed leadership models (Smylie, et. al., 2007), capacity building targeting commitment to equitable outcomes (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Theoharis, 2007); as well as improved student achievement (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Desimone et al., 2002).

      Yet sustained and multi-contextualized professional development is not yet a common experience for most teachers (Borko, 2004; Brownell et al., 2006; Buell et al., 1999; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Desimone et al., 2002; Wayne, et al., 2008). Although content-focused professional development and use of mentoring/coaching support for teachers have been established as professional norms, most professional development still lacks intensity as measured by clock hours provided over the course of the school year. In their study of teacher professional development Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) suggest that professional development experiences lacked opportunities for collaborative work, which Garet et al. (2001) found promote active learning, teacher skill development, and at the organizational level, reform coherence. Teacher professional collaboration on professional tasks appears to have even greater impact when teachers focus on meaningful tasks germane to school, content-area, and/or grade level goals and responsibilities (Garet et al., 2001). While 59% of teachers found professional development in content areas to be useful, less than 50% of teachers found other professional development to be useful to them (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Smith and Desimone (2003) similarly found that teachers reported that content-related

professional development as most useful. To enable such learning and professional development to occur, schools should align structures with inclusive reform purpose, as school structural changes in terms of teacher roles, student grouping practices, and scheduling are often required to make inclusion work.

Sustaining Commitment to Risk, Innovation, and Learning

Research on sustainability suggests that reforms will not be sustained without substantial investment in capacity building, as organizations that don't plan for capacity building jump from one solution to another in a desperate attempt to comply. Compliance then leads to temporary solutions and cynicism as individuals come to think of the goals of reforms as impossible (Fullan, 2005). The implementation of professional development activities should be guided in a manner that provides opportunity for teacher voice and governance so that the reforms come to be purpose-centered, understood, and "owned" rather than perceived as resource debilitating, incoherent, and distant top down mandates (Ingersoll, 2007; Hubbard, et al., 2006).

Meier (1997) posits that for schools to become effective learning communities that sustain democratic principles, leaders and teachers should nurture skepticism and empathy. In terms of skepticism, she argues for leaders helping develop an open mind that what may be found to be a truism or common sense today may "in time turn out to be otherwise. It behooves us, then, to listen carefully to others and to listen even to ourselves" in order to "overcome our own self-righteousness" (p.62). Schools listen to critics, look at their failures, and school leaders consistently help to question the organizations assumptions. In order not to become cynical, she argues for the habit of empathy, so that individuals imagine ourselves in the shoes of others in ways that want to run towards them, which leads to deliberatively democratic habits of the mind being developed in a school community (Meier, 1997).

For example, one study of urban educational leaders of schools that demonstrated slow, but continuous growth found that leaders sustained leadership capacity in high-performing urban schools through centering moral purpose and nurturing teacher-learning families. The principals' sense of moral commitment allowed them to support innovation and risk and bend rules and district procedures in the service of an ethically centered purpose (Weber & Kiefer-Hipp, 2009). In another case study of a school that moved to fully inclusionary practices, inclusion appeared on the agenda of every faculty meeting as a means of keeping the initiative important. The principal also used collective, grade level language rather than individualized language, and created opportunities for staff to gather and celebrate success and reflect on "inclusion moments" (Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999). Keys, Hanley-Maxwell, & Capper's (1999) case study of an inclusive school found a supportive environment where critique and risk was encouraged, although the process of how to get there was debated and alternative frameworks were considered, the ultimate goal of full inclusion was held as non-negotiable. Trust was present and bolstered through consistent communication of successes and the attraction of like-minded teachers to the school. Teachers' sense of efficacy and professional development was facilitated through showing concrete examples and highlighting teacher-led solutions.

In leading schools toward more inclusive practice, uncertainty and complexity are inevitable and schools may struggle with a sense of ceaseless compromise in their attempt to resolve dilemmas of infinite needs and finite resources (Reyner, 2007). Leaders can recognize that problems tend to be more severe and complex at first, and they should actively work on developing consistency and coherence over time, as these tend to make inevitably complex endeavors more manageable (Fullan, 2005).

Leaders committed to an equity-related investment in inclusive practices should take a long-term approach that includes feasible actions steps that are undertaken while sustaining the conversation over time. Moreover, leaders should anticipate and persevere in the face of inevitable pushback from groups that might see an investment in inclusive practices as unfair to them (Conner & Ferri, 2007), incorporating change planning, including communicating transformative reform purposes and progress with a broad community, into this long-term approach (Brown, 2006; Plecki, Knapp, Castaneda, Halverson, & LaSota, 2009). Additionally, Seashore Louis and colleagues (2010) highlight the importance of succession planning and the important concept of leadership as a property of a social system. Stability and improvement are symbiotically constituted as stability in authorized roles at the district, principal, and assistant principal positions are important in sustaining initiatives toward inclusive practice.

Concluding Perspective

Although the importance of the importance of teaching all students has been recognized in various educational forums and in major policy and legislative initiatives, the debate around students with disabilities still largely centers around the where and how to educate students with disabilities. Additionally, this debate often centered within the realm of special education and teacher education. In this article, we sought to integrate a discussion of inclusive practice with professional development and leadership literature. Inclusive practice needs to be conceptualized as a collective endeavor that requires leadership that plans and aligns developmental supports in order to sustain organizational learning and commitment to inclusive educational practices.

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