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ABSTRACT

PRINCIPALS GIVE VOICE TO THE ISLLC STANDARDS-AN INVESTIGATION
INTO PRINCIPAL PRIORITIES

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Due to the increasing demands on educational administrators it has become essential that leadership priorities be established. This study investigated elementary school principals' job responsibilities and how the school administrator prioritized the many facets of the job. The literature supported the continued escalation of job demands on the school principal. Thus with growing accountability, it is essential that school leaders learn to balance the responsibilities of being the instructional leader and the school manager.

A purposeful sample of 25 elementary school principals in central Virginia was used in a qualitative study. Principals from small (0-350), medium (351-750), and large (751-1200) sized schools participated in the research. The data did not support any trends or patterns related to school size and the work of the elementary principal. In addition, the research regarding the fulfillment of the ISLLC Standards (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) suggested that localities should correlate their local professional responsibilities and qualities with the national standards in order to help with the use of a common language when discussing principal job qualities and responsibilities. The study also suggested that although instructional leadership was a principalship priority, it was often overshadowed by the school managerial demands.

Each participant maintained one-day logs of activities and the results supported the interview responses in the area of instructional leadership. The principals' day included a variety of situations that interrupted the scheduling of classroom observations. Principals shared that they wanted to be more of an instructional leader yet management demands often prevented them from being actively involved in the classroom. Elementary leaders described the frustrations of time management and the desire to have more "human resources" available to assist them with the very demanding job. In addition, school administrators explained various methods used to prioritize the job responsibilities in order to "run the school".

This research study explored how principals described their jobs and their leadership with hopes of discovering what might be done to encourage more qualified applicants.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study is about elementary principals and their perceptions of their work as school leaders. There exists the assumption that effective principal leadership is a key to student achievement. As the leaders of the school, principals have tremendous influence over the values, beliefs, practices, and efforts that guide the faculty, staff, students, and parents (Lashway, 2002). The single most powerful force for improving school effectiveness and for achieving excellence in education is the school principal (Anderson, 1989). It is understood that all principals and schools are different. Thus leadership takes on different forms. McEwan (2003) recently noted how dramatically the leadership role of the principal has changed over the past thirty years. In the seventies and early eighties the school administrator would have targeted the management areas of planning, controlling, leading, and organizing (McEwan, 2003). Today, there is little doubt the public eye is keenly focused on school principals to deliver results. Succinctly expressed, "Accountability is not just another task added to the already formidable list of the principal's responsibilities. It requires new roles and new forms of leadership carried out under careful public scrutiny while simultaneously trying to keep day-to-day management on an even keel" (Lashway, 2000, p.13). In this era of accountability principals not only need to maintain school accountability, but they must also be accountable to their job responsibilities. Today's administrator must fulfill the job of instructional leader within the framework of management skills that

include delegation and collaboration. Therefore, this study will explore how elementary principals describe their jobs and their leadership practices.

This study seeks to give voice to the ISLLC Standards, national standards for school leaders developed by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium. The research will look at the national standards for school administrators and investigate how accurately they describe the job of the elementary principal. The NAESP, 2001 asserted that standards are a catalyst for new thinking about the role of principal as leader and principal as manager. With various internal and external stakeholders, the job of principal is under daily scrutiny. Not only must the principal meet state and federal accountability standards, but they must also pay attention to every aspect involving the student including violence prevention, bullies, and the emotional needs of their students. In this era of accountability, educators must also meet set standards. Six standards were created to focus the efforts of school leaders on leadership to improve student learning. They reflect an historical and current frame for the research of principal job responsibilities. By using the ISLLC Standards, the researcher will bring life to the six standards through the interviewing process. The interview questions should elicit rich descriptions about the elementary principals' leadership practices and how the job requirements are prioritized.

Understanding how the principals daily practice leadership and how the principals prioritize their time and efforts will give voice to the ISLLC Standards. Often times the leader's day is built around dozens of concrete tasks, many of which have no direct connection with instruction yet must be accomplished in order for instruction to

take place. “When do I have the time to do it?” (Rice, 1989) is often heard from principals as they set their day’s agenda. Principals weave these daily activities into an agenda that should be learning-focused, but often times the focus can better be described as that of a business manager. Shellard (2003) recognizes the fact that the most important duty for any principal is that of an instructional leader; yet, the role of the instructional leader can be difficult to fulfill because of the managerial mandates associated with the duties of the principal. The central role of the principal is first and foremost to be an instructional leader (Fullan, 2002). The basic elements of the position call for the principals to possess the necessary skills as an instructional leader, a school manager, and a political force (Seyfarth, 1999). According to Susan Church, the principals whom she interviewed almost universally agreed that managerial work dominates their job (2005). In her book, *The principal difference: key issues and how to deal with them*, Church cites interviews from her doctoral research on principal leadership and change. Moreover, the emphasis on student achievement has intensified so much that school administrators must spend many working hours collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and sharing self-generated student data. These data must be used in providing prescriptive instruction to individual students. The demands and growing responsibilities placed on the educational administrators generate a need for a redefined vision of leadership. Conditions of education today require highly qualified, competent, and visionary leaders who competently fulfill multiple roles. Among school related factors that effect student outcomes, research identifies school leadership second only to classroom instruction (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

This study will examine how 25 elementary school principals understand his/her role as the principal whose job responsibilities may or may not reflect the ISLLC Standards. The research will focus on the elementary principal because in the secondary schools there are several assistant principals and numerous administrative assistants. In the elementary arena there are some schools that qualify for an assistant principal and some that do not. Thus the sole responsibility of leading the school often rests on the shoulders of one person—the elementary school principal.

By understanding the job of the elementary principal, the research will also reveal what factors affect the principal's ability to lead as he/she feels is appropriate. In addition, by giving voice to the ISLLC Standards the research will address the complexity of leadership and how principals must prioritize the job duties with the knowledge that instructional leadership should be at the top of the daily list for the school's leader. According to the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), instructional leaders have six roles: making student and adult learning the priority; setting high expectations for performance; gearing content and instruction to standards; creating a culture of continuous learning for adults; using multiple sources of data to assess learning; and activating the community's support for school success (Lashway, 2002). Administrators must prove that they can develop a vision, design comprehensive professional growth plans, provide effective instructional programs, and apply best practices to student learning (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

This study will research the elementary principal's perception of their job and if the ISLLC Standards correctly target the school leaders' job responsibilities. The job of school principal requires complex leadership skills that include creating a school vision, designing professional growth plans for each teacher, ensuring that effective instructional plans are in place and in general making sure that best practices are used to enhance student learning. Often times there is conflict between the demands of the managerial requirements of the job and the fact that instructional leadership is directly related to the processes of instruction. McEwan (2003) relays this as a process where teachers, learners, and the curriculum interact. Sykes, King, and Patrick (2002) describe the demands of the principalship as one with a workload needing superhuman efforts and ability in order to fulfill the job requirements. Lastly, the research will look at the school size. Does the size of the school impact the leadership of the principal?

In order to have a clear definition of the concept of leadership, researchers have studied and learned about schoolhouse leadership (Leithwood and Duke, 1999). How school principals conceive of leadership influences their behavior and practice as job responsibilities are fulfilled. There are many definitions of leadership, yet being a school leader has unique qualifiers. One definition is that leadership is about relationships (Hoerr, 2005). Understanding that leadership is a shared belief of commonly held ideas and responsibilities helps to define the nature of the relationships (Burrello, Hoffman, & Murray, 2005). Leithwood & Duke (1999) state that leadership is intentional influence over others. Leithwood & Duke (1999) acknowledge that

theorists have experienced difficulty in developing an accepted definition of leadership because of the various forms of relationships that school leaders must have. These include relations with other leaders, followers, and the organization as a whole. For this study the researcher will state that the definition of leadership is one who leads and manages while building and sustaining relationships.

Goldman (1998) stated that the role of the school leader is one that recognizes the consequences of one's beliefs, vision, and values. Many principals in schools today have had to rethink their leadership role (Goldman, 1998). The role of principal in implementing innovative instructional practices has become increasingly constrained (Fullan, 2001). The knowledge base needed in the preparation of school administrators requires a more complex overview of leadership skills and educational demands (Fullan, 2001). Examining the factors that complicate the principals' abilities to lead as they would like and in the manners and directions they believe are appropriate will be investigated. Supported by literature this investigation will assume that there are many ways for principals to exert influence through their leadership.

Purpose of the Study

Sergiovanni (2000) writes of the potential for principals to influence the direction of their schools. It is important to understand the school principal's view of leadership because it influences his/her behavior and practice. Discovering how principals develop their personal framework of leadership and principalship creates understanding of why principals choose to lead as they do and provides a basis for other principals. The primary purpose of this study will be to understand, through the lens of

the elementary principal, how the demands of the principalship coincide with the ISLLC Standards. Understanding what the requirements, expectations and responsibilities of the elementary school principal and of the school leadership, specifically the instructional leader, is necessary in order to seek a connection or disconnection to the ISLLC Standards. Secondly, the study will look at the principalship job priorities as they relate to instructional leadership and school management. Finally, the study will examine the impact of school size on leadership.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

Listed below are the six global standards articulated in the ISLLC Standards without the accompanying indicators (ISLLC, 1996). Each of the ISLLC Standards begins with the phrase: “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by...” The remainder of each of the standards statements specifically presents a successful administrator’s expectations:

- Standard 1: facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
- Standard 2: advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
- Standard 3: ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- Standard 4: collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- Standard 5: acting with integrity, with fairness, and in an ethical manner.
- Standard 6: understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts.

Additionally, various states established performance standards for principals at the state level, and localities followed with attempts to standardize the work of principals through the development of evaluation instruments (Murphy, 2001). The research will take place in the state of Virginia. According to the Regulations Establishing Standards For Accrediting Public School in Virginia adopted on May 24, 2006 and effective on September 7, 2006, principals have job responsibilities in the area of instructional leadership and management. Job responsibilities are listed in Table I.

Table I

The Regulations Establishing Standards For Accrediting Public School in Virginia
 adopted on May 24, 2006 and effective on September 7, 2006

School and Instructional Leadership 8 VAC 20-131-210. Role of the principal.
<p>A. The principal is recognized as the instructional leader of the school and is responsible for effective school management that promotes positive student achievement, a safe and secure environment in which to teach and learn, and efficient use of resources. As a matter of policy, the board, through these standards, recognizes the critically important role of principals to the success of public schools and the students who attend those schools and recommends that local school boards provide principals with the maximum authority available under law in all matters affecting the school including, but not limited to, instruction and personnel, in a manner that allows the principal to be held accountable in a fair and consistent manner for matters under his direct control.</p>
<p>B. As the instructional leader, the principal is responsible for ensuring that students are provided an opportunity to learn and shall:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect the academic instructional time from unnecessary interruptions and disruptions and enable the professional teaching staff to spend the maximum time possible in the teaching/learning process by keeping to a minimum clerical responsibility and the time students are out of class; 2. Ensure that the school division's student code of conduct is enforced and seek to maintain a safe and secure school environment; 3. Analyze the school's test scores annually, by grade and by discipline, to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Direct and require appropriate prevention, intervention, and/or remediation to those students performing below grade level or not passing the SOL tests; b. Involve the staff of the school in identifying the types of staff development needed to improve student achievement and ensure that the staff participate in those activities; and c. Analyze classroom practices and methods for improvement of instruction; 4. Ensure that students' records are maintained and that criteria used in making placement and promotion decisions, as well as any instructional interventions used to <p>Virginia Department of Education 36 REGULATIONS ESTABLISHING STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITING PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN VIRGINIA-2006 8 VAC 20-131.</p>

5. Monitor and evaluate the quality of instruction, provide staff development, provide support that is designed to improve instruction, and seek to ensure the successful attainment of the knowledge and skills required for students by the SOL tests;
6. Maintain records of students who drop out of school, including their reasons for dropping out and actions taken to prevent these students from dropping out; and
7. Notify the parents of rising eleventh-grade and twelfth-grade students of:
 - a. the number of standard and verified units of credit required for graduation; and
 - b. the remaining number of such units of credit the individual student requires for graduation.

C. As the school manager, the principal shall:

1. Work with staff to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and courtesy and to facilitate constructive communication by establishing and maintaining a current handbook of personnel policies and procedures;
2. Work with the community to involve parents and citizens in the educational program and facilitate communication with parents by maintaining and disseminating a current student handbook of policies and procedures that includes the school division's standards of student conduct and procedures for enforcement, along with other matters of interest to parents and students;
3. Maintain a current record of licensure, endorsement, and in-service training completed by staff; and
4. Maintain records of receipts and disbursements of all funds handled. These records shall be audited annually by a professional accountant approved by the local school board.

(Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, pp. 35-37, July 1, 2007)

Through the interview process, the researcher will learn how elementary school principals set school leadership priorities. The interview questions will seek information about leadership and what it means to each principal and his/her work. One primary objective will be to determine how principals differentiate between the concept of leadership and the principalship job requirements. This research will seek to find out if the principal views leadership and the job of principal as being connected to the ISLLC Standards. This investigation will seek to discover to whom the principal feels accountable to and how this accountability affects his/her job. Another objective is to understand how leadership priorities are set. Finally, the researcher will inquire about the nature of the authority that the principal has in his/her school and how this is similar or different to what they expected when he/she was appointed to this administrative position.

Research on the principalship of an elementary school administrator offers multiple conceptions, characterizations, and accounts of principal leadership. In addition, numerous and varying accounts highlight differences in research-based descriptions of the principalship and what principal leadership looks like in practice. The research seeks to understand how the demands of the principalship coincide with what the principal feels his/her leadership ought to be. This research may be used for other purposes such as preparing the next generation of administrators, mentoring new administrators, evaluating administrators, and planning professional development for practicing administrators.

Definition of Terms

The terms used in the context of this study are as follows:

Educational leadership. The ability to demonstrate the use of knowledge, skills, and practices to create continued success for a school (Glasman & Glasman, 1997).

Elementary school. A public school with any grades pre-kindergarten through five.

Instructional leaders. Those in positions who are people oriented, effective communicators, and lead teachers to provide effective instructional programs (Joachim & Klotz, 2000). The instructional leader must be able to develop a vision that will lead teachers to produce tangible results through the application of best practices for students (McEwan, 2003). Instructional leaders are strong educators whose work is anchored on the central issues of learning and teaching and school improvement (Fullan, 2001).

ISLLC Standards (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium). A set of common and established standards for the professional development of educational administrators (Murphy, 2001).

Leadership. Centers on one who leads and manages while building and sustaining relationships.

Manager. A principal who completes tasks in a perfunctory manner.

Principal. A school leader and administrator

School size. For the purpose of this study school population has been given the following size parameters: small equates to 0-450 students, medium equates to 451-750 students, and large equates to 751-1200 students. School size parameters are also based on the latest research regarding school size.

Literature/Research Background

The literature review serves many purposes. Most importantly, it places a study in the context of a larger body of work (Maxwell, 1995). The literature review will utilize studies of principal leadership in schools. The area of school management will also be researched. The literature review will look first at the historical development of the principal in the twentieth century. Additionally, the research will examine the role

of the principal as the instructional leader. The research of Gillat and Suzer-Azaroff (1994) concludes that principals of successful schools are strong instructional leaders. These data suggest that such principals as instructional leaders emphasize the following criteria: achievement, orderly atmosphere, evaluation of student progress, teacher support, coordination of instructional programs, and maintenance of high presence and visibility in the classrooms and school building (Gillat & Suzer-Azaroff, 1994). McEwan (2003) proposed that effective leaders in business and education need planning and time management skills. Understanding the interconnected importance of leadership and management will be explored in the literature.

The research will also examine the recent literature reflecting additional conceptions of the principalship, including definitions and parameters that inform expectations and responsibilities of principals. The ISLLC Standards will be used as a framework component to this study. The standards lay the foundation for what is essential about the role of school leaders. The standards capture what research and practitioners have told the ISLLC representatives are critical components of effective leadership (Murphy, 2002). The creation of the ISLLC in 1996 and the development of a set of standards conceived to examine the components of leadership helped to design a set of specific objectives required of school administrators. Each of these standards addresses the manner in which school administrators will enhance student success and names performance practices that will transform school administrators into educational leaders (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). Murphy (2001) indicates four primary purposes of the ISLLC standards: (1) to examine the culture of leadership

preparation, (2) to rebuild preparation programs around the ISLLC standards, (3) to establish a common set of standards for the preparation of school administrators, and (4) to use the standards as a tool for evaluative measures.

In a study conducted by Gullat and Sulzer-Azaroff (1994), findings showed that principals who were involved in the instructional process positively influenced student achievement. One strategy used to increase principal involvement with students was to utilize their managerial skills so that they set aside short blocks of time for classrooms visitations and teacher observations. According to Schnur, (2002), “Many of the most impressive examples of schoolwide change and student achievement gains involve a talented principal who has brought together teachers, parents, and students to improve teaching and learning” (Kaplan, 2006, p.1).

Research Questions

The primary research questions addressed in this study are:

1. How do elementary principals describe his/her leadership in their schools?
2. How do the requirements of the job of elementary school principal coincide with what he or she feels their leadership focus ought to be?
3. What is the role of instructional leadership in the elementary principals' description of their work?
4. How do elementary school principals set job priorities in order to successfully lead their school?
5. How does school size impact leadership?

Methodology

This research will utilize qualitative methods to create a detailed description of the job of a principalship in an elementary school where the chain of command may or may not include an assistant principal and/or an administrative assistant. Through the use of interviews and documents it is the goal of the researcher to document the principals' characterization of their job and how priorities are created and/or selected. According to Maxwell (1996) a qualitative design can be described as a path shaped like the letter Z (Figure 1.1). This particular design allows the researcher to chart a pathway for the research. Having a good qualitative design “provides a map showing how to get from one to the other” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 11). “The strengths of qualitative research derive primarily from its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 17).

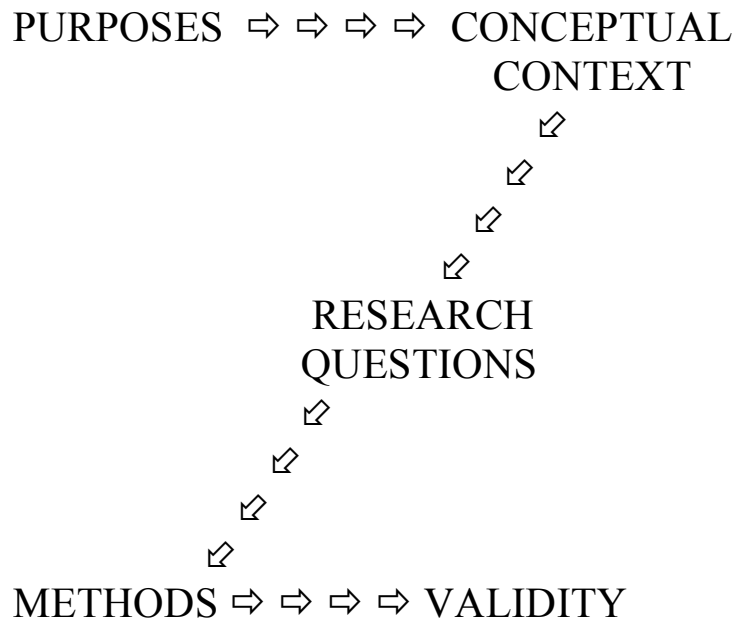


Figure 1.1 Z-shaped model for qualitative research design (Maxwell, 1996, p. 11)

Additionally, the research will include document reviews. This will be in the form of school mission statements. These documents have been chosen because they illustrate what one would expect to see, hear, and experience in the school. The statements are developed collaboratively and are reflective of the stakeholders: staff, parents, students, and community members. Each principal will be asked to fill in a single school day log that will represent a typical or atypical day in the life of the elementary principal. This document will be another source of data for the researcher. Grounded theory will be the guiding theoretical basis for the research. Questions will be asked and comparisons will be made (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Methodological triangulation will be used to strengthen the research. According to Patton (1987), “building checks and balances into

a design through multiple data collection strategies increases the rigor of the evaluation" (p. 160). A purposeful sampling will be utilized because the researcher will deliberately choose the elementary principals whose schools fall into the category of small, medium, and large. According to John Maxwell (2005) a purposeful sample helps to best understand the phenomenon, not to generalize but to understand the study of individuals. Based on the 2007 Virginia Department of Education school membership report, the researcher will determine the number of schools in each size category. This will determine the number of small, medium, and large sized sites selected in each public school district.

Summary

Principals find themselves accountable to policy makers, parents, and business leaders alike for the results of high-stakes testing (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). The political pressure of high-stakes accountability requires principals to improve instruction and student achievement while balancing the need to maintain facilities, supervise student conduct, and manage budgets. Principals take on two roles. As instructional leaders, principals must be the standard-bearers for a high-quality education for every child. As managers, principals must be attentive to the daily critical administrative tasks that make their facilities run smoothly and efficiently. They must execute a vision, deal with employees and maintain the set standards. While the nature of the position may place these two responsibilities at odds, good principals understand that everything they do, whether as a leader or a manager, is valuable for quality teaching and learning for children and adults. "In sum, they must both maintain the

routine functioning of the schools and provide vision and motivation; they must both manage and lead”(Deal & Peterson, 1994). With the many demands of this multifaceted job, it is important to understand how the principal sets job priorities. This study will set out to understand what the principal’s job requires and how closely these job requirements coincide with the ISLLC Standards. The research will seek to find out what principal leadership can and does look like. The study will explore how principals describe their jobs and their leadership with hopes of discovering what might be done to encourage more qualified applicants.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the work of the elementary principal. The principal's daily responsibilities are numerous. From morning until night they address late arriving buses and early arriving children, angry parents and concerned teachers, changing standards of learning and out of date computers. Schools must operate effectively and efficiently if they are to survive (Sergiovanni, 1999). Although the principal's effect on student achievement may be indirect, it is crucial. The principal controls the most important factors affecting the school's teaching and instructional quality, including attracting, selecting, and retaining outstanding teachers. They must work with the school community to establish a common mission, instructional vision, and long-term goals. Additionally, the principal must create a school culture grounded in collaboration, high expectations and facilitating continuous instructional improvements. Principals also have increased responsibilities for traditional areas such as security, public relations, finances, politics, and technology (Sergiovanni, 1999). The researcher examined the literature related to leadership standards (ISLLC) as they connected with principal preparation, accountability, management and instructional leadership skills. To understand the job of the school administrator, the researcher also reviewed the historical development of the principal.

An Historical Look at the Development of the Principalship

Tyack and Hansot (1982) describe a historical shift in educational administrators' perceptions of their jobs. The change was consistent with the guiding principles of industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At that time, schools increasingly came to resemble businesses as they wrestled with educating a greater number of students than ever before while providing an array of skills and fundamental knowledge sufficient to satisfy the diverse needs of an industrial society. This change was not immediate, but it occurred at the time when educators were faced with the task of redesigning the public school system (Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

Scientific management was popularized by the work of Frederick Winslow Taylor (Taylor, 1967). He described principles for management based in part on the rigorous research of timed tasks to determine work completion. The result of this research shed light on how workers could accomplish tasks with the greatest efficiency and economy. Taylor wrote of how managers could use this knowledge to work more effectively with men to ensure that all of the work was being done in accordance with well-developed scientific principles. For F. W. Taylor, the identification of the science and training of workers lead to an equal division of work responsibility between management and laborers. Yet, despite its popularity, all educators did not embrace the use of scientific management. Callahan (1962) cites William C. Bagley and John Dewey as two well-known opponents. Both men criticized the use of science to oversimplify the educational process. According to Callahan (1962), reformers created a model for schooling and administration they deemed appropriate for most settings because it was based on what they perceived to be an extremely efficient way to teach the greatest number of pupils.

Scientific management was established as the guiding framework for school administration. The 1917 American School Board Journal published a rating format that teachers in Everett, Washington used to evaluate their principals (Callahan, 1962). This

form outlined four general areas for evaluation: personal equipment, social and professional equipment, management, and technique of supervision. Thirty-six additional criteria were included in the principalship evaluation. These were shared with the teachers so that they could rate their principals (Callahan, 1962). They ranged from “general appearance” and “enthusiasm,” to “interest in life of school” and “helpfulness to teachers in supervision” (p. 107). The evaluation format highlights the job performance criteria of the principal in the early twentieth century. It was used to determine how efficiently principals were completing their jobs by outlining the standards and job responsibilities for them. Also principals were using scientific management to monitor and evaluate their teachers. School administrators used performance criteria to rate the efficiency of their teachers in educating the greatest number of pupils. The principalship in the early 20th century had three dominant values. They were (1) absolute values; both traditional and spiritual, (2) principles of scientific management, and (3) accepted social values (Beck & Murphy, 1993, p. 14). Gradually these values changed. According to Beck and Murphy (1993), the most important values for the principalship became (1) educational research, (2) principles of scientific management, and (3) business efficiency and economy in schools (Beck & Murphy, 1993, p.24).

During the 20th century the role of the principal has evolved and shifted from that of one who is an expert of managerial skills to one of an instructional leader. In addition the school principal must be a specialist in public relations, a decision maker, a plant manager, and a social director (McKay, 1999). Many people believed one person could no longer be responsible for the multitude of duties facing the school principal (Richard, 2000). As an integral part of the school system, the successes or failures of that school depend, at least in part, on the effectiveness of the school principal (McEwan, 2003). The effective leadership found in today’s schools reflects the need for the alignment between

student success and the mastery of state standards. The principal must be the one to lead this movement. The success of a school requires the role of the principal to be carefully examined (Kelley & Peterson, 2002). With such attention being centered on school accountability and state mandates, school leadership is having a profound effect on student achievement (McFadden, Mobley, Burnham, Joyner, R., & Peel, H. (2003).

When compared to the other staff members of a school, the life of the campus principal takes on a different perspective (Tucker & Coddling, 2002). The role, once seen as a managerial position, is now being transformed into one concentrated on instructional leadership (McEwan, 2003). Principals must be tied to the improvement of instruction if they are to be effective leaders (Fullan, 2002). Yet, much of the principal's days are filled with disciplinary issues, supervising duties, maintaining a balanced campus budget, and being an expert in public relations not impacting student achievement or instruction (Olson, 1999). The job of the principal is comprised of long hours, increasing responsibilities, and added stress (Keller, 1998). Many of today's principals spend more time solving problems than they do focusing on instruction (Tucker & Coddling, 2002).

A brief history of the evolution of school leadership is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

An Overview of the History of School Leadership

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP	ROLE
1839 – 1867: First “Principal Teachers” appointed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clerical • Attendance • School repair
1870 – 1880: Principal as “teacher of teachers”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructing and mentoring teachers in the art of teaching
1905 – 1920: Era of Efficiency and Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with weak and ineffective teachers • Centralization of education • Organization, orderly focus
1905 – 1920: Era of Efficiency and Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific Management • Business and industrial management view of school organization • Elaborate rating scale to measure teacher efficiency used
1920 – 1938: Improvement of Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leader becomes more democratic and professional • Management is still a focus
1938 – 1950: Era of Human Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of democratic methods – cooperation with and consideration of teacher
1950 – 1980: Era of Professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionalism of school leaders and curriculum workers • Impact of Supreme Court Rulings (education opportunities for all) • Science and math focus • Inclusion of handicapped • Integration
1980: Age of Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal serves as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Financial manager -Negotiator -Manager of human resources -Source of legal knowledge -Human relations expert
1990 to present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards movement • Restructuring • Student-centered reform

(Hessel, K. & Holloway, J. 2006, p. 15)

Changing Role of the Principalship

In a survey conducted by the Educational Research Service, half of the school districts in the United States reported difficulties in locating capable principals, regardless of the pay (McKay, 1999). Tirozzi and Ferandino (2000) share why there are educators not actively seeking the principalship: (a) the hours are too long, (b) the pay is too low, and (c) the stress is too much. Exemplary teachers, recognized for leadership abilities, are foregoing the opportunity to move into leadership positions because of the amount of responsibilities and stress associated with the job of principal (McKay, 1999).

Wanted: A miracle worker who can do more with less, pacify rival groups, endure chronic second-guessing, tolerate low levels of support, process large volumes of paper and work double shift (75 nights a year out). He or she will have carte blanche to innovate, but cannot spend much money, replace any personnel, or upset any constituency." (Fullan, 1998, p. 6)

This description of an overburdened, underpaid principal has led many to reconsider the reasons for staying in the profession (Fenwick & Pierce, 2001). According to Sykes et. al. (2002), "The demands on the job have escalated to such an extent that without superhuman effort and ability the job has become unworkable" (p. 145). The role of the principal has moved toward instructional leadership yet the age-old roles such as coordinating buses, performing managerial skills, and handling discipline problems still face the principalship on a daily basis (Richard, 2000). Considering the changes in the role of the principal, it is no surprise that those in the position and those considering the position find the job overwhelming (McEwan, 2003). The field notes taken by the researcher, Susan Church (2005), included the many daily tasks that a principal must complete. The list of job responsibilities included the following:

1. Work on the school's draft assessment and evaluation policy

2. Work with the community to form a school advisory council
3. Revise the school discipline code
4. Continue implementation of school improvement plan
5. Complete teacher evaluations using new board process, support teachers in creating professional portfolios (p. 23)

Leadership: Accountability and Management

Increasingly, district superintendents are holding building administrators accountable for student achievement. Sixty-three percent of superintendents note that they evaluate the principal on how successful he or she is at raising student achievement. In addition, 73% of superintendents suggest that holding principals accountable for their students' standardized test scores is a good idea (Kaplan, 2005). With the *No Child Left Behind Act*, principals are required to focus on data disaggregation and enhanced teaching and learning practices. Thus principals must publicly answer for the performance of their schools. Today's accountability requires a skillful leader who knows both instruction and management techniques. Principals are managers of their sites responsible for the entire operation and accountable to a variety of constituents: students, parents, district staff, the larger community, government, politicians, and the press.

Donaldson & Marnik (1995) asserted that principals are responsible for managing complex organizations with varied challenges and unpredictable demands. Principals often find it difficult to remain focused on their purpose due to the primary components of their job—brevity, variety, and fragmentation. Principals must be able to work quickly, shift gears easily, and complete tasks in tiny bits and pieces throughout

the day. A manager is defined in the literature as one who manages the affairs of the organization, but does not lead the organizational group toward a common vision or goal. Managers plan, coordinate, and monitor, which are all part of being a school leader; however, managers do not inspire, guide, and persuade. The major difference in managers and leaders is that managers are concerned with directing and leaders are concerned with influencing (Crow, Matthews & McCleary, 1996). “Leadership and management must coincide; leadership makes sure that the ship gets to the right place, management makes sure that the ship (crew and cargo) is well run” (Day, et al, 2000, pp. 38-39).

ISLLC Standards—To Guide and Define School Leadership

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) was established in mid 1994, with the help and direction of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), American Association of School Administrators (AASA), Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA), National School Boards Association (NSBA), and University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) joined the consortium to develop standards that would guide and define school leadership (Kaplan, 2005, p.16). The contributions of the initial 24 states, a generous foundation grant from The Pew

Charitable Trusts, and the assistance from the Danforth Foundation also collaborated with the CCSSO (Kaplan, 2005, p.18). The initial 24 states were Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. In 1996 the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium produced the ISLLC Standards and its purpose was to establish a framework for education policy that would help states define educational leadership. ISLLC also provided a means for cooperation among states in development and implementation of standards, assessments, and professional development for school principals. The focus of the consortium was the enhancement of educational principal's leadership skills through improvement of training programs that prepare future school principals (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, 2000). The standards were developed to help guide instructional delivery and field-based opportunities to ensure that aspiring school leaders are exposed to and immersed in project-based, experiential researched, and hands-on experiences through a combination of traditional instructional methodologies, mentored experiences, and internships. The standards provided the educational framework to prepare competent and successful school leaders more effectively. The ISLLC Standards charted a path for school leaders to assist them in improving student success (Lovely, 2004). Murphy (2001) further delineated that the standards were intended to drive improvement efforts in professional development, evaluation and assessment, licensure, and certification. The development of the standards created the

job framework needed to define the qualities of principal leadership. The standards also enhanced reform efforts in this area. A common thread found running through the standards reflected the importance of effective leadership and teaching (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996).

The preparation for school administrators rested in theory-based instruction. This stance on preparation allows little room for training and the application of real world situations (Murphy, 2001). With inconsistencies occurring between the preparation and the actual duties assigned to school leaders, many candidates for the principalship were not equipped to successfully lead their campuses toward educational improvements. Murphy (1992) stated, “The knowledge base for training should be constructed from a blueprint that specifies what the role of the school administrator is and ought to be” (p. 85).

The focus of ISLLC was on the areas of concern that directly impacted the need for higher quality school leadership at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Each of these standards addressed the manner in which school administrators would enhance student success and identified performance practices that would transform school administrators into educational leaders (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). Murphy (2001) indicated four primary purposes of the ISLLC Standards: (1) to examine the culture of leadership preparation, (2) to rebuild preparation programs around the ISLLC Standards, (3) to establish a common set of standards for the preparation of school administrators, and (4) to use the standards as a tool for evaluation. Presently, the ISLLC group represents 43 member states and it reflects a

common voice as it attempts to analyze and respond to the need for higher standards in educational leadership (CCSSO, 2008). In so doing, it considered three factors that directly impacted on expectations for educational leaders. First, it recognized that educators are looking more closely at student learning. Secondly, it was aware of the conflict between the public perceptions of educational bureaucracy and the community's need for nurturing school environments. Finally, ISLLC members were sensitive to the role that parents and other stakeholders would play in the future of education (ISLLC, 2000).

In its document, ISLLC elaborated on two reasons for its focus on standards. First, ISLLC believed that standards provide a basis for educational reform. Secondly, research by the Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASSC) found a lack of common standards in the area of education administration (Shipman & Murphy, 1998). As a result, ISLLC established seven guiding principles that guided the development of the final six standards that would combine knowledge, dispositions, and performance indicators that would standardize the expectations for principals' practice (ISLLC, 1996). The guiding principles evolved from three tenets. These tenets are described as follows: "there is a single set of standards that applies to all leadership positions, the focus and ground of the standards should be the core of productive leadership, and the standards should not simply codify what is; they should help elevate the profession to a higher level" (Murphy, 2005, p.17).

The six standards were created from seven principles. These principles became the "touchstone" to which the consortium regularly returned to test the emerging standards.

1. Standards should reflect the centrality of student learning.
2. Standards should acknowledge the changing role of the school leader.
3. Standards should recognize the collaborative nature of school leadership.
4. Standards should be high, upgrading the quality of the profession.
5. Standards should inform performance-based systems of assessment and evaluation for school leaders.
6. Standards should be integrated and coherent.
7. Standards should be predicated on the concepts of access, opportunity, and empowerment for all members of the school community (Murphy, 2005, p. 17).

The research based the standards focus on indicators of knowledge (required for the standard), dispositions (the attitudes evident by the accomplishment of the standard), and performances (what was observed and accomplished by an administrator) that was important to effective school leadership as it related to teaching and learning and the success of all students. As Murphy and Shipman (2002) noted, the goal of the ISLLC Standards was to redefine and rebuild the structure of school leadership (Kaplan, 2005).

In a letter prefacing the notebook, *Standards for School Leaders*, from the Council of Chief School Officers, Joseph Murphy and Neil Shipman, Chair and Director, respectively, of ISLLC, share that the standards, “represent a common core of knowledge, dispositions, and performances that will help link leadership more forcefully to productive schools and enhanced educational outcomes” (ISLLC, 1996, p. iii). Indeed ISLLC has attempted to respond to public demands for higher standards while, “building on research about skillful stewardship by school principals and emerging perspectives about society and education” (ISLLC, 1996, p. 6).

The ISLLC Standards are as follows with each standard beginning with the phrase: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by:

1. facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
2. advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
3. ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
4. collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
5. acting with integrity, with fairness, and in an ethical manner.
6. understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts. (ISLLC, 1996, p. 6).

In conjunction with the Educational Testing Center (ETS), ISLLC developed a performance-based assessment test for licensure of new principals and assistant principals. Fourteen states and the District of Columbia are currently using the School Leaders Licensure Assessment for state licensure of their principals. The states include: Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia (School Leaders Licensure Assessment Requirement, 2004). The goal of the Consortium was to raise the bar for school leaders by reshaping educational leadership concepts and practices to foster admittance and retention of successful school leaders.

The six separate yet inextricably connected ISLLC Standards contain 183

indicators organized in the subcategories of knowledge, disposition, and performance.

Of the many goals of the standards, an important one is to raise the bar for school leaders to enter and remain in the profession because the meaningful outcomes are realized. The main supporters and promoters of the ISLLC Standards include state educational agencies, departments of education, individual state professional standards boards, and participants of professional associations. Based on a CCSSO (Council of Chief State School Officers) survey completed in 2005, forty-six states have leadership standards for administrator certification and preparation programs, and forty-one states report that they adopted or adapted the ISLLC Standards or confirmed alignment of state standards with ISLLC (Sanders & Simpson, 2005). The ISLLC Standards have become a national model of leadership standards and serve as common language of leadership expectations across differences in state policies. Each of the participating states sets its individual SLLA and SSA test requirements that include the test expectations and pass scores. ISLLC's ongoing goal is to further promote certification and licensure reciprocity among states in order to meet the impending shortage of educational leaders who are both skilled and knowledgeable.

Table 3

National Policy Board for Educational Administration's Synopsis of ISLLC Standards

A School Administrator is an Educational Leader Who Promotes the Success of All Students by:

ISLLC Standard	# of Indicators	# of Elements (Key Words)
1. facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community	<u>29 Indicators Total</u> 6 = Knowledge 7 = Dispositions 16 = Performance	<u>5 Elements (Vision/Involve Community)</u> 1. Develop a Vision 2. Articulate a Vision 3. Implement a Vision 4. Steward a Vision 5. Promote Community Involvement in the Vision
2. advocating nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth	<u>39 Indicators Total</u> 11 = Knowledge 8 = Dispositions 20 = Performance	<u>4 Elements (Culture, Best Practice, Professional Growth)</u> 1. Promote a Positive School Culture 2. Provide Effective Instructional Program 3. Apply Best Practice to Student Learning 4. Design Comprehensive Professional Growth
3. ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment	<u>38 Indicators Total</u> 8 = Knowledge 7 = Dispositions 23 = Performance	<u>3 Elements (Collaborate, Manage Operations, Resources)</u> 1. Collaborate with Families and Other Community Members 2. Manage Operations 3. Manage Resources

Table 3 continued

4. collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources	<u>29 Indicators Total</u> 5 = Knowledge 8 = Dispositions 16 = Performance	<u>5 Elements (PR, Collaborate, Mobilize, Involve)</u> 1. Collaborate with Families and Other Community Members 2. Respond to Community Interests and Needs 3. Mobilize Community Resources 4. Steward a Vision 5. Promote Community Involvement in the Vision
5. acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner	<u>29 Indicators Total</u> 5 = Knowledge 8 = Dispositions 16 = Performance	<u>3 Elements (Act: Integrity, Fairly, & Ethically)</u> 1. Acts with Integrity 2. Acts Fairly 3. Acts Ethically
6. understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context	<u>19 Indicators Total</u> 8 = Knowledge 5 = Disposition 16 = Performance	<u>3 Elements (Larger Context: Understand, Respond, & Influence)</u> 1. Understand the Larger Context 2. Respond to the Larger Context 3. Influence the Larger Context

(Wiedmer, 2007, p.23)

The review of literature presents a synthesis of research that has been published regarding standards of education, especially those that affect the principal. In investigating standards, research related to each standard will be explored.

Research on Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards

Research has been found which supports each of the six ISLLC Standards.

Standard I: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

This standard requires a principal to function as an instructional leader whose primary responsibility is to help all students attain academic success. The principal needs to understand learning goals in a multicultural society; principles of developing and implementing strategic plans; systems theory; information sources, strategies for data collection, and data analysis; effective communication; and effective consensus building and negotiation skills (ISLLC. 1996). According to the first ISLLC standard, the building principal has to believe in, value, and be committed to:

- knowing that all students can be educated;
- promoting a school vision of high standards of learning;
- fostering continuous school improvement;
- including all stakeholders in the school community;
- providing assurances all students can acquire knowledge, skills, and values needed to become successful adults;
- being willing to continuously examine one's own assumptions, beliefs, and practices;
- doing work required for high levels of personal and organizational

performance (ISLLC, 1996, p. 10).

The research of Gillat and Suzer-Azaroff (1994) concluded that principals of successful schools are strong instructional leaders. The data suggest principals identified as instructional leaders emphasize the criteria of achievement, orderly atmosphere, evaluation of student progress, teacher support, coordination of instruction programs, and regular maintenance of high presence and visibility in the classrooms and school building (Gillat & Suzer-Azaroff, 1994). In this qualitative study the behaviors of two school principals (one in an elementary school and one in a middle school) were examined and the impact of his or her involvement on the teachers' and students' performance in three classes was examined. The researchers found that despite the small investment of time and effort, the school principals appeared to have both direct (verbal praise and interaction) and indirect (non verbal praise) influences on enhancing student achievement. The elementary principal served a population of 437 students. The school contained 19 third through fifth grade classes. The principal worked with seven students who had failed to learn their multiplication tables. Three times a week the principal would spend 10-15 minutes helping the students learn their multiplication tables. At the end of the intervention, the student demonstrated mastery of 85% and higher. Educational leaders can modify his/her activities to affect student performance.

Standard 2: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Principals who use this standard in their practice have school cultures that focus on student outcomes. "The culture must be so strong that visitors will be able to hear it,

see it, smell it, and feel it before they enter the school doors” (Hessel & Holloway, 2006, p. 51). The principal strives to make sure that the students, teachers, and administrators are happy and excited to work in the school. The school dialogue is nurturing and the voice of the participants is focused on school pride (Hessel & Holloway, 2006). “It is the responsibility of the principal to provide the leadership to cultivate a school culture that articulates the vision of the school and community” (Hessel & Holloway, 2006). The culture is framed with the belief that all students can be successful. Murphy (1998) states, “In schools where there is a strong professional culture, teachers and principals operate with an interdependent connected relationship” (Hessel & Holloway, 2006, p.51). According to the second ISLLC Standard, the principal believes, values, and is committed to:

- student learning as the fundamental purpose of schooling,
- the proposition that all students can learn,
- the variety of ways in which students can learn,
- life-long learning for self and others,
- professional development as an integral part of school improvement,
- benefits that diversity brings to the school community,
- a safe and supportive learning environment,
- preparing students to be contributing members of society (ISLLC, 1996, p. 12).

A study by McClure (1999) supported the significance of the second ISLLC Standard when she used quantitative research methods to examine the role of the principal in the transformation of a school from low performing during the 1995-96 school year to the attainment of high performance levels of student achievement in the 1996-97 school

year. The school selected for this study earned an exemplary rating by the state's 1998 accountability system. Findings of this study indicated that creating an environment of school change included refocusing the district mission, redefining the school climate and modifying the instructional program. The principal was a key player in overcoming barriers to create school change. In order to maintain a successful school reform it is important that the principal require continuous emphasis on high standards, instructional collaboration, as well as, empowered and shared instructional leadership at the school site. The variables observed for this study were shared mission and goals, instructional guidance, and redesigning the organization.

1. Shared mission and goals dealt with framing, communicating, and enlisting engagement in a common mission and a set of clearly defined goals that determined the areas in which school staff expended their resources. The focus was on linking beliefs and actions in the school; e.g. academic expectations, opportunity to learn, and time for learning. The principal's values and beliefs were known to teachers and were aligned with the mission and goals. The mission and goals were a prominent part of the day-to-day operation of the school.
2. Instructional guidance included developing and allocating the resources necessary for effective instruction; ensuring that curriculum, assessment, and instruction were aligned and monitoring the day-to-day work of teachers in classrooms. It required knowledge on the part of the principal of curriculum, assessment, and instruction of language arts, mathematics,

science, and social studies. It also required an understanding of national and state standards.

3. The principal had to draw on a wide array of knowledge, skills, and tools for change to happen: 1) incentives and disincentives to make those changes perceived to result in higher performance, 2) knowledge and ability to communicate the research basis for changes, and 3) willingness to risk and support teachers in trying new things (McClure, 1999).

Standard 3: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

The principal that exhibits knowledge and understanding of the standard 3 uses:

- theories and models of organization and principles of organizational development;
- operational procedures at the school and district level;
- principles and issues relating to school development;
- principles and issues relating to fiscal operational of school management;
- principles and issues relating to school facilities and use of space;
- legal issues impacting school operations; current technologies that support management functions.

According to the third ISLLC standard, the principal believes, values, and is committed to:

- making management decisions to enhance learning and teaching
- taking risks to improve schools

- trusting people and their judgment
- accepting responsibility
- high-quality standards, expectations, and performances
- involving stakeholders in management processes
- a safe environment (ISLLC, 1996, p. 14).

Springer's (1996) research showed that principal behavior is a factor in school effectiveness. The researcher utilized ten variables to describe principal behavior using three constructs: school management, school environment, and instructional leadership. Variables of principal behavior include resource management, personnel management, decision-making, communication, interpersonal behavior, professional integrity, supervision and evaluation, educational expertise, staff development, and curriculum. Variables were drawn from traditional and contemporary effective schools' literature. The purpose of the study was to determine if there is a difference in principal behavior as measured by teacher perceptions in schools characterized as more effective and schools characterized as less effective as determined by study achievement scores. Student achievement was used as the criterion for classifying schools as more effective and less effective. Teacher perceptions were measured on an instrument developed by the researcher, the Principal Behavior Questionnaire (PBQ). The study included 15 schools from which data were collected from teachers using the PBQ. Mean responses were compared between the two sets of principals on variables measuring principal behavior. The study controlled for socioeconomic level and investigated moderating variables, including principal sex and year of experiences of the teachers and principals.

Results found significant differences between principals in high-achieving and low-achieving schools on nine of the ten variables. Setting job priorities in the areas of school management and instructional leadership strengthen the significance of the

influence of the school leader as it connects to student achievement. Socioeconomic level was found to have an effect with high achieving schools included in the high socioeconomic level group and schools with the lowest achievement in the low socioeconomic group. Unexpected results of the study were the consistent differences found for female principals in low-achieving schools. School district procedures in selection and assignment of principals in low-achieving schools appeared to be a factor in these schools. These finding had implications for selection and training principals. In addition, the findings have implications for incentive programs for principals and teachers in low-achieving schools.

Standard 4: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Principals who exhibit understanding of this standard are cognizant of emerging issues and trends that could potentially impact the school community; conditions and dynamics of the diverse school community; community resources; community relations, marketing strategies, and processes; as well as successful models of school, family, business, community, government, and higher education partnerships (ISLLC, 1996, p. 16). According to the fourth ISLLC standard, principals believe, value and are committed to:

- schools operating as an integral part of the larger community
- collaboration and communication with families
- involvement of families and other stakeholders in school decision-making processes
- the proposition that diversity enriches the school
- families as partners in education of their children

- the proposition that families have the best interests of their children in mind
- resources of the family and community needing to be brought to bear on education of students
- an informed public (ISLLC, 1996, p. 16).

A study by Mercer (2000) predicted that by the year 2002 nearly 40% of children in the nation's classrooms would be of African American, Hispanic American, Asian American, or Native American background. His study found that the students were more likely to have teachers who were of European descent. Such demographics provide challenges and opportunities for educators striving to meet needs of diverse populations related to the fourth ISLLC standard. The purpose of the study was to identify and describe elements of the organizational culture of an academically improving elementary school with a majority of students of color. Mercer (2000) suggested that elements of the culture in an academically improving school include the following: symbols and artifacts in the form of bulletin boards, banners, plaques, pictures, student work, tee shirts, and posters. These symbols and artifacts appear to be student-centered. Ideologies, values, belief systems, and cultural rites consisted of the following: high expectations for all students, collaboration, a homelike environment, celebrations, student-centered instructional strategies, and parents as partners in the learning process. Elements that were identified as processes to formally communicate internally and externally included newsletters, weekly memos, daily verbal contact, principal's leadership, collaboration and trust, school-wide staff development, and planning and decision making.

Standard 5: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, with fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Principals' knowledge of this standard is exemplified by understanding the purpose of education and the role of leadership in modern society; various ethical

frameworks and perspectives on ethics; values of the diverse school community; professional codes of ethics; and the philosophy and history of education (ISLLC, 1996, p. 18). According to the fifth ISLLC standard, principals believe, value, and are committed to:

- the ideal of the common good
- the principles in the Bill of Rights
- the right of every student to a free, quality education
- bringing ethical principles to the decision-making process
- subordinating one's interest to the good of the school community
- accepting the consequences for upholding one's principles and actions
- using the influence of one's office constructively and productively in the service of all students and their families
- developing a caring school community (ISLLC, 1996, p. 18).

A study by Nash (1999) examined increased expectations to provide leadership in reform efforts, which included meeting new state standards and implementing site-based decision-making. Principals are expected to provide leadership in these times with little empirical information regarding how to achieve these goals. This study sought to provide insight into this dilemma by identifying specific behaviors and practices of principals that were considered effective by the building staff at selected sites. Data were collected at two elementary school sites through personal interviews, surveys that addressed transformational leadership, and personal observations by the researcher. The rationale was that by examining behaviors of practicing principals in buildings that were engaged in implementing a defined restructuring model, results could provide more specific information regarding effective practices. A majority of the respondents were in agreement with the dimensions of transformational leadership regarding the leadership behaviors of

the two site principals. These findings had implications for principal preparation and training programs and in restructuring or change process planning.

Standard 6: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts.

A principal who has knowledge and understanding of this standard is expected to utilize:

- principles of representative governance that undergrid the system of American schools
- the role of public education in developing and renewing a democratic society and an economically productive nation
- the law as related to education and schooling
- the political, social, cultural, and economic systems and processes that impact schools
- models and strategies of change and conflict resolution as applied to the larger political, social, cultural, and economic contexts of schooling
- global issues and forces affecting teaching and learning
- the dynamics of policy development and advocacy under one democratic political system
- the importance of diversity and equity in a democratic society (ISLLC, 1996, p.19).

According to the sixth ISLLC standard, principals believe in, value, and are committed to:

- Promoting education as a key to opportunity and social mobility
- Recognizing a variety of ideas, values, and cultures
- Understanding the importance of a continuing dialogue with other decision makers affecting education
- Participating actively in the political and policy-making context in the service of education
- Using legal systems to protect student rights and improve student opportunities (ISLLC, 1996, p. 20).

A study by Abrams (1998) examined the perceptions of 11 successful elementary school principals from seven school districts in southern Arizona. The principals were identified by their district superintendent or assistant superintendent as exemplifying characteristics of successful principals. Interviews were held with questions regarding effective leadership, school culture, vision, school improvement, empowerment, staff motivation, teacher instructional leadership, conflict, the changing nature of principalship, and educational pre-service education. The findings that emerged from this study indicated that successful principals placed the needs of the students in the center of their entire decision-making. Moreover, these principals demonstrated leadership behaviors that included meeting the intrinsic needs of their followers. In addition, the principals in this study believed their pre-service educational administration program was inadequate in preparing them for their role as principal.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership became the trend in the 1980s with school principals considered as the instructional leader within the school building (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). As the instructional leader, the principal has been defined as the one who is to provide constant support and recommendations to the instructional staff concerning the direction of the curriculum and the overall academic program (Leithwood, et. al., 1999). During the instructional leader decade between the late 1980's and late 1990's, school principals found their actions dictated by the behaviors of the teachers as the principals engaged in the activities that directly affected the growth of the students within their buildings (Leithwood, et. al., 1999). Leithwood, et. al (1999) defines strong school leadership with the following descriptors: the knowledge of the teaching and learning processes, and the power to motivate other members of the organization to achieve and work toward the common good of the school. In addition, the researchers

stated that a school principal exhibits strong leadership when moral values are not only modeled but also encouraged of everyone in the organization (Leithwood, et.al. (1999). Strong leaders have the power of influence over others in the organization when decisions are made for the betterment of the organization. Strong school principals have the ability to know the leadership behaviors that match the needs of the organizational members (Leithwood, et. al, 1999). Today's administrator must major in instructional leadership, learning how to complete essential management details through delegation and collaboration. Instructional leaders must be knowledgeable about learning theory, effective instruction, and curriculum (McEwan, 2003). "Instructional leadership is directly related to the processes of instruction where teachers, learners, and the curriculum interact" (McEwan, 2003, p. 6). Principals have allowed others to dictate the standards of their practice and professional development. There is no one better situation to reflect upon and develop solutions to the present challenges and demands facing school leaders in this era of standards-based reform than principals themselves. For almost two years, principals engaged in conversations about the quality of leadership in their own profession. This dialogue has produced important outcomes with the release of NAESP's *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do*. Principals have made a public statement about the standards they are aspiring to meet.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) set forth six standards of instructional leadership in the publication *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do*. The six standards are

as follows:

1. Lead schools in a way that places student and adult learning at the center.
2. Set high expectations and standards for the academic and social development of all students and the performance of adults.
3. Demand content and instruction that ensure student achievement of agreed-on academic standards.
4. Create a culture of continuous learning for adults tied to student learning and other school goals.
5. Use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools to assess, identify, and apply instructional improvement.
6. Actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success (McEwan, 2003, p.7).

Today, more than ever, the responsibilities of the principal focus on instructional leadership, guiding a faculty through standards-based outcomes, developing a schoolwide vision, and acting as a change agent charged with the duty of meeting state accountability measures (Richard, 2000). The redefinition of the principal's roles requires the principal to be seen as the instructional leader with a vision for school improvement (Richard, 2000). With each of these roles comes a new responsibility. Harsher demands face administrators because of the responsibilities school leaders encounter. Considering the changes in the role of the principal, it is no surprise to find those in the position and those considering the position to find the job overwhelming (Groff, 2001).

Management Skills

The managing process is essential to the supervisory goal of helping teachers do

their work effectively and efficiently (Burke & Krey, 2005). Burke & Krey (2005) describe managing as a process that utilizes directing and controlling. The authors explain directing to be similar to that of a theatre director. The principal works with the individuals to derive their best performance in their particular job. The controlling component is described as a form of regulating behaviors in order to gain the desired improvement needed. Burke & Krey (2005) relay the importance of developing a trusting relationship with teachers and staff so that managing can become a shared process. They describe this as mutuality. “Mutuality has been defined to be a choice of behaviors in working with others within certain restrictions that have a cooperative power of determination” (Burke & Krey, 2005, p. 318). Good leadership requires effective management. Effective principals are also effective managers. They must be good communicators and use this strength to develop relationships with teachers, assistant principals, students, parents, custodians, secretaries, counselors, media specialists, bus drivers, central office personnel, and school resource officers. As the school manager the principal must display respect for every individual who contributes to the school’s success. According to Robbins and Alvy (2003), the principal must manage challenges in the following five categories: “classroom, school site, community, central office, and support services” (p. 11).

Setting Job Priorities

Setting priorities needs to be related to the overall school vision of the leader. The principal needs to make distinctions about what is more important and what is less important and decide what gets done at various points in time. If priorities are not set and choices not made, then everything is of equal importance. Often times it is difficult to prioritize in schools when everything seems equally important (Burrello, Hoffman, & Murray, 2005). Every school principal operates within the same time constraints. Clearly no one actually “manages time”, yet principals can manage his/her use of time by

succinctly identifying personal and professional goals and scheduling time to reflect and complete. Often times a leader will reflect that there are not enough hours in the day to complete the job. In a 2001 poll conducted by the Public Agenda, 909 principals were surveyed about the priority that instructional leadership was given during the school day. Their response was that it must be added to an already overtaxed agenda (McEwan, 2003, p.10). According to McEwan (2003) in a similar study by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2001), 70 percent of the principals considered their biggest hurdle to be the lack of time in their profession. Responsibilities are continually added and yet there never seems to be job requirements that are taken away. They just become layered tiers of job components that must be accomplished. (McEwan, 2003, p.14). Principals must think about what matters most, what makes sense to prioritize, and always remember that the work in education is ongoing with constant changes and choices. While some areas are being focused on, the principal needs to work forward and begin preparing for the next of set of priorities to take the center of the educational stage (Burrello, Hoffman, & Murray, 2005).

In the long and short terms, competing demands challenge principals' abilities to work in manners consistent with their conceptions of how they should spend their time and energies. To address these challenges, many principals have decided to retain full responsibility for certain work while delegating part or full responsibilities in some areas. In a survey of 10,000 high school and middle school principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2001) sought to identify the types of work for which principals held themselves fully responsible. Of the items, principals rated highest, teacher evaluation (55.5%) and budgets (40.5%) as solely the principal's responsibilities. School safety (35.9%) and program evaluation (31.6%) were the leading activities for which principals held themselves responsible but were willing to delegate as long as they were

well informed. Curriculum development (49.3%), community relations (49.1%), student assessment (44.2%), and dealing with parent issues (43.8%) were four responsibilities that principals most often deemed worthy of sharing with others. Lesson demonstration (31.1%) and discipline (22.2%) were the areas where the principals felt the least amount of responsibility.

This survey information is significant because it highlights different notions among principals as to how they should be spending their time and for what they feel accountable. Different principals hold themselves responsible to varying degrees for different types of work. The work with which they engage is not always in line with what they feel is most important. Another survey of principals, by Public Agenda (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett & Foleno, 2001), finds that students with discipline problems (47%) and parents with complaints or special issues (45%) received more of the principals' time over the previous year than it warranted. Teacher quality and staff development (36%) and improving student achievement (27%) were the leading two items that principals noted as getting less of their attention. These figures are necessary to consider before looking closely at the daily work of principals. Thus the need to understand how priorities are set in order to effectively lead and manage a school.

Supovitz and Poglinco (2001) researched the many types of work principals do in their schools. To them, effective principal leadership focused on instructional improvement and consistency within and across each grade level and each classroom. Their study revealed the many strategies that effective principals utilize within the structure of distributive leadership. Principals rearranged their priorities so that more time was spent on instruction than on politics and management. Principals spent time in classrooms, looking at student work and asking students how the work reflected standards. Principals spent time observing teachers with the goal of helping them to improve, rather than

spending time evaluating them.

In a study of twelve Philadelphia, PA, principals of varying age and years of experience, Spiri (2001) found that principals described their work in similar ways yet they attached different value to it. Spiri compiled a list of job responsibilities that were representative of their work.

1. Meeting with parents
2. Student discipline
3. Meeting with the cluster office
4. Special meetings downtown
5. Meeting with teachers in groups
6. Visiting classrooms of new teachers
7. Management by walking around
8. Checking on materials not received
9. Checking on staff members
10. Meeting with people from outside agencies
11. Returning phone calls
12. Paperwork

(Spiri, 2001, p.15)

The participating educators in Spiri's (2001) study gave different values to these twelve activities based on the contexts in which they were being performed. For example, when Spiri asked the principals to select the activities that best represented "instructional leadership" a majority of them cited staff development, meeting with teachers in groups, management by walking around, checking on staff members, and paperwork. Two of the principals in this study suggested that any of the twelve items was a form of instructional leadership because they all helped facilitate instruction in some form or manner.

Being able to set and maintain job priorities require that school leadership meets the demands of the following: being critical, being transformative, being educative, and being ethical (Burrello, Hoffman, & Murray, 2005). In the area of the first leadership demand, being critical involves asking on-going questions and critiquing one's work. The questioning helps the school leader to work toward practices that result in improvements for all. The second demand focuses on being a transformative leader. This demand guides the leader to take a stand and exert changes on situations. The third demand looks at the leader being educative. This involves having a vision and being able to analyze and self reflect. The last demand is one of being ethical. Leadership carries the responsibility of working toward democratic values. Leadership is consensual and it is important that ideas are shared and improvements are made equitably. Burrello, Hoffman, and Murray (2005) support the use of the four demands when setting priorities.

Summary

This study will seek to understand what the elementary principal's job requires and how closely these job requirements coincide with the ISLLC Standards. School leaders have a difficult time prioritizing when everything seems equally important. Every principal operates with the same time constraints. It is often said that there are never enough hours in the day to complete the job. In a study by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (2001) it was found that 70% of the respondents believed that the biggest job hurdle was the lack of time (McEwan, 2003). Thus principals need to prioritize in order to get the job done. According to Richard (2000) when looking at

duties facing principals, one person can no longer be responsible for the multitude of duties facing the school principal. The demands of the job are complex and often times unpredictable (Donaldson & Marnick, 1995).

The ISLLC Standards lay the foundation for what is essential about the role of school leaders. The standards capture what research and practitioners have told the ISLLC representatives are critical components of effective leadership (Murphy, 2002). Joseph Murphy (2001) sets the stage for the need for the ISLLC Standards and the accompanying indicators as real world situations not just theory-based instruction in the preparation for school administrators. This research may be used for preparing the next generation of administrators, mentoring new administrators, evaluating administrators, and planning professional development for practicing administrators.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to explore, through the lens of the elementary principal, how the practical demands of the principalship are aligned with the ISLLC Standards. Understanding what the requirements, expectations and responsibilities of the elementary school principal and of the school leadership, specifically the instructional leader, was necessary in order to seek a connection or disconnection to the ISLLC Standards. Secondly, the study investigated the principalship job priorities as they related to instructional leadership and school management. Finally, the study examined the impact of school size on leadership.

The purpose of a study should dictate the methodology and design employed. The researcher implemented a qualitative design because the study's research questions coincided with qualitative inquiry. This study used the strengths of qualitative methodology, explaining events, attitudes, beliefs, and policies that shape the phenomenon of the work of elementary school leaders based on the perspectives of 25 elementary principals. Face-to-face interactions during interviews allowed for rich perspectives to be captured by the researcher. The study investigated the requirements, expectations, and responsibilities of the elementary school principal and how priorities for the job were established. Elementary principal experiences were described through the in-depth interviews and the document (one-day logs and school mission statements)

analysis. This approach allowed the researcher to understand the demands of the principalship from the perspective of the elementary principals who participated in the study. Patton (2002) states, "The purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining these points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories" (p.21). The researcher believed that the heart of this study was the points of view of the 25 participants, and their input proved to be the keys to answering the research questions of the study.

Another justification for a qualitative methodology was that qualitative methods allowed the researcher to access the "thick descriptions of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 1988, p. 27). According to Merriam, the thick and rich descriptions portray a thorough picture of the phenomenon, allowing the researcher to interpret the meanings with accuracy.

Research Design and Rationale

Patton (2002) states that qualitative inquiry best facilitates research that seeks to discover people's perceptions of their experiences and the meanings they make of these experiences. Qualitative research is based on real-world situations. It is often called naturalistic inquiry. The researcher does not manipulate the phenomenon or the setting. Guba (1978) identifies naturalistic inquiry as a "discovery oriented" approach that minimizes investigator manipulation of study setting or outcome. Maxwell (1996) believes that the instrument of the research is the researcher and relationships developed during the research are the means by which the research is completed. In this type of

research the researcher is the instrument. Thus the validity of the research is strongly connected to the “skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork” (Patton, 1980). In this study the researcher was also a practitioner and this knowledge base added to the strength of the analysis and inquiry. This study consisted of interviews and document collection. Patton (2002) shares that qualitative research is comprised of three methods. They are in-depth, open-ended interviews, direct observation, and written documents (Patton, 2002, p. 4). This study utilized both in-depth interviews and a review of written documents. The study focused on discovery rather than hypothesis testing. The value of this research was in the area of principalship development within the framework of the research questions and the ISLLC Standards.

Grounded theory was the guiding theoretical framework for the research. Questions were asked and comparisons were made (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The use of a set of semi-structured interview questions established the stage for inductive inquiry. "This means that the findings are grounded in specific contexts; theories that result from the findings will be grounded in real-world patterns" (Patton, 1990, p. 45). Patton (1990) states that how you study the phenomenon will determine what you learn. According to Maxwell (1996), the researchers Glaser and Strauss (1967) referred to grounded theory as a theory that developed inductively over the period of time during the research. “This theory is grounded in the actual data collected, in contrast to a theory that is developed conceptually and then simply tested against empirical data” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 33). “The purpose of grounded theory is, of course, to build theory that is faithful to and illuminates the area under study”(Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.53).

By using grounded theory the researcher was able to utilize the research questions as the framework for rich responses that helped create comparisons. Categories emerged and the theory was concealed in the data for the researcher to discover. Qualitative inquiry helped the researcher to use inductive strategies for generating the theory that emerged from the direct contact with the practicing elementary principals.

A purposeful sampling was utilized because the researcher deliberately chose the elementary principals whose schools fell into the size category of small, medium, and large. Participants were interviewed in their work environment which supported the premise of getting out into the field, talking with people, and seeking to understand what is seen and heard (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

This study looked at the complexity of the topic of leadership. The primary research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

1. How do elementary principals describe his/her leadership in their schools?
2. How do the requirements of the job of elementary school principal coincide with what he or she feels their leadership focus ought to be?
3. What is the role of instructional leadership in the elementary principals' description of their work?
4. How do elementary school principals set job priorities in order to successfully lead their school?
5. How does school size impact leadership?

The interview questions (see Appendix B) were designed to allow the researcher to study the leadership practices using one-on-one interviews and document analysis. In

addition, principals were purposely selected according to his/her school size of small, medium, and large. Fontana and Frey (1998) state, "interviewing is one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings" (p. 47). The interview questions probed areas explored in the literature review including leadership, job requirements, demands of the principalship, accountability, and changes to the principalship.

Setting

Settings for conducting qualitative research must meet certain specifications. According to Rossman & Rallis (1998) such a setting is where (a) one can gain entry; (b) a variety of potential participants exists; (c) the possibility of establishing strong relationships with participants can be realized; and (d) ethical and political issues are not overwhelming. The setting for this research was in 25 elementary school sites in three Virginia school districts. The researcher's experiences and contacts allowed for easier entry and access to participants. Relationships and a level of trust were established prior the interviews. This was done through the introductory emails and at the onset of each interview. The overall purpose of the research was conveyed at the beginning of each interview. In addition the researcher built rapport with the participants by conveying understanding without judgment.

The three school divisions in this study were located in central Virginia. The study included principals of small, medium, and large-sized schools. The definitions set in Chapter One of this study described a small school size as one the parameters of 0-450 students, a medium school size was defined as 451-750 students, and a large school

size was listed as 751 or more students. According to the research, a small school had a population of 300-400 (Schneider, 2002). The small school population parameter of 300-400 pupils was described in the research of Suzie Boss (2000). Other research cited a small school to be one that had a population of 200-500 (Howley, 2000). From this research, the size parameters were created for the small school (0-450). According to the 2007 Virginia Standards of Quality, a school qualified for a half-time assistant principal at 600 students and a full time assistant principal at 900 pupils. Using the average of 600 and 900 students, which was 750, the researcher created the medium school parameters of 451-750. The large school parameters then became 751-1200. The school size parameters included the size definition that qualified a school for a full time assistant principal. In addition, the maximum size equated to the largest student population of an elementary school in one of the three participating school districts. Thus, the size parameters created were based on current research, the Virginia Standards of Quality, and the maximum size of an elementary school in one participating locality (<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/>). Table 4 indicates that there were 15 schools in the small category, 59 schools in the medium category, and 22 schools in the large category.

Table 4

Public School District and Elementary School Size (Small, Medium, and Large)

Public School District	# of Small Schools (0 - 450 Students)	# of Medium Schools (451-750 Students)	# of Large Schools (751-1200 Students)
District A	1	19	18
District B	4	7	3
District C	10	33	1
Total	15	59	22

Source: Virginia Department of Education (<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/>) (2007)

The three public school systems were located in the central Virginia area. The student populations in the three localities ranged from nearly 25,000 to 58,000 pupils. The demographics of the public school systems included Caucasian, Black, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian student populations. The localities of the three public school districts varied in size from 674 miles to 437 miles of land. They can be described as suburban, rural, and urban areas. The school populations varied from a small size of 207 students to large schools of over 1,000 young people. Various elementary school sites also housed preschool student programs. Potential participants were identified and selected from schools serving students in grades kindergarten through grade five.

Each locality was unique and diverse. The school divisions utilized in this study were Public School District A, Public School District B, and Public School District C. The study included elementary principals from the three localities.

District A is comprised of nearly 58,000 students who attend 60 schools and of that total, 38 are elementary schools. The demographics of the public school system included Caucasian 64%, Black 26%, Hispanic 6%, Asian/Pacific Island 3%, and American Indian 1%. The locality covers approximately 437 miles and is largely bordered by two rivers. It can be described as a suburban area although the schools are located within settings that mirror urban and rural descriptors. The elementary school populations varied from a small size of 448 students to large schools of over 1,000 pupils.

District B is a suburban locality comprised of approximately 20,000 pupils. There were 14 elementary schools ranging in size from the small category of 292 students to a large category of over 1,000 students. The locality covers approximately 474 miles of land. The demographics of the school system included Caucasian 87%, Black 9%, Hispanic and Asian 1% each, and other groups equaling 2%.

District C can be described as a suburban system with 66 schools with 44 elementary schools and a total student population (Pre-K through 12th grade) of 48,000. The ethnic distribution was Caucasian 49.3%, Black 35.7%, Asian 5.2%, Hispanic 4%, and others comprising of 5%. The locality covers a total area of 674 miles. The diversity of this suburban school system is evident in the ethnic distribution of the student population. The schools ranged in size from the small category with 187 students to the large category of 785 students.

Sampling and Participants

A decision was made to include elementary personnel only in this study. Due to the size of secondary school's staff and students in comparison to those of elementary schools, it was determined that each school level (elementary, middle, and high) would have different issues and needs. For example, on the secondary level, several assistant principals and administrative assistants share in the leadership responsibilities. According to Merriam (1998), if a researcher "wants to discover, understand, and gain insight" a sample of participants must be gathered, "from which the most can be learned" (p. 61). Therefore, a purposeful selection of participants was interviewed in this study. A purposeful sampling was utilized because the researcher deliberately chose

the elementary principals whose schools fell into the category of small, medium, and large. The number of small, medium, and large sized schools used in the data collection were determined by the researcher based on the number of schools in each size category.

The researcher selected 25 principals (eight in the small size category, nine in the medium size category, and eight in the large size category) from the three school districts. The participants were selected based on his/her school size. In one school district the Manager for School Improvement contacted elementary principals and asked for volunteers to participate in this study. The researcher then contacted the principals. Others were identified through collegial connections with principals that the researcher knew as a practitioner in the field of elementary education. The total sample size was 25 elementary principals from schools that fell into the category of small, medium, and large student body population (Pre K through 5th grade). The three localities had a total of 96 elementary schools and from that total 25 principals were identified according to the school size of small, medium, and large (see Table 4). "Qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of people, nested in their context and studied in-depth-unlike quantitative researchers, who aim for larger numbers of context-stripped cases and seek statistical significance" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27).

The principals' age range included four in the 30-40 age group, eleven in the 41-50 age group, nine in the 51-60 age group, and one in the over 60 age group. Three of the principals had their doctorates in education and 22 had attained their master's degrees. In addition, three of the principals were currently enrolled in doctoral

programs. Four of the participants were completing their first year principalship in their current school assignment. Three of the first year principals had relocated from another locality (two from within the state of Virginia and one from another state), and one was promoted from within his/her current locality. The years of experience in education ranged from 9-34 years, and the number of years of administration experience ranged from 3-22 years. In the area of gender, 20 female and 5 male principals participated in the study (see Table 5). The researcher interviewed eight principals from small-sized schools (0-450 students), nine principals from medium-sized schools (451-750), and eight principals from large-sized schools (751-1200). Six principals from large-sized schools and one principal from a medium-sized school chose not to participate when permission was requested. The researcher continued to contact principals from each size category until the total number of participants was 25 (8 from small-sized schools, 9 from medium-sized schools and 8 from large-sized schools).

The 25 elementary principals who agreed to participate in the study had significant number of years of educational experience (see Table 5). Due to this factor the group of administrators would not be considered a typical group of elementary principals.

Table 5

Years of educational experience and small, medium, and large size school categories

Years of educational experience	Principal of small-sized school (0-450)	Principal of medium-sized school (451-750)	Principal of large-sized school (751-1200)
6-10	1		
11-15		2	2
16-20	2		3
21-25		2	
26-30	2	2	1
31 +	3	3	2
Total	8	9	8

Instrumentation

With the desire to generate rich, detailed accounts of the human experience, researchers turn to the personal experiences of the participants through qualitative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). "The purpose of qualitative interviewing is to capture how those being interviewed view their world, to learn about their terminology and judgments, and to capture the complexities of their individual perceptions and experiences" (Patton, 2002, p. 348). The "stories" told by the principals as primary participants provided rich contextual data. His/her individual and collective stories contributed to an understanding of the job principalship. In addition to articulating the experience of others, meaning was enhanced for these participants in the very act of telling his/her story. This research utilized interviews to create a picture of the job of a principalship in an elementary school setting where the chain of command may or may not include an assistant principal. It was the goal of the researcher to document the principals' characterization of their jobs and how priorities are created and/or selected.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the preferred instrument for qualitative research is human beings. For this research study, the researcher was the instrument for the data collection. The researcher collected the data relevant to purpose of the study, conducted the interviews, transcribed the recordings of all the interviews, and then analyzed the data collected from the transcripts and other documents.

The interview protocol included six questions. Numbers one through five contained categories of questions within a general topic. Question six requested any

additional information that the participant may want to share pertaining to the elementary principalship and the prioritizing of job responsibilities (see Appendix B).

The research also included document reviews. This was in the form of school mission statements. “The effective school leader works for continuous school improvement achieved through a cyclical, or recursive, process in which the school’s vision, mission, and strategic plans are developed, implemented, monitored, evaluated, and revised” (Hessel & Holloway, 2006, p. 21). Additionally, each principal was asked to fill in a one school day logs of activities, which represented a typical day or an atypical day in the life of the elementary principal. The one-day log of activities was a simple document that required the participants to log in his/her school activities based on one-hour increments of time during the day. The logs began at 6:30 a.m. and ended at 4:30 p.m. and beyond (See Appendix C). This document was another source of data for the researcher.

Data Collection

Upon university approval of the study, the researcher requested formal approval and permission to conduct the study of the school division superintendent or his/her designee. Approval for the study was obtained from the superintendent’s designee. Additionally, approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board for the Behavioral Sciences (IRB) before initiating a pilot study.

The purpose of the pilot study was to field test the proposed research questions, interview protocol, and methodology for the collection of data. This study took place prior to the data collection process with the 25 elementary principals. Pilot interviews

took approximately 45-60 minutes in length, and they were audio taped with written consent from the participants. The interviews were semi-structured to allow sufficient time for input from the principals. The pilot study consisted of one principal from a small school population with 9 years of educational experience, one principal from a medium school population with 32 years of educational experience, and one principal from a large school population with 17 years of educational experience. This study included two females and one male participant. Each pilot study member was asked to review the research questions, the interview questions, demographic information, and the one-day logs of activities. The researcher interviewed each pilot study member to ensure that all components of the study had been reviewed and discussed by practicing principals from a small, medium, and large-sized school. There were two changes that were recommended as a result of the pilot study. The first change was in the demographic section and the second change was in the one-day log document. The pilot study recommendations included the following:

- request the number of years of educational experience from each participant
- add a concluding section to the one-day log that allowed the principal to describe the day as a typical or atypical school day.

Upon identification of the participants, an introductory email was sent to each person. The email served several purposes: (a) to introduce the researcher, (b) to explain the purpose of the study; and (c) to request their participation. In addition, the participants were emailed the interview protocol along with a daily log template. The participants used the one-day log document to list his/her day's activities and job

completions for a period of one school day. This email contact served the purpose of providing the participant an opportunity to better understand the focus of the study and reflect on their leadership experiences. The researcher also emailed the principal participant one-day before the planned meeting as a courtesy reminder. Prior to the start of the interview, informed consent was obtained. This was signed/dated by the participant along with a witness signature/date by the researcher and a copy was provided to each participant.

The semi-structured protocol approach ensured that each participant was asked the same questions, which served to focus the interview and give consistency across the interviews. This approach was combined with a conversational strategy for probing questions that could illicit new emerging topics of interest. This combined technique supported an emergent design of inquiry. This type of inquiry research followed the basis of grounded theory research. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), the research can involve developing a theory. Thus the questions that the researcher had developed helped one to explore given phenomenon in depth. The interview questions were to be open and broad. In grounded theory this type of questioning helps the researcher to better investigate the phenomenon of how one manages and leads his or her school. As a practitioner in the field of education the researcher was able to utilize her personal and professional experience, as well as, the literature review. "Theoretical sensitivity" allowed the researcher to use the creative aspect of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 81). The researcher's varied educational background and years of experience helped to better understand the responses to the interview questions. Strauss and Corbin

(1990) recommended that the researcher should, "Periodically step back and ask what is going on here? Maintain an attitude of skepticism and follow the research procedures" (p. 45). Being able to separate oneself from the research can cut off the researcher from a vast area of insights and hypotheses. Maxwell (1996) suggested that the researcher can utilize a "researcher experience memo" and prior to beginning a study write down all of one's beliefs, assumptions, and expectations about the job of the elementary principal (p. 27). According to Maxwell (1996) this exercise can prove to be valuable throughout the study as the researcher tests for bias or positionality. The researcher maintained a personal experience journal throughout the research process. The researcher added personal thoughts to the journal after each interview and made it a habit to re-read the journal entries. Although one may have difficulty putting aside his/her bias, the journal did prove to be an effective method of acknowledging one's bias and helped the researcher to remain open to new ideas and beliefs.

The interviews were scheduled at a convenient time and location for the participants. Each interview, with the permission of the participant, was audio taped and immediately transcribed by the researcher for data analysis. The participant was sent a copy of the transcript so that he/she could read over it in order to ensure that the interview transcript accurately described the interview questions and answers.

The interview questions (see Appendix B) were designed so that each question would allow the researcher to look into the leadership practices of the building principals. The literature review served as a guide for the interview-questioning frame. The main areas investigated were as follows: questions about his/her leadership

influences, the demands of the principalship and expectations of the job requirements, the process used to set job priorities, the nature of their authority in their schools, the principal's beliefs about education, for what and to whom he/she was accountable, the influences of the ISLLC Standards on the work of the administrator, and the state of the principalship from his/her perspective. These windows of questioning allowed the researcher to acquire data to answer the primary research questions.

In Table 6, the interview questions were aligned to the four research questions as noted by the check mark in the appropriate column. The research questions created a road map for the interview protocol. In the first question, leadership was addressed in the following areas: the meaning of leadership, the leader's greatest strengths, challenges faced by the leader, and how the faculty responded to the leader. Each research question correlated to the leadership questions. Interview question two covered the area of job requirements by addressing the understanding of the ISLLC Standards/Professional responsibilities. Again, each question connected to this area. In interview question three, the demands of the principalship job were queried in the areas of instructional leadership and management responsibilities, time spent in each area of leadership, and how the job may or may not be what was expected when appointed to the position. This question also correlated with the research framework. Interview question four delved into the area of accountability—to what and to whom. The questions connected to four research questions. In question five the participant was asked about his/her job priorities. The question requested information about time spent in the area of instructional leadership and school management. The question's

components correlated to the research. Question six required information about the changes in the role and responsibilities of the principalship. In addition, the question guided the interviewee to think “outside the box” and discuss possible changes in the job of elementary principal. This question also correlated to the four basic research questions. Thus internal congruence between the research questions and the interview questions was verified.

Table 6

Correlation of research questions to the interview protocol

Interview Question Topics	<i>Research Question #1</i> How do elementary school principals describe his/her leadership in their schools?	<i>Research Question #2</i> How do the requirements of the job of elementary school principal coincide with what he/she feels their leadership focus ought to be?	<i>Research Question #3</i> What is the role of instructional leadership in the elementary school principal's description of their work?	<i>Research Question #4</i> How do elementary school principals set job priorities in order to successfully lead their school?	<i>Research Question #5</i> How does school size impact leadership?
1. Leadership Questions (beliefs, strengths, & challenges)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Job Requirement Questions (ISLLC Standards)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. The Demands of the Principalship Questions (Instructional leadership, management, & job priorities)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4. Accountability Questions (what & whom)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5. Changes to the Principalship Questions (possible changes)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Data Analysis Procedures

Qualitative data analysis is defined by Patton (2002) as "reducing the volume of raw information, sifting trivia from significance, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal" (p. 432). The process of data analysis was not only time intensive, but lengthy. The researcher transcribed each interview, studied the documents, and read all notes taken during the interview. The transcription process equated to over 160 pages of interview responses. During the data analysis the information was coded and arranged so that the data qualified the questions. The researcher used descriptive, interpretive, and pattern coding to help pull together the vast amount of information into meaningful units (Miles & Huberman, 1998). A display format was designed in order to organize the accumulation of large amounts of collected data of this qualitative research study. Organizing and managing the materials in every stage of the process was of great importance to the research. Creating a chart of data entries assisted the researcher in data analysis. "Formats must always be driven by the research questions involved and your developing concepts, often in the form of codes" (Miles & Huberman, 1998, p. 93). Maxwell (2005) recommends that data analysis should be done systematically.

During and after the interview, in addition to the audio taped recording of the process, the researcher kept notes of his/her thoughts, memories, impressions, hesitations, body language, or other occurrences that were thought to warrant attention. After the interview ended and the tape recorder was stopped, two participants continued

to add some after thoughts. The researcher asked for permission to add the additional thoughts to the participant's transcript. Permission was granted in both cases. The field notes were transcribed after each interview. Transcription was completed within twenty-four to forty-eight hours after the interview was conducted.

Immediately after each interview was completed, the researcher began to analyze the data. The interview questions were categorized into broad topic areas or key concepts and line-by-line transcript analysis was completed. Coded data segments were located in the transcripts and the data was extracted and condensed. Representative quotes were selected and the researcher made judgments on the data based on the number of similar responses that generated patterns, comparisons, and a "logical chain of evidence" (Miles & Huberman, 1998, p. 100). The content analysis involved a hands-on approach, reading and re-reading the raw data, as well as making contrasts, comparisons, and counting similar responses. Each general area was analyzed in order to categorize into themes. Direct quotations and descriptions were included. This helped "...the reader to enter into the situation and thoughts of the people represented in the report" (Patton, 2002, p. 430). A data index was created with the coding system and the researcher utilized this as the first step of content analysis. The researcher also coded the transcripts by categorizing the responses by years of experience and school size (see Table 5). This gave organization to the responses so that the researcher could better view the "big picture" of the purposeful participant sampling. The resulting theory was an explanation of categories, their properties, and the relationships among

them. The research results will lead to a practitioner's body of knowledge that is grounded in data.

Credibility, Dependability, and Bias

Patton (2002) states that validity and reliability are two factors which qualitative researchers should be concerned about when designing a study, analyzing results and judging the quality of the research study. "Validity has long been a key issue in debates over the legitimacy of qualitative research; if qualitative studies cannot consistently produce valid results, then policies, programs, or predictions based on these studies cannot be relied on" (Maxwell 2002, p. 37). Patton (2002) notes that credibility of the research is related to the depth of the data collected. Information from a one-day log of activities completed by the interviewees and the school's mission statements were used to triangulate or crosscheck the interview data analysis for validity (credibility). The credibility of qualitative research depends on the ability and effort of the researcher (Patton, 2002). The researcher was also a practitioner in the field of elementary education with 33 years experience. In addition, the researcher transcribed each interview within twenty-four to forty-eight hours.

There were several threats to credibility of the study findings: researcher bias or positionality and reactivity. Maxwell (2005) stated that the researcher bias couldn't be eliminated. It is important to understand how the bias influences "the conduct and conclusions of the study (which may be either positive or negative) and avoiding the negative consequences" (p. 108). Reactivity involved the researcher having influence

over the participant. One needs to understand the effect he/she had on the informant. The researcher understood “how you are influencing what the informant says and how this affects the validity of the inferences you can draw from the interview” (p. 109). The researcher was also a practicing elementary principal. Thus the participants may not have been entirely candid in their responses.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) use "dependability" in qualitative research, which closely corresponds to reliability in quantitative research (p. 300). A pilot study was conducted and the pilot interviews took approximately 45-60 minutes in length, and they were audio taped with written consent from the participants. The interviews were semi-structured to allow sufficient time for input from the principals. The pilot study consisted of one principal from a small school population, one principal from a medium school population, and one principal from a large school population. Each pilot study member was asked to review the research questions, interview questions, demographic information, and the one-day logs of activities. The researcher interviewed each pilot study member to ensure that all components of the study have been reviewed and discussed by practicing principals from a small, medium, and large-sized school. The information from this pilot study was used to determine if any changes needed to be made in the research questions, interview questions, and documents used for review.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

Once each source of information (interviews and document analyses) was studied, the researcher looked collectively at all materials. The interview transcripts were analyzed and sorted into meaningful units that captured the rich participants' reflections. Data from the mission statements and one-day logs of activities were congruent with the transcripts' analysis. The document analysis included a summary of patterns derived from the one-day logs of activities. The analysis of the school mission statements consisted of reading each statement and identifying common key words and phrases. The researcher read through the transcribed interviews, made margin notes, and then formed initial codes. Representative quotes were selected and the researcher made judgments on the data based on the number of similar responses that generated patterns, comparisons, and a "logical chain of evidence" (Miles & Huberman, 1998, p. 100).

Research Questions

The primary research questions addressed in this study were as follows:

1. How do elementary principals describe their leadership in his/her schools?
2. How do the requirements of the job of elementary school principal coincide with what he or she feels his/her leadership focus ought to be?

3. What is the role of instructional leadership in the elementary principals' description of their work?
4. How do elementary school principals set job priorities in order to successfully lead their schools?
5. How does school size impact leadership?

Brief overview of data analysis

The findings emerged from a data analysis of the interview transcripts, the principals' one-day logs of activities, and the schools' mission statements. "Content analysis is qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative materials and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (Patton, 2002, p. 453). With this in mind, the researcher used each broad interview question to identify six categories in order to best analyze the volume of raw data. "Analysis of qualitative data rests very centrally on displays that compress and order data to permit drawing coherent conclusions, while guarding against the overload and potential for bias that appears when we try to analyze extended unreduced text" (Miles & Huberman, 1998, p. 141). The display format was organized into the five broad categories that emerged as themes.

- School leadership
- ISLLC Standards
- Demands of the instructional leader versus the managerial leader
- Accountability
- Changes to the principalship

Inductive analysis was used in order to uncover patterns, themes, and categories from the data. Patton (1990) discusses how the researcher must "flesh out" the patterns and categories (p.404). The first step was to address cases involved, and to examine the responses to each question in the interview. Next, the data was open coded, case by case, and line by line. Categories were generated and themes were identified. The third step was to interconnect the responses and categories to find categories and sub-categories, and explanations to responses-which was a form of axial coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Through this process of open and axial coding, general themes first started to emerge among answers to each question.

In order to effectively analyze the volume of data, the researcher identified the principals in groups that matched their respective years of experience in education and the school size (see Table 5). "Reducing the volume of raw information, sifting trivia from significance, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal" is the lengthy process that the researcher set out to accomplish (Patton, 2002, p. 432). The interviews with each participant told a story about the job of the elementary school principal. Interview quotes added rich data to the research project. Daniel Pink (2005) quotes Don Norman as he relayed how stories improve and fine-tune understanding.

Stories have the felicitous capacity of capturing exactly those elements that formal decision methods leave out. Logic tries to generalize, to strip the decision making from specific context, capture the emotions...Stories are important

cognitive events, for they encapsulate, into one compact package, information, knowledge, context, and emotion. (p.103)

The researcher is also an "insider" as described by Bahira Sherif (2001). The "insider" perspective adds another layer of authenticity to the research. "By being forced to balance an insider/outsider perspective on a daily basis, I ultimately became more sensitive to my informants' voices and experiences" (Sherif, 2001, p. 446). As a practicing elementary principal, the researcher was able to quickly develop a rapport with the participants. In addition, the interviews developed into an open dialogue format and one principal even gave the researcher her business card in hopes that this professional dialogue and networking could continue.

Study Findings

The extensive analysis of the collected data guided the researcher in the art of interpretation. By using an inductive analytical approach the five broad categories emerged as themes (See Figure 4.1).

- School leadership
- ISLLC Standards
- Demands of the instructional leader and the managerial leader
- Accountability
- Changes to the principalship

"Because each qualitative study is unique, the analytical approach used will be unique... because qualitative inquiry depends, at every stage, on the skills, training, insights, and capabilities of the researcher" (Patton, 1990, p. 372).

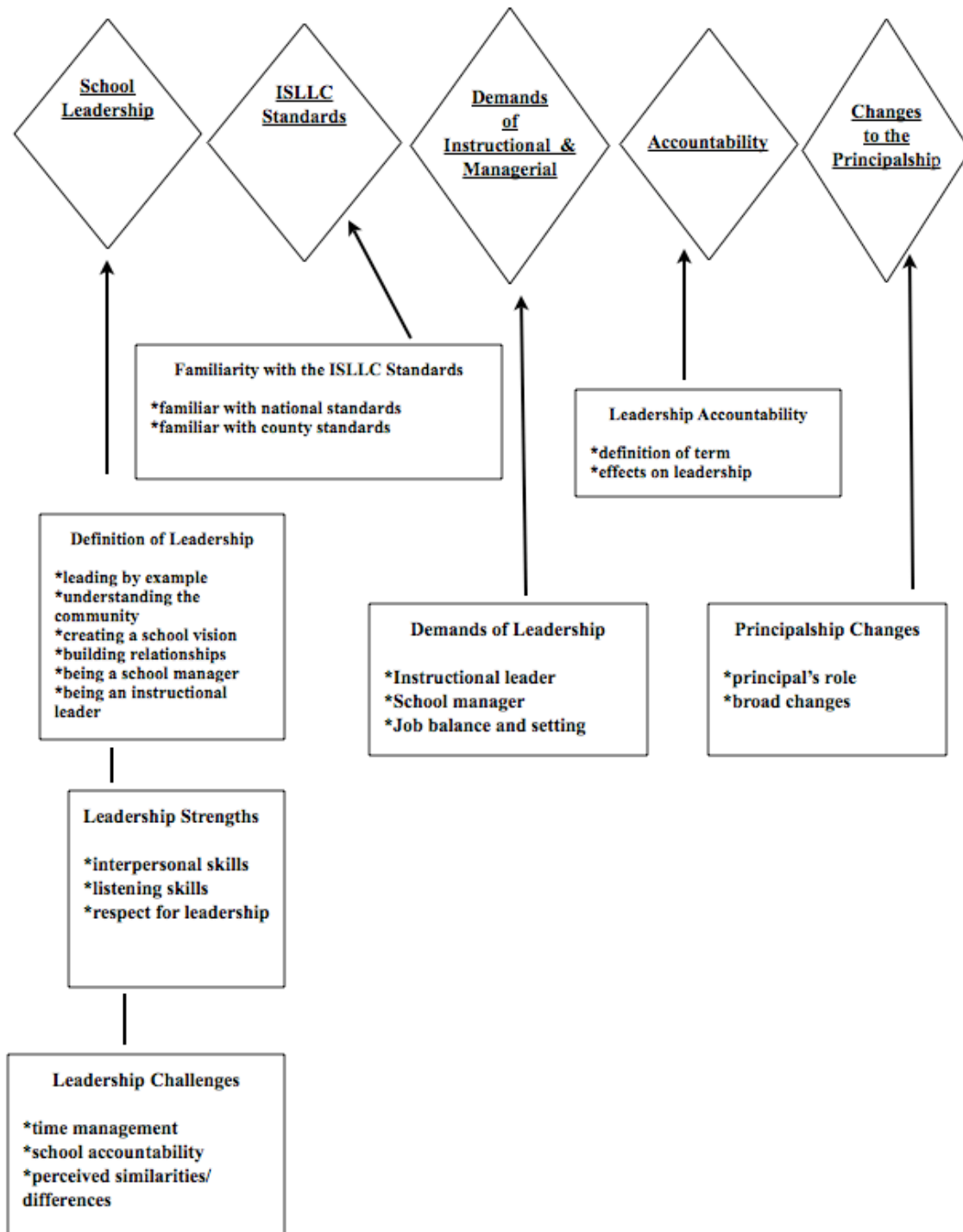


Figure 4.1 Data Analysis of Research Findings

School Leadership

The first broad category that emerged as a theme was "school leadership". The pattern codes are even more explanatory. They include definition of leadership, leadership strengths, leadership challenges, and faculty responses to school leadership. The following interview questions captured many facets of leadership as described by the elementary principals. The interview questions in this category were as follows: "What does leadership mean to you?; What does it mean for you to lead your school?; What are your greatest strengths as a leader?; What are the challenges that you face as a school leader?; and Do you think that your faculty responds to you the way they do because you are the principal or do they respond to you because of how you lead?" To further assist with the content analysis the researcher classified the first two questions as definition of leadership.

Definition of Leadership

Research supports the importance of effective school leadership. Leadership matters in terms of educational outcomes and school success (Lashway, 2002). The overall findings in the area noted as "definition of leadership" emerged from the following descriptive codes that include: *leading by example, understanding the community, creating a school vision, building relationships, and being a school manager and instructional leader*. Approximately two-fifths of the interviewees shared that they *lead by example*. "I'd say that leadership means the ability to lead by example,

work cooperatively with whatever group you are working with" (small school, 34 years experience). "Leadership to me is setting the course for the school, leading by example, modeling what you want" (large school, 13 years experience). One-third of the principals shared that leadership means *understanding the community*.

I think it took understanding the community, the diversity of the community, the changes of the community, and to understand where the community was, where it is, and where it wants to go. I think once you understand those things, then you need to understand what are your resources to achieve the common goals for the community. (small school, 17 years experience)

According to the National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001), school leaders must actively collaborate with the community in order to create school and student success (McEwan, 2003). The importance of community collaboration is stated in ISLLC Standard (4): "collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources" (ISLLC, 1996, p. 6).

To lead the school means that you are very aware of all of the variables that impact your building--your community, the social economic status, you are aware of the special needs, the ESL population, all of those components that really make your building unique. You can set goals and strategies that will help your school and team accomplish those tasks in a timely and efficient manner. (medium school, 11 years experience)

Creating a school vision was discussed by one-fifth of the principals. Facilitating a school vision is one of the six themes of the ISLLC Standards. This best practice set by the national standards is exemplified in the statement by a principal with 14 years experience in a large-sized school. "You have to have a strong vision so that everything is aligned and all of your actions are aligned with that vision." One-third of the participants discussed the importance of *building relationships*. Leithwood & Duke (1999) state that leadership is intentional influence over others. The researchers also acknowledge that it is often difficult to develop an accepted definition of leadership because of the various forms of relationships that school leaders must have.

Parents feel that you respect them therefore you are able to build relationships, meaningful relationships, immediately with people which allows you to get a lot done...when you have to make a tough decision...they feel as though you are doing what is best for the situation, what is best for the child. (small school, 17 years experience)

"Leadership means having relationships established with all the public so that people trust and respect what you do. It just means getting everyone on the same page" (medium school, 27 years experience). A principal of a large-sized school with 35 years experience found that she had to be very patient during the process of relationship building. It did not happen as quickly as she had expected. "On a personal level, leadership is about getting to know people, building relationships with people. So when you talk to them it is not just as a principal to a colleague, it is to someone you know and building trust is important" (large school, 13 years experience). Interestingly, two of

the 25 principals described leadership as being a dual job of *a school manager and an instructional leader*.

Leadership incorporates so many different hats and we are very familiar with the managerial component and how time consuming just maintaining the building can be and the massive amounts of paperwork associated with being a leader.

But the role that I really value is the instructional leadership component and it is a real balance that you have to strive for. (medium school, 11 years experience)

According to Robbins and Alvy (2003), the principal must manage challenges in the classroom and school site. "...To provide both the instructional support, but really any type of support so that teachers can do what they need to do academically. And sometimes that means instructional work, sometimes it means mopping the floors, sometimes it means picking up trash" (large school, 18 years experience).

Leadership Strengths

While approximately one-sixth of the principals cited instructional leadership as their professional strength, a majority of the interviewees identified their forte to be in the areas of *interpersonal and listening skills*. Approximately half of the interviewees described their strengths as being a people person (*interpersonal skills*). "My greatest strengths as a leader are being a people person and I get to know students well, I get to know teachers well, and I work so closely with families" (medium school, 15 years experience). "I do feel that I have the ability to help people come together and see strengths in maybe each of them that are still untapped" (large school, 29 years experience). Being able to listen well (*listening skills*) is a strength that one fifth of the

participants shared was their area of leadership expertise. "I am an excellent listener and I am able to get down to the brass tacks and determine if this is where we are and this is what we need to do. I then can create a plan for success" (medium school, 31 years experience). In conclusion, it is also important to note that principals shared the following descriptors of their perceived areas of strength: communicator (3), positive person (2), patient person (2), data analyzer (3), organized leader (3), reflective leader (2), team player (3), motivator (2), empathic person (1), visionary (3), and leader from the heart (2). Interestingly, research supported the importance of school leaders being good communicators. Research by McEwan (2003) found that effective principals communicated one hundred percent of the time by listening, speaking, writing, and reading. Three principals described his/her strength in the area of communication. The researcher noted that one-fifth stated that "listening" was his/her leadership strength and that can be described as a form of communication. "I am a very strong communicator, as well as, a good listener" (medium school, 27 years experience).

Leadership Challenges

The codes that emerged from the content analysis in the area of leadership challenges were *time management*, *school accountability (state and federal mandates)*, *perceived job similarities and differences*. The challenges that school leaders face today require prioritizing both time and effort (Rice, 1989). Approximately two-fifths of the administrators described their leadership challenge as being the lack of time to get the job done (*time management*). According to a 2001 study conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, it was found that 70% of the participants

believed that the biggest job challenge was the lack of time (McEwan, 2003). "I have to get up at four o'clock in the morning to work and I stay up late at night to work...I even get up in the middle of the night to work to stay on top of all the tasks" (small school, 18 years experience). "Time management is a big challenge, trying to get the job done, sometimes there are simply not enough hours in the day" (small school, 34 years experience).

Time is number one and even though I have a small school and that makes me feel guilty because...I feel overwhelmed so often with not enough time to give the attention to do what I need to do. (small school, 28 years experience)

A school leader of a medium-sized school with 27 years experience believed that people outside the realm of education did not have realistic expectations in terms of deadlines and therefore it was so important to learn to prioritize. Interestingly, a principal of a medium-sized school with 23 years experience shared that her time management issues impede her ability to balance her home and her job...."if I get my act together at home then school is going down the drain."

With the attention being focused on *school accountability (state and federal mandates)* approximately one-half of the participants discussed the challenges connected to the Virginia Standards of Learning pass rates. The Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools are the state's expectations for student learning and academic success in grades K-12 in the following subjects: English, mathematics, science, history/social science, technology, the fine arts, foreign language, health and physical education, and driver education. Each subject has a minimum pass rate that

students must achieve (www.doe.virginia.gov). Additionally, the participants discussed the challenges associated with the federal guidelines for Adequate Yearly Progress status (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). "I think the biggest challenge right now is not allowing test scores to determine whether you are a good teacher, whether or not you have good kids or whether or not you have a good school" (small school, 17 years experience).

Another challenge is working with the No Child Left Behind standards and the Adequate Yearly Progress. Yes, we have done historically well...however looking at our special education population with having to test all students, having zone-based programs...it is very difficult having all of those students take all of the SOLs. (medium school, 15 years experience)

The participants were all asked in what ways the job of principalship was similar and different to what they expected before their appointment to the position. Roughly half of the interviewees responded that their previous position prepared them for the job. The preparation experiences consisted of being an assistant principal or a resource teacher (administrative assistant position in one locality). Thus the prior experience consisted of being mentored by a practicing school principal. One-third of the principals interviewed shared that they thought it would be a challenging position. A principal of a large-sized school with 33 years of experience used the metaphor of a being a dance partner. This educator found that the experience of being the assistant principal taught her how to be an administrative partner and use her skills or educational fortes "...to play that dance act so well." Moving from the assistant principal to the school principal

changed the dance partnership for her. "Then when you become the leader of that dance....you are the one to define how the partnership will move." Approximately one-third of the administrators discussed the "leap" from assistant principal to principal and shared that it was greater than they expected.

I was told by the superintendent of schools and the director of human resources that the difference between being the assistant principal and being the principal is a far greater leap than people think...you don't know the full weight on your shoulders until you are really behind the desk no matter what you did as an assistant principal. And they were exactly right...I didn't see that difference before I got here and now that I am here I feel the weight on my shoulders.

(small school, 9 years experience)

The content analysis in the area of job differences found a number of categories that principals described as a "job surprise".

- Working with many diverse groups (4 out of 25 participants)
- Lack of reflection time with other principals (3 out of 25 participants)
- Lack of teacher and parental support (3 out of 25 participants)
- Loneliness of the position (3 out of 25 participants)
- Working with a school budget (3 out of 25 participants)
- Interpretation and analysis of test data (2 out of 25 participants)
- Level of delegation needed (2 out of 25 participants)
- Managerial tasks to be completed (2 out of 25 participants)
- Richer experience than I expected (2 out of 25 participants)

Interestingly, two principals shared that the job was more fun and a richer experience than they had expected.

...it is such a complex position and there is so much to learn. Nothing gives me more satisfaction than constant learning. I think I could stay in this job for another 5-10 years and still be learning. I had no idea about how positive the kids would react to me as principal. I should have known this but didn't fully appreciate it. It has some wonderful surprises. (large school, 35 years experience)

One of the two participants also added that even though the job was rewarding, "...I thought that I would have more time ...in the classroom" (medium school, 31 years experience). It is noteworthy that one participant of a small school with 28 years experience shared how unprepared she was for the job, "...it really has been overwhelming...I thought I was pretty prepared...but not as well as I thought".

The researcher made notes in the transcripts of the emotional response from those participants who shared that they often feel loneliness. Moving into the position of school principal created a feeling of isolation or loneliness for three of the 25 participants. According to Robbin & Alvy (2003), elementary principals find themselves lonelier due to the fact that many elementary schools have only one administrator. Thus the lone administrator has no one around to relate to or to discuss the issues that he/she faces each day.

The difference is just the feeling of loneliness. Before I got this job I was in positions where I was the bridge between the teachers and the administration. So

I had teachers that I felt close to as colleagues...but as principal there just isn't anyone else that I can talk to... you just have to be careful what you say. I don't develop strong friendships with the staff because it makes it difficult if something happens and you have to put on that supervisor role. (medium school, 23 years experience)

The researcher noted the importance of collegiality for principals. One principal of a large-sized school with 18 years experience shared that having meetings in large groups was not as effective as small groups of six. "Wonderful things start to happen because we are able to talk, dialogue, and share." Another principal of a small-sized school with 18 years experience thought that more networking was needed. "You are a single person in the building and you are not sure if you are doing it right or wrong."

Faculty Responses to School Leadership

The question asked related to this pattern coded area was "Do you think your faculty responds to you the way they do because you are the principal (out of respect for authority) or do they respond to you because of how you lead (out of respect for your leadership)?" . Burke & Krey (2005) relay the importance of developing a trusting relationship with teachers and staff. The content analysis determined that three-fifths of the principals thought that their faculty respected their leadership. "I would like to believe that most of them see me as a friend and someone that they can trust and someone that they know is deserving of this position. I don't believe people in today's world follow people just foolishly" (large school, 33 years experience).

I think being a new leader right now, it is twofold. I am going to read a quote to you. At my last faculty meeting I gave everyone the name of a staff member and they had to write one positive characteristic about that person. Then we shared some and this is what someone wrote about me, 'Your energy and enthusiasm have been the medicine to save a critically ill patient.' Of course, I would assume that is a metaphor for my school. 'You always find time to hear us when we need you, both faculty and students.' So that is a real positive statement. (small school, 17 years experience)

Four first year principals discussed the fact that the faculties did not know them and they hoped that they (the faculty) would grow into responding to them based on their leadership.

They don't know me and I don't know them. I haven't had that growth yet for them to actually see my leadership. I am trying to manage. But in the end I will definitely be a true leader. (medium school, 27 years experience)

The principals reported that they worked to cultivate an environment where shared decisions were made and they strived to respect each teacher's opinion.

I have to say out of respect for my leadership. I have been here 6 years and they have learned to trust me. They have learned that I will take care of business. Easy or hard, I will confront a situation...I have developed a rapport with them that I am going to ask them what is going on first then together we will make decisions. (medium school, 15 years experience)

One interviewee of a medium-sized school with 11 years experience responded that her young faculty appreciates her focus on their personal family needs. She always lets her staff know that "family is first." It should be noted that a majority of the principals were over 40 years of age and this may have been the reason why only one principal discussed the focus on personal family needs. Interestingly, two principals shared that they could quantify this answer because each had created faculty surveys in order to help them improve their leadership skills and their connections with their faculty and staff members.

...I know this because I have done some surveys with the staff at the end of school regarding what I am doing that works, what do I need to change, what do we need to look at as a group and their response to those surveys...say that they respect me due to my leadership. (small school, 28 years experience)

Familiarity with the ISLLC Standards

This interview question category was about the ISLLC Standards. Each participant was asked the question, "Are you familiar with the ISLLC Standards for principals?" The pattern codes were the responses of "yes" or "no" to familiarity with the ISLLC Standards. If the principal responded with a "yes" then they were asked if they believed that they fulfilled these set job responsibilities. If the principal responded with a "no" then they were asked what standards they used as professional guidelines. Interestingly, four of the participants had downloaded a copy of the standards in order to respond to the question.

I'll be honest that I remembered there are six of them and I remembered some of them. I went back and looked them up. When I was in my master's program we discussed them. So when I looked back over the list I would say that probably not even realizing it I would say yes, I do use the ISLLC Standards. I think that I feel that I do use them and they are so delineated and they are all encompassing. (small school, 28 years experience)

Almost four-fifths of the participants responded that they were familiar with the ISLLC Standards.

Absolutely, I just know that as a leader there are requirements. I feel strongly about the community involvement piece. As the instructional leader of the school I have to monitor the data and make sure that we meet the criteria and the objectives and the pacing and all of that falls under the umbrella. Just promoting the school climate, making sure that the children are safe and that their needs are met. I do think that I am fulfilling the responsibilities. (medium school, 27 years experience)

Of those respondents one-eighth replied that they were not extremely familiar with them. One principal shared that he had heard of them, but had never seen them. "Mostly standards that I base my work on are what I have seen in effective situations...I don't get bogged down reading the policy manual" (small school, 32 years experience). A principal of a large-sized school with 20 years experience shared that her county's superintendent set the job expectations for her and she did not have any written set of guidelines other than putting students first. Another principal of a medium-sized school

with 31 years of experience explained that the job posting set the guidelines for the job responsibilities as well as the county's evaluation system. When asked if they thought that they fulfilled the set job responsibilities as stated in the ISLLC Standards almost half shared that they do fulfill the standards.

There are whole realms of things that go with it. There is management, it's operations, it's philosophy, it's leading, it's looking at data, it's looking at assessments, it's dealing with community relations. I fulfill them, but at times I question certain parts whether I am doing it as well as I could do. (small school, 28 years experience)

It is noteworthy that two-fifths shared that they were more familiar with their county standards and utilize them as guidelines for their job responsibilities. "My county has more defined standards specific to the way we do things in this county" (large school, 18 years experience). With a majority of the participants having 26 years or more of experience it is most likely that they entered school administration before the ISLLC Standards were adopted by their state. Thus the county guidelines would be what the school principals were most familiar with in the area of professional guidelines and requirements. Approximately one-fourth of those principals who answered "yes" to being familiar with the standards responded that they didn't perceive that they encompassed all of their job responsibilities.

I do think the ISLLC Standards are an incomplete picture of what a principal needs to be. I think they are very lacking in not only details but I think they miss whole components of the job and if a person could do the things that are

contained in the standards they would perhaps be maybe the minimal requirements for being the assistant principal or principal. (large school, 29 years experience)

Approximately one-third of the educators shared that they were not familiar with the ISLLC Standards. With the "no" response the participants were asked what standards they used as their professional responsibilities' guidelines. "Our county guidelines...just the expectations from the county and understanding what is attached to the job. Sometimes you have to find out by just getting in and doing the work" (small school, 32 years experience). Based on the interview answers it seemed as if the ISLLC Standards were not a strong influence on the elementary principalship.

Demands of Instructional and Managerial Leadership

Several interview questions addressed the demands of the principalship. Participants were asked, "How do you balance instructional leadership and school management responsibilities?; Do you spend more time as a school manager or as an instructional leader?" The overall findings in the area noted as "demands of leadership" emerged from the following descriptive codes.

- Instructional leader
- School manager
- Job balance & setting priorities

Instructional Leader

Today's administrator must major in instructional leadership. According to McEwan (2003) school leaders must be knowledgeable about learning theory, as well

as, effective instruction and current curriculum alignment. Approximately half of the administrators responded that they would like to be more of an instructional leader in their school. "I would like to be more of an instructional leader rather than feel like I am juggling 18 balls at once, which is how I feel that I am doing with management issues" (small school, 9 years experience). The participants in this study shared that daily interruptions impede their desire to be instructional leaders. "... But I am having a hard time due to the discipline issues" (small school, 18 years experience). "And when you look at my one-day log I do feel that the managerial piece has interfered with instructional leadership. I don't get into the classrooms like I should" (medium school, 31 years experience).

When I look at my background of instructional knowledge is what I bring to the table it is far more about management and that is very distressing. Because that is what we know and what we love and I wanted to become a principal because I could be an advocate for teachers, an advocate for children, and that has been somewhat disappointing. (large school, 33 years experience)

The researcher found it important that only two of the 25 participants explained that that they spent more time as an instructional leader than as a school manager. "Believe it or not, the instructional leader piece comes over the edge a little bit higher than the management piece because I try to get in the classrooms everyday" (medium school, 24 years experience). In addition, two different principals out of the 25 participants shared that there was a connection between being both an instructional leader and a school manager.

I see all management responsibilities as relating to instruction....it is important for facilities to be the way they need to because of instruction. It is important for the cafeteria to operate on a schedule the way it needs to because of instruction. So I don't see those things in opposition to each other. I see those management pieces as supports for instruction. (large school, 29 years experience)

Interestingly, three-fifths of the participants explained how they delegate instructional and managerial responsibilities. To address school challenges, many principals have decided to retain full responsibility for certain work while delegating part or full responsibilities in some areas. The practice of shared leadership and delegation included delegating to teachers who were interested in entering the leadership track and sharing the responsibilities with the school's administration team. This team could be made up of a lead teacher sometimes referenced as a resource teacher in one locality and it could be comprised of one or more assistant principals, school secretaries, special education coordinator, team leaders, and aspiring leaders. "You really don't have many people to share the load. You have a resource teacher. You are pretty much in charge. You can delegate some to your different folks, but you still have to oversee it" (small school, 32 years experience).

I would say that it is a 50/50 split because of the fact that I have such an efficient, productive assistant principal. We really have a clear demarcation of what responsibilities we each are in charge of and we both are very sound instructional leaders. (medium school, 27 years experience)

Principals shared the importance of working as a team. Delegating jobs builds ownership in the school, both in practices and policies (Robbins & Alvy, 2003). They also shared that they wanted to know what was going on even when they delegated duties. A principal of a large-sized school with 13 years experience explained that he worked closely with his leadership team, but the addition of a second assistant principal has "...made a world of difference. Last year I spent most of the year putting out fires all day."

School Manager

Being an effective principal is connected with being an effective manager (Robbins & Alvy, 2003). ISLLC Standard (3) described the necessity of being a school manager, "ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment" (ISLLC, 1996, p.6). Yet, the responses from the principals communicated frustrations with the time spent as a school manager. Three-fifths of the elementary principals discussed the issues of spending more time as a school manager. One principal with 31 years of educational experience shared that this area was the reason for her impending retirement, "The managerial piece has just grown and grown and grown...I don't get into the classrooms. I hate it and those are the days that I am very unhappy at the end of the day. And there you have why I am retiring" (medium school, 31 years of experience).

Unfortunately, I am more of a school manager...we have had four break-ins and two sets of graffiti this year. That is not an every year occurrence. There is always something different taking its place. Getting ready for painting...I had

non-stop contractors wanting me to drop everything and walk through my building. It is all of those pieces that get in the way of me spending time in the classroom. (small school, 28 years experience)

The frustrations of being a school manager became very evident as the interview transcripts were analyzed. The words "challenging", "frustrating", and "management minutia" described how tough it was to balance both instructional leadership and school management. The researcher noted that the above descriptive words were noted in 16 responses to the questions pertaining to the demands of school management.

I think that management things take precedence over instruction because management things have to get done. If your roof is leaking the class can't function, if there is water dripping on the kids. You have got to do the paperwork or get on the phone and take care of it. The management, the day-to-day things many times take precedence over top of instruction because instructional leadership is more flexible. And the shame of it is that's part of my job that gets cheated. (small school, 32 years experience)

It was noteworthy that only one participant acknowledged the ability to effectively meet the demands of both instructional leadership and school management. "Over the years I've gotten better at looking at my time, dividing my time, setting aside time for doing a walk around the building, for doing observations..." (large school, 35 years experience).

The researcher noted that this response might be connected to the experience level of the "seasoned administrator".

Job Balance & Setting Priorities

Being able to balance both instructional leadership and school management can be challenging. The question asked to each participant was "How do you balance instructional leadership and school management responsibilities?" Approximately one-third of the principals stated that they do not balance the job very well and they spend many hours outside of the school day trying to balance their workload. "What makes it hard ...trying to balance home and the job. ...I never feel like I am good at my job and good at my job at home being a wife and a mother" (medium school, 23 years experience). The demands of the job are complex and often times unpredictable (Donaldson & Marnick, 1995). Overall, the principals shared that balancing these dual responsibilities equates to long hours and working at home in order to be available to the children, parents, and teachers.

Often times it is difficult to prioritize in schools when everything seems equally important (Burrello, Hoffman, & Murray, 2005). In the area of job prioritizing approximately half of the principals stated that they create lists. The lists are created on paper and digital calendars. One administrator uses a color-coded folder system and another has found that 3 by 5 index cards help her to organize and prioritize her day. Another principal created a daily time log to use on her clipboard. Utilizing a color-coded folder system assisted another educator with prioritizing the daily/weekly to-do list. Yet, even with a system of prioritizing this same group of principals shared that lists change due to the nature of the position.

I make a list every night for what's going to happen the next day. But as I have found I can just open this window and throw that list out...because life happens,

children happen, and so do teachers. So I have to prioritize on the run...because everything in a school changes on a dime. (small school, 9 years experience)

In order to better understand the need to prioritize the following areas were cited as taking precedence:

- parents (in person and/or on the phone)
- emails
- student discipline
- crisis situations
- observing teachers
- interacting/connecting with students
- team meetings
- classroom walk-throughs
- central office requirements

The number one priority in this list according to half of the principals was responding to parents who "show up" at school with no prior notice. Keeping good lines of communication open with parents was an important leadership factor.

...or you get demands that I need to speak to the principal right now and you are in the classroom...you have to weigh and balance if I stop what I am doing right now and go to deal with this demanding parent...or do I really do what I believe is best...and stay in the classroom. The reality is the parent wins. (medium school, 31 years experience)

In summary, an educator of a large-sized school with 29 years of experience shared that the principal must be aware of "...the ever changing picture and we call it 'withitness'...just as teachers need to understand what is going on...with this child and that child...it is the same with the principal...except in a bigger picture."

Leadership Accountability

The interview questions in the area of accountability were "For what and to whom do you feel accountable? and How does your accountability affect your leadership?" From content analysis descriptive codes included *definition of term* and *effects on leadership*. Four-fifths of the participants explained that they felt accountable first to the students. A principal of a large school with 29 years experience shared, "I feel accountable first off to the students. This is their only chance to be a first grader and get what they need in first grade...the time that we have with them is very precious." Along with this area of accountability the same group of principals added that they feel accountable to the teachers, the families, and the school community. The words "nurturing, advocating, and collaborating" were used in the principals descriptive language during the interviews. This same descriptive verbiage is used in the ISLLC Standards.

I feel like it is my responsibility to make this a place where children learn and make it a nurturing environment where we do put kids first. I want parents of this community to feel that this is a good school for their children. (small school, 32 years experience)

Three-fifths of the participants shared that they feel accountable to their central office and school board supervisors. The responses included the following supervisors: superintendent, assistant superintendent, director, and school board members.

Interestingly, two-fifths of the principals stated that they believed that they were accountable to everyone for everything. According to T. R. Hoerr (2005) there are two reasons for this heightened accountability: an increase in the use of quantitative analysis to rate and predict school success and school choice options being offered to parents.

The accountability of the current state and federal mandates was only noted by three of the participants. This is an interesting finding due to the current reliance on student performance data. School leaders are being held accountable for student achievement and adequate yearly progress. Catano & Stronge (2006) describe the "educational landscape" as being different than it was 10-30 years ago on the local, state, and national level (p. 231). "One reason that the role responsibilities for school principals are changing rapidly is that the accountability movement has substantially changed the focus of the responsibilities to a role focused on instructional leadership" (Catano & Stronge, 2006, p.231). Thus it is not surprising that approximately one-half of the principals described the effect of accountability on their leadership as a means of framing how they make decisions and how they prioritize their job responsibilities. "It really helps me to prioritize my day...it helps me to put people first, the instructional leadership piece as much as possible" (medium school, 15 years experience). Two-fifths of the school leaders shared that accountability demands made them focus on being data driven leaders.

Because we are in such a high-stakes testing era, I think that this accountability has helped me to be a clear communicator of where we are number wise with all of our stakeholders...I make it a point to communicate data regularly to our parent/teacher population. I want them to know where we are and where we have moved forward. I clearly indicate where our AYP groups are...and how I am differentiating our resources... (medium school, 11 years experience)

Of the 25 participants, there were two with more negative responses to the effect of accountability on their school leadership. An experienced educator shared that she is confused about her accountability and this confusion creates dissonance. "I think we are getting so many directives from so many people that part of me is saying, 'Wait a minute that interferes with my building, there is no need for that, and you are not my boss anyway'" (large school, 33 years experience). Another veteran administrator of a medium school with 31 years experience stated that the pressure that she felt from her superintendent about her performance gap between her black and white children was offensive to her. She explained her school plan and yet, "He still said that I needed to address this issue and that's when I said to myself I need to be thinking about retirement." Lastly, only one principal stated that the area of accountability had a positive effect on his leadership. "It gives me energy, my job is not a job to me...it is a way of life" (small school, 17 years experience).

Changes to the Principalship

The interview questions in this category pertained to current changes and broader recommendations for the elementary principalship. The questions were "Is there

anything that you wish you could change about your role and responsibilities in the job of elementary principal?" and "If you had the authority to change the elementary principalship, broadly, what changes would you make and why?" The content analysis led to the descriptive coding of the responses to include *principal's role* and *broad changes*.

It was not surprising to find that approximately three-fifths wished that their *role* as principal involved more time as the instructional leader. A similar response was given when one-half shared that they wanted to be more of an instructional leader. "I would love to truly be the instructional leader of a school and have someone take care of the beans, balls, and buses" (medium school, 27 years experience). Today, more than ever, the responsibilities of the principal must focus on instructional leadership, guiding a faculty through standards-based outcomes, developing a schoolwide vision, and acting as a change agent charged with the duty of meeting state accountability measures (Richard, 2000). In addition, approximately one-fifth shared that the salary scale should be reviewed.

I would like to see us look at the financial package...if I took a lawyer or a doctor who has to go through similar schooling and time...our job never ends and yet we are given x-dollars for our work. So I tell myself when 4:00 rolls around it is time to go home because I am not getting paid beyond that time.

(large school, 18 years experience)

Another principal of a medium school with 23 years experience explained that school administrators are "...like CEOs of corporations...we have so much

responsibility." This principal shared that even when she was on vacation she was called to unlock the school building due to an emergency. Interestingly, two of the five males interviewed stated the desire for an improved financial package for administrators. Another noteworthy response came from one principal of a small school with 17 years experience. He shared that he liked his school size and would never wish to be a principal of a large school. He liked the fact that he knew the students and their families on a very personal basis. A principal of a large school with 13 years experience talked about the change of moving from a school of 300 students to a school of over 900 children. "Here I don't know everybody's name. It is impossible...everything is just super-sized". With so much emphasis on time management and spending long hours on the job, it was interesting that only two participants noted that they wished their role as principal was less stressful. "...it is a highly stressful job and I wish there was a way to take that stress down so that you didn't get all engaged in the nitty gritty things" (small school, 32 years experience)

In the area of *broad changes* to the job of elementary principal, three-fifths of the participants discussed the need to add more "human resources" to assist the principal. The dialogue concerning the need for more administrative assistance was shared by principals from each school size category. The suggested "human resources" included:

- assistant principals
- administrative assistants
- special education coordinator/administrator

- bilingual interpreter
- clerical assistance
- cafeteria monitors
- bus duty assistants

All of the participants of a school without an assistant principal noted the importance of that "human resource" in their response to broad changes to the job. A principal of a medium school with 15 years experience noted that the addition of an assistant principal at her school had a positive impact on her time management. She was able to effectively delegate and "...balance my plate of instructional leader and management roles". One principal of a medium school with 27 years experience suggested the idea of a "co-principal". She added that having someone else with the same "weight on his/her shoulders" would make instructional leadership an everyday reality. Lastly, in the age of accountability it is noteworthy that approximately one-fifth of the administrators wanted to see broad changes made in the area of student assessment.

...I would like to see more open-ended assessments...SOLs are not the end all...

I would like to see more electronic student portfolios. ...I want to see more education as a journey and every child growing at their own pace. Yes, it will still be as rigorous as it is now, but not all children are geared for college...just like all children cannot achieve pass/advanced level. (medium school, 15 years experience)

Principal's On-Day Logs of Activities & School Mission Statements

Principal's One-Day Log

Information from a one-day log of activities completed by the interviewees was used to triangulate or crosscheck the interview data analysis for validity. Principals were asked to fill in the log with short phrases or sentences during each hour increment of the day. The one-day log was divided into one-hour increments of time beginning at 6:30 a.m. and ending at 4:30 p.m. and beyond. In addition each participant was asked to respond as to whether the day of the logged activities was a typical or atypical day. Of the 25 participants, 23 stated that the day of the logged activities was a typical day. The two exceptions included a principal with an annual school safety audit and another principal with a higher than normal day of student disciplinary issues including a student with a knife in the classroom. This principal also added that due to the absence of the assistant principal the day was an atypical one. In addition the following comments were noted, "This was a typical day--very difficult with lots of interruptions and student discipline." (large school, 18 years experience) and "This was a great day! I got to eat lunch sitting down and went to the bathroom twice" (small school, 17 years experience). The principals' one-day log of activities included the following:

- Student discipline (15 out of 25 participants)
- Walk throughs (12 out of 25 participants)
- IEP meetings (11 out of 25 participants)
- A variety of evening events (10 out of 25 participants)
- Child study meetings (5 out of 25 participants)
- Classroom observations (2 out of 25 participants)

The data analysis found that three-fifths of the principals included student discipline activity in their daily log. Approximately one-half found time to include classroom walk-throughs yet only two of the 25 principals were able to conduct classroom observations. This finding corroborates with what research tells us is that the most important duty for any principal and that is the job of instructional leader; yet, the role of the instructional leader can be difficult to fulfill because of the managerial mandates (Shellard, 2003). "...at any given moment a crisis situation, discipline, or parent concern can come up which alters the entire day's plans" (medium school, 15 years experience).

The data analysis of the one-day logs was also consistent with the participants' interview analysis. One-half of the participants wanted to be more of an instructional leader. Thus school leaders needed to effectively prioritize because so many other daily demands pulled them from the instructional focus. Approximately two-fifths of the principals spent some of their day involved in IEP meetings. In the area of broad changes to the principalship, the participants shared the need for a special education coordinator/administrator. A 28 year veteran principal of a small-sized school discussed the demands of the IEP meetings. "There are so many of them and so many more of them have become so demanding, so high profile".

School Mission Statements

The researcher reviewed the schools mission statements. Each of the three school systems had created common commitment statements for the locality's schools. According to Robbins and Alvy (2003) mission statements are "succinct, powerful

statements on how the school will achieve its vision. It provides guidance for actions on a daily basis" (p.83). The review of the school mission statement had the common thread of being student-centered and acknowledging that every student can learn. This document review component of the research was consistent with the principals' response to the question, "For what and to whom do you feel accountable?" Four-fifths of the principals explained that they felt accountable first to the students. Additionally, the statements described creating positive bonds between the school and the community, utilizing the strengths of the students, their families, and the community, helping students acquire knowledge, skills, and core values, and learning in a safe environment. The emphasis on building connections with the school and the community was shared by one-third of the participants as being leadership strength. It is interesting that in this age of heightened school security, that only two out of the 25 principals stated that keeping the school safe was a priority. "The most important thing would be that I have a safe and secure environment to learn...that is the biggest priority" (medium school, 34 years experience).

Summary

During the analysis of all of the information generated in this study, key patterns emerged and many of those patterns evolved into important themes that aided the researcher in answering the study's research questions (see page 79). Table 8 describes the codes that emerged into the descriptive themes during the research question analysis.

Table 7

Research Questions & Descriptive Display Summary

Research Question	Descriptive Code	Descriptive Theme
How do elementary principals describe his/her leadership in their schools?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lead by example 2. Building relationships 3. Creating a vision 4. Understanding the community 5. Being a manager & an instructional leader 6. Child-centered leader 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher of Teachers 2. The Nurturer 3. Change Agent 4. "PR" Facilitator 5. The Juggler 6. Kid-Friendly
How do the requirements of the job of elementary school principal coincide with what he or she feels their leadership focus ought to be?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instructional leadership & School management 2. School accountability 3. Familiarity with ISLLC standards 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Holy" Time vs. "Tool" Time 2. Captain of the ship 3. "Local" compass
What is the role of instructional leadership in the elementary principals' description of their work?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Instructional leader 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Delegator
How do elementary school principals set job priorities in order to successfully lead their school?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Job priorities 2. Job balancing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Murphy's Law 2. 24/7
How does school size impact leadership?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School size--small, medium, large 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One size fits all

The descriptive codes in the area of leadership description (research question 1), were leading by example, building relationships, creating a school vision, understanding the community, being an instructional leader and school manager, as well as, being a child-centered leader. Based on the descriptive codes the descriptive themes became apparent.

Leading by example--TEACHER OF TEACHERS

Approximately two-fifths of the participants shared that they lead by example. According to Lashway (2002) leaders must model the same learning traits that they expect of teachers. McKay (1999) stated that school leaders must consistently base their decisions on appropriate core values and beliefs. Principals of effective schools model the way by setting the example for others. Teachers admire principals "who walk their talk" and serve as role models for the behaviors they hope to instill in others (McKay, 1999). "I feel that teachers are leaders in their own classrooms. So for me leadership is just leading them and supporting them" (large school, 18 years experience).

Building relationships--THE NURTURER

A common thread that emerged from the interview responses described the importance of building and sustaining strong relationships. Approximately one-half of the administrators felt that their strength was in the area of interpersonal skills. McEwan (2003) shared that effective principals understand how to bring out the best in those around them and this fosters and empowers relationships. According to Blase & Blase (1998) successful principals focus on the people within the school not the program.

One-third of the participants discussed the importance of building relationships. As McEwan (2003) stated, "Relationships drive school improvement" (p.54). Building relationships with all members of the school community was essential to the work of elementary principal. The personal relationships communicated a sense of caring and appreciation (McEwan, 2003). The constant attention to building strong relationships helped the principal to build up "emotional bank accounts" (McEwan, 2003, p.56). "I build relationships with my faculty, staff, students, and parents. I am a naturally nurturing person. So when I talk to them it is not just as a principal to a colleague, it is to someone you know and building trust is important" (large school, 13 years experience). Three-fifths of the principals thought that their faculty respected their leadership. "I would like to believe that most of them see me as a friend and someone that they can trust"(large school, 33 years experience). Burke & Krey (2005) relay the importance of developing a trusting relationship with teachers and staff.

Creating a vision--CHANGE AGENT

Creating a school vision was discussed by one-fifth of the principals. McEwan (2003) found that while less effective principals offered excuses, highly effective principals envisioned a successful school that had achieved its mission and goals. Beck & Murphy (1993) stated that effective school principals understood that not only must they create a school vision but they must also cultivate an environment that allows teachers to make decisions that result in ownership of the vision. "Whenever I think of leadership I think of vision. Having a vision of where you want your organization or the

people to be is my strength. Then, of course, having the vision also must involve having the skills to help people get there" (large school, 35 years experience).

Understanding the community--"PR" FACILITATOR

One-third of the participants shared that leadership means understanding the community. School leaders understand that local citizens want a school that reflects their values, and work to create a positive culture (Sergiovanni, 2000). Effective principals seek out opportunities that actively engage the community with the school (Beck & Murphy, 1993). This research finding also connected to the school systems' mission statements about building strong bonds with the community. "We have parents who are very, very involved which is a great blessing for us and allows us to do so many things but it also means that I spend a lot of time talking with parents and other community members. This calls upon a special set of skills in order to be effective in public relations" (large school, 29 years experience). Another principal of a large school with 18 years experience stated, "A lot of it has to be PR on my part to let people know that this need exists. So everybody that I meet with I start off talking about the needs of the school. And some great things have come from that".

Being a manager and an instructional leader--THE JUGGLER

Approximately one-half of the school principals responded that they would like to be more of an instructional leader. According to McEwan (2003) effective school leaders are knowledgeable about teaching and learning, and serve as instructional leaders. They believe in the importance of being up to date on best practices in assessment and instruction and look for ways to learn about good teaching (Beck &

Murphy, 1993). Principals communicated frustrations concerning the issues of spending more time as a school manager. Three-fifths of the elementary principals discussed the issues of spending more time as a school manager. Interestingly, two of the 25 principals described their leadership as being a dual job of both school manager and instructional leader. "I would like to be more of an instructional leader rather than feel like I am juggling 18 balls at once, which is how I feel that I am doing with management issues" (small school, 9 years experience).

Child-centered leadership--KID-FRIENDLY

In addition, the participants discussed the importance of making child-centered decisions. This response was found in various answers to a variety of interview questions. The importance of making decisions based on the best interest of the student was important to all 25 principals. This finding emerged across the interviews. Effective principals keep in mind that the student's welfare is the bottom line (McEwan, 2003). A central phrase of each ISLLC Standards is worded as follows "A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students" (Murphy, 2005, p.4). In addition a pattern emerged from the document review of the schools' mission statements that linked the school's mission to each child's success. "Another strength is my interaction with children. I love to see kids learn. But as a leader I love to sit with them and try to help them figure out the choices that they make" (medium school, 27 years experience).

In research question two the participants discuss the requirements of the job of principal. The descriptive codes of instructional leadership, school management, school

accountability, and familiarity with the ISLLC Standards emerged into descriptive themes.

Leadership focus--"HOLY" TIME VS. "TOOL" TIME

Notable patterns emerged that related to the professional job requirements and the principal's personal belief concerning his/her leadership focus. One-half of the school leaders thought that his/her leadership focus should be on instruction, yet three-fifths discussed the belief that they spend more time as a school manager. Thus the participants stated that discord existed between the actual job responsibilities and what they believed their school leadership focus should require. An important finding was in the area of instructional leadership. Two of the 25 administrators stated that they spent more time as instructional leaders. Yet, research supports the importance of instructional leadership. "Instructional leadership is directly related to the processes of instruction where teachers, learners, and the curriculum interact" (McEwan, 2003, p. 6). "And I have "holy" time in which my secretary is not allowed to schedule things. I am out in classrooms or meeting with grade levels" (large school, 18 years experience).

School Accountability--CAPTAIN OF THE SHIP

Four-fifths of the participants explained that they felt accountable first to the students. In addition three-fifths shared that they also were accountable to their central office and school board supervisors. Two-fifths of the school leaders shared that accountability demands made them focus on being data driven leaders. According to T. R. Hoerr (2005) there are two reasons for this heightened accountability: an increase in the use of quantitative analysis to rate and predict school success and school choice

options being offered to parents. Thus it is not surprising that approximately one-half of the principals described the effect of accountability on their leadership as a means of framing how they make decisions and how they prioritize their job responsibilities. "I am accountable to everyone and I must provide strong leadership so that we are all rowing the same boat. And I need to set the course so that we are all going in the same direction" (medium school, 23 years experience).

Familiarity with the ISLLC Standards--"LOCAL" COMPASS

It was important to note that two-fifths shared that they were more familiar with their county (local) standards and utilize them as guidelines for their job responsibilities. "My county has more defined standards specific to the way we do things in this county" (large school, 18 years experience). A principal of a large-sized school with 20 years experience shared that the county's superintendent set the job expectations and made it clear that each principal must have their "moral compass" set in order to do the job. With a majority of the participants having 26 years or more of experience it is most likely that they entered school administration before the ISLLC Standards were adopted by their state.

Research question three was about the role of the instructional leader. From the descriptive code of instructional leader, the theme of "The Delegator" emerged.

Instructional Leader--THE DELEGATOR

When discussing his/her role as instructional leader, the school administrator discussed the issues of time management and the need to delegate job responsibilities in order to meet the demands of both instructional leadership and school management.

Three-fifths explained the importance of shared leadership. Having the help of an assistant principal was highlighted in the answers. One-fifth of the participants shared that an assistant principal would help them to better meet the demands of being an instructional leader. Principals shared the importance of working as a team. Delegating jobs builds ownership in the school, both in practices and policies (Robbins & Alvy, 2003). They also shared that they wanted to know what was going on even when they delegated duties. Research supports distributed leadership. Yet, it is not just a division of labor. According to Lashway (2002), leaders must be able to coach teachers to "focus on core instructional issues" (p. 6). "I asked teachers if any of them is interested in going into administration. I have assigned teachers various responsibilities to try to facilitate the task. This distributes the work load for me" (small school, 17 years experience). Having the job support of an assistant principal helps elementary leaders in the area of administrative isolation and loneliness. Robbins & Alvy (2003) note that elementary principals find themselves lonelier due to the fact that many elementary schools have only one administrator.

Setting priorities as the school principal describes research question four. The descriptive codes of job priorities and job balancing emerged into the descriptive themes.

Job Prioritizing--MURPHY'S LAW

Overall, principals saw instructional leadership as being the most important job responsibility (approximately one-half responded that they would like to be more of an instructional leader), yet time constraints and management demands often put

instructional leadership at the bottom of the list. In the area of job prioritizing (research question 4) principals used a variety of methods in order to prioritize their time and their job responsibilities. Approximately, two-fifths explained that when they create their daily to-do list, it often changes. The list of "real life" priorities included, parents showing up at school, student discipline, classroom teacher observations, supporting teachers, parent phone calls, email correspondence, and dealing with various crisis situations. Thus the importance of allocating more "human resources" to assist the principal became evident. An increasing number of researchers share that instructional leadership is "distributed across the school community with principals and ...teachers having complimentary responsibilities" (Lashway, 2002, p.2). "Well, it is almost like 'Murphy's Law'. You can come with a plan, but nothing ever goes as you have planned. It could be an incident on the bus or someone has had a death in the family, or we have to find a substitute" (medium school, 27 years experience).

Job Balancing--24/7

Approximately one-third of the principals stated that they do not balance their workload. "What makes it hard...trying to balance home and the job...I never feel like I am good at my job and good at my job at home being a wife and mother" (medium school, 23 years experience). The demands of the job are complex and often times unpredictable (Donaldson & Marnick, 1995). "I have an open door policy so I never get anything done. I have to get up at 4 in the morning to work and I stay up late at night to work. It is a 24/7 job" (small school, 18 years experience). With so much emphasis on spending long hours on the job, it was interesting that only two participants noted that

they wished their job involved less stress. One principal of a medium school with 23 years experience talked about her difficulty balancing work and friendships. "The fact that it takes so much time to do the job that I am not a good friend to my friends outside of school. I always say that when I retire I will have time to nurture my friendships."

Finally, during the analysis of the interview questions the following descriptive theme emerged to help the researcher answer research question five.

The Principal of the Small, Medium, and Large-size School--ONE SIZE FITS ALL

When analyzing the answers of principals from small, medium, and large sized schools, the researcher found that no patterns or trends emerged in the work of the principal and the size of the school. Each principal worked with the same time constraints, the same accountability issues, and the same concerns about being an instructional leader. As one leader stated, "A school of 300 or 900, a principal still has jobs that are common throughout. That has to be expected" (large school, 13 years experience). Another principal of a medium school with 23 years experience added, "The job is the same no matter how many students you have in the building." Yet, it is noteworthy that one principal of a large school with 33 years experience shared the difficulties of knowing the student's name, knowing his/her report card grades. "So everything is just on a grand scale...yet I still feel that I have to acknowledge each child as if they are the most important one in the school." In conclusion, size doesn't matter. What does matter is how the school principal connects with the teachers, students, and their parents. As one principal of a large-sized school with 18 years shared, "You are

here to serve others--if you make that a priority in your position, then you will always enjoy it."

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The individual interviews of 25 elementary principals generated a body of data from which consistent themes emerged. These findings were discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter has three objectives: (a) to frame the findings within the research questions and the ISLLC Standards; (b) to consider the recommendations for practicing and aspiring principals; (c) to suggest subjects for future research. The rationale and purpose of the study introduce the chapter.

Rationale and Purpose

Principals find themselves accountable to policy makers, parents, and business leaders alike for the results of high-stakes testing (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). The political pressure of high-stakes accountability requires principals to improve instruction and student achievement while balancing the need to maintain facilities, supervise student conduct, and manage budgets. Principals take on two roles: instructional leaders and school managers. As instructional leaders, principals must be the standard-bearers for a high quality education for all children. As school managers, principals must be attentive to the daily critical administrative tasks that make their facilities run smoothly and efficiently. They must execute a vision, deal with employees and maintain the set standards. While the nature of the position may place these two responsibilities at odds, good principals understand that everything they do, whether as

a leader or a manager, is valuable for quality teaching and learning for children and adults. With the many demands of this multifaceted job, it is important to understand how the principal sets job priorities.

Sergiovanni (2000) writes of the potential for principals to influence the direction of their schools. It is important to understand the school principal's view of leadership because it influences his/her behavior and practice. Discovering how principals develop their personal framework of leadership and principalship creates understanding of why principals choose to lead as they do and provides a basis for other principals.

Purpose of the study

- The primary purpose of this study was to understand, through the lens of the elementary principal, how the demands of the principalship coincide with the ISLLC Standards. Understanding what the requirements, expectations and responsibilities of the elementary school principal and of the school leadership, specifically the instructional leader, was necessary in order to seek a connection or disconnection to the ISLLC Standards.
- Secondly, the study looked at the principalship job priorities as they related to instructional leadership and school management.
- Finally, the study examined the impact of school size on leadership.

Research Design and Questions

The researcher selected 25 elementary principals (eight in the small size category, nine in the medium size category, and eight in the large size category) in a

purposeful sampling. The school leaders worked in three school divisions in central Virginia. The school localities in the group were District A, District B, and District C. The total sample size consisted of 25 elementary principals from schools that fit into the category of small, medium, and large student body population (Pre K through 5th grade).

Upon identification of the participants, an introductory email was sent to each person. The email served several purposes: (a) to identify the researcher, (b) to explain the purpose of the study; and (c) to request their participation. In addition, the participants were emailed the interview protocol along with a daily log template. The one-day logs of activities' template were used by the participants to list their daily responsibilities and job completions for one school day. This email contact served the purpose of providing the participant an opportunity to better understand the focus of the study and reflect on their leadership experiences. The researcher also emailed the principal participant one-day before the planned meeting as a courtesy reminder. Prior to the start of the interview, an informed consent was obtained. This was signed/dated by the participant along with a witness signature/date by the researcher and a copy was provided to each participant. The interviews were scheduled at a convenient time and location for the participants. Demographic information regarding gender, age range, years of experience in education, level of education, teaching experience, history of administrative experience, and work site size category was requested in the first moments of the interview. From there, questions were asked that focus on the issues related to the topic of study. The interview audio-recordings were transcribed by the researcher and then submitted via e-mail to the participants for review and edit. The

transcripts were then used for the final data analysis. Confidentiality of the participants was maintained by identifying the interviewees by school size and years of experience.

Each of the participants was asked the following interview questions:

1. Leadership Questions

- A. What does leadership mean to you?
- B. What does it mean for you to lead your school?
- C. What are your greatest strengths as a leader?
- D. What are the challenges that you face as a school leader?
- E. Do you think that your faculty responds to you the way they do because you are the principal (*out of respect for authority*) or do they respond to you because of how you lead (*out of respect for your leadership*)?

2. Job Requirement Questions

- A. Are you familiar with the ISLLC Standards for principals?
- B. If yes, do you think that you fulfill these set job responsibilities?
- C. If no, what standards do you use as your professional responsibilities' guidelines?

3. The Demands of the Principalship Questions

- A. How do you balance instructional leadership and school management responsibilities?
- B. Do you spend more time as a school manager or as an instructional leader? Explain your answer.
- C. How do you set your job priorities?
- D. In what ways is your job similar to what you thought it would be before you were appointed to your position?
- E. In what ways is your job different from what you expected it would be before you were appointed to your position?

4. Accountability Questions

- A. For what and to whom do you feel accountable?
- B. How does your accountability affect your leadership?

5. Changes to the Principalship Questions

- A. Is there anything that you wish you could change about your role and responsibilities in the job of elementary principal? Explain your answer
- B. If you had the authority to change the elementary principalship, broadly, what changes would you make and why?

6. Is there anything that you would like to share regarding the elementary principalship and the prioritizing of job responsibilities that we have not addressed?

These questions were designed to answer the overarching research questions of:

1. How do elementary principals describe their leadership in his/her schools?
2. How do the requirements of the job of elementary school principal coincide with what he or she feels his/her leadership focus ought to be?
3. What is the role of instructional leadership in the elementary principals' description of their work?
4. How do elementary school principals set job priorities in order to successfully lead their schools?
5. How does school size impact leadership?

Discussion

The information presented in Chapter Four addressed the specific questions asked in the interview protocol format of the individual interviews. The following information addressed the study in relation to the five research questions.

Research Question One--How do elementary principals describe their leadership in his/her schools?

The outcomes of the data analysis focused on the following descriptors of *school leadership*.

- Leading by example (approximately two-fifths)
- Understanding the community (one-third)
- Building relationships (one-third)

- Listening and Interpersonal skills (approximately three-fourths)

One of the surprising outcomes of the research was the fact that only four of the participants expressed that his/her leadership strength was in the area of instructional leadership. School management was not mentioned as a strong point, yet three-fifths stated that they spend more time as school managers. Two of the 25 principals described leadership as being a dual job of being a manager and an instructional leader. According to Susan Church (2005), leadership and management was "complexly interrelated within the whole of an administrator's work" (p. 94). Church (2005) stated that how "educational leaders deal with even the most mundane and routine operational issues sends clear messages to others about vision, values, relationships and purposes. Such decisions affect teaching and learning" (p. 94). In research supported by the Wallace Foundation, Holland (2008) cited a superintendent of the LaRue County Public Schools. "Student achievement is the focus, but the only way you're going to move student achievement up is if you allow principals to get directly involved in instruction and assessment. Other than that, they'll be putting out fires every day." (p. 2) According to Gillat and Sulzer-Azaroff (1994), principals of successful schools exhibit strong instructional leadership. Yet, 21 out of 25 principals in this research study did not rate his/her instructional leadership skills as a professional strength.

The challenges described by the school leaders were as follows:

- Time management (approximately two-fifths)
- School accountability--state and federal mandates (approximately one-half)

Other areas that were noted as challenges to school leaders were parents, disciplinary

issues, special education, and email volume. Interestingly, only one participant discussed the needs of her family. That may have been due to the fact that 10 principals were in the 50 and above age bracket.

In a standards-oriented age of accountability, it was not surprising that approximately one-half of the participants shared that state and federal mandates posed as areas of leadership challenges. Principals found themselves accountable to policy makers, parents, and business leaders alike for the results of high-stakes testing (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). The political pressure of high-stakes accountability required principals to improve instruction and student achievement while balancing the need to maintain facilities, supervise student conduct, and manage budgets.

Research Question Two--How do the requirements of the job of elementary school principal coincide with what he or she feels his/her leadership focus ought to be?

The findings of this study were consistent with the literature related to the challenges of balancing the job of instructional leader and school manager.

Getting principals out of the office and into classrooms is not a new approach, of course. Many school reform efforts in the past two decades have emphasized the importance of redefining the principal's default role as supervisor of 'buses, budgets, and butts' to the school's chief executive of learning. (Holland, 2008, p. 2)

The outcomes of the data analysis concerning what the leadership focus ought to be were as follows:

- Be more of an instructional leader (approximately one-half)

- Use shared leadership (three-fifths)
- Have the assistance of an assistant principal (approximately one-fifth)
- Balance instructional leadership and school management (approximately three-fifths)

An organization's success is often determined by the quality of its leadership (Burrello, Hoffman, & Murray, 2005). The ISLLC Standards laid the foundation for what was essential about the role of school leaders. The standards captured what research and practitioners had told the ISLLC representatives were critical components of effective leadership (Murphy, 2002). Joseph Murphy (2001) established the need for the ISLLC Standards and the accompanying indicators as real world situations not just theory-based instruction in order to prepare school administrators for the job.

The ISLLC Standards

The ISLLC Standards are as follows with each standard beginning with the phrase: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by:

1. facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
2. advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
3. ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
4. collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
5. acting with integrity, with fairness, and in an ethical manner.
6. understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic,

legal, and cultural contexts. (ISLLC, 1996, p. 6).

Almost four-fifths of the participants responded that they were familiar with the ISLLC Standards. Of those respondents, one-eighth replied that they were not extremely familiar with them. One principal shared that he had heard of them, but had never seen them. It is notable that two-fifths shared that they are more familiar with their county standards and utilize them as guidelines for their job responsibilities.

According to Hessel & Holloway (2006), the purpose of *Standard One* was to ensure that school leaders develop a vision with the primary focus on educating all students.

This focus should be a shared leadership in and outside of the schoolhouse.

Approximately one-fifth of the participants stated that their work involved creating a school vision. *Standard Two* can be described as creating a culture of teaching and learning (Hessel & Holloway, 2006). This involves instructional leadership.

Approximately one-half of the administrators responded that they would like to be more of an instructional leader in their school. The researcher found it highly significant that two of the 25 participants explained that that they spent more time as an instructional leader than as a school manager. In addition, two of the 25 participants shared that there was a connection between being both an instructional leader and a school manager.

Standard Three outlines the management of learning (Hessel & Holloway, 2006).

"Making management decisions in such complex settings involves identifying, clarifying, and resolving competing needs, forces, and claims of all stakeholders involved" (Hessel & Holloway, 2006, p. 62). Three-fifths of the elementary principals discussed the issues of spending more time as a school manager. The words

"challenging" and "management minutia" described how tough it was to balance both instructional leadership and school management. It was noteworthy that only one participant acknowledged the ability to effectively meet the demands of both instructional leadership and school management.

Hessel & Holloway (2006) described *Standard Four* as fostering learning through relationships with the broader community. Interestingly, one-third of the participants described his/her leadership strength as the ability to build relationships and to understand the community. Demonstrating the ability to promote integrity, fairness, and ethics in learning were the descriptors of *Standard Five* (Hessel & Holloway, 2006). It was noteworthy, that one participant discussed the "moral compass" (large school, 20 years experience). Also, four of participants shared the importance of service to others. The last ISLLC Standard (*Standard Six*) can be described as the political, social, legal, economic, and cultural context of learning (Hessel & Holloway, 2006). One-third of the school leaders shared the importance of understanding the community. Only one principal of a large school with 18 years experience discussed the importance of connections with the business community.

...we had a shadow day where a member of the business community stayed with me all day. He commented on the fact that he didn't know that I did all these things in the course of the day. I think that it would be great the more publicity that we could get in a positive way about the myriad of things that you have to go through, the decisions that you make... (large school, 18 years experience)

Approximately one-fourth of those principals who answered "yes" to being familiar with the standards responded that they didn't perceive that they encompassed all of their job responsibilities.

I do think the ISLLC Standards are an incomplete picture of what a principal needs to be. I think they are very lacking in not only details but I think they miss whole components of the job and if a person could do the things that are contained in the standards they would perhaps be maybe the minimal requirements for being the assistant principal or principal. (large school, 29 years experience)

Research Question Three--What is the role of instructional leadership in the elementary principals' description of their work?

Today's administrator understands the importance of instructional leadership. According to McEwan (2003), school leaders must be knowledgeable about learning theory, as well as, effective instruction and current curriculum alignment. Lashway (2002) shared that instructional leadership was what school principals do to improve teaching and learning. Approximately one-half of the administrators responded that they would like to be more of an instructional leader in their school. The researcher found it highly significant that two of the 25 participants explained that they spent more time as an instructional leader than as a school manager. In addition, two of the 25 participants shared that there was a connection between being both an instructional leader and a school manager. "The multiplicity of demands also creates role conflict. Surveys persistently find that principals feel torn between the instructional leadership that almost

everyone agrees should be the top priority and the daily management chores that are almost impossible to ignore; often, the managerial responsibilities seem to take precedence" (Lashway, 2002, p. 5). Interestingly, three-fifths of the participants explained how they delegate instructional and managerial responsibilities.

To address school challenges, many principals have decided to retain full responsibility for certain work while delegating part or full responsibilities in some areas. The practice of shared leadership and delegation included delegating to teachers who were interested in entering the leadership track and sharing the responsibilities with the school's administration team. This team could be made up of a lead teacher, sometimes referenced as a resource teacher in one locality, and it could be comprised of one or more assistant principals, school secretaries, special education coordinator, team leaders, and aspiring leaders. Lashway (2002) discussed the importance of "dense leadership" more commonly known as "distributed leadership". According to Lashway (2002), the principal not only has to carry out his/her duties but also build the leadership capacity of the teachers and other members of administrative team. This mentoring responsibility was crucial to helping others learn how to think and act as a leader when they may not be accustomed to that particular professional role. Lashway (2002) described instructional leadership as the "organizational glue" that kept things on track (p. 3).

Research Question Four--How do elementary school principals set job priorities in order to successfully lead their schools?

Being able to balance both instructional leadership and school management proved to be challenging. Approximately one-third of the principals stated that they do not balance the job very well and they spent many hours outside of the school day trying to balance their workload. The demands of the job were described as complex and often times unpredictable (Donaldson & Marnick, 1995). Overall, the principals shared that balancing these dual responsibilities equated to long hours and working at home in order to be available to the children, parents, and teachers.

Often times it was difficult to prioritize in schools when everything seems equally important (Burrello, Hoffman, & Murray, 2005). In the area of job prioritizing, approximately half of the principals stated that they created lists. The lists were created on paper and digital calendars. One administrator used a color-coded folder system and another had found that 3 by 5 index cards helped her to organize and prioritize her day. Another principal created a daily time log to use on her clipboard. Utilizing a color-coded folder system assisted another educator with prioritizing the daily/weekly to-do list. Yet, even with a system of prioritizing, this same group of principals shared that lists change due to the nature of the position. In order to better understand the need to prioritize the following areas were cited as taking precedence:

- parents (in person and/or on the phone)
- emails
- student discipline
- crisis situations
- observing teachers

- interacting/connecting with students
- team meetings
- classroom walk- throughs
- central office requirements

The number one priority in this list, according to half of the principals, was responding to parents who "show up" at school with no prior notice. Keeping good lines of communication open with parents was an important leadership factor. The data collected indicated that elementary principals must prioritize in order to get the job done. Yet, each administrator must also be aware that daily lists changed due to the nature of the job. While the nature of the position created changing priorities, principals understood that everything they do, whether as a school leader or a manager, was valuable for quality teaching and learning for children and adults.

Research Question Five--How does school size impact leadership?

When analyzing the responses of principals from small, medium, and large-sized schools, the researcher found that no patterns or trends emerged in the work of the principal and the size of the school. Each principal worked with the same time constraints, the same accountability issues, and the same concerns about being an instructional leader. As one leader of a large school with 13 years experience stated, "A school of 300 or 900, a principal still has jobs that are common throughout. That has to be expected." Yet, it is noteworthy that one principal of a large school with 33 years experience shared the difficulties of knowing the student's name, knowing his/her report card grades. "So everything is just on a grand scale...yet I still feel that I have to

acknowledge each child as if they are the most important one in the school." In conclusion, size doesn't matter. What does matter is how the school principal connects with the teachers, students, and their parents.

Recommendations

More studies are needed in the area of the ISLLC Standards and job responsibilities of principals. Approximately two-fifths of the participants in the research shared that they were more familiar with their county standards and utilized them as guidelines for their job responsibilities. One locality shared the alignment of the ISLLC Standards to the county professional qualities and responsibilities (see Table 7). Having such a relationship with the national standards would help to ensure alignment with the local standards for administrators. In addition, universities need to ensure that the ISLLC Standards are a part of the leadership curriculum. According to Kaplan (2005), "School systems need clear, functional performance standards for what principals should be able to do in order to lead schools that foster all student's high academic achievement" (p. 2). Standards ensure that principals have "...clear expectations about the professional behaviors and school performance needed to enhance their effectiveness" (Kaplan, 2005, p.3).

Table 8

The Relationship between ISLLC Standards
And Professional Qualities and Responsibilities

ISLLC Standards	Professional Qualities & Responsibilities
<p>Standard #1: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community</p>	<p>School Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves appropriate people in developing, coordinating, and monitoring various plans (CSIP, crisis, staff development, technology, etc.) • Relates plan to division-wide goals • Develops effective plan of action with reasonable time lines and clear assessment components • Develops well-written plans that reflect understanding of school profile and needs • Provides staff development for faculty and staff based on data-driven needs • Communicates mission and goals of school
<p>Standard #2: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.</p>	<p>Instructional Leadership Resulting in Student Achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of curriculum and varied instructional methodologies • Observation and feedback • Effective teaching strategies • Use of technology • School data and demographics • Virginia and District C

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> curriculum • Student recognition for achievement <p>Accessibility & Visibility in School</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal & formal meetings with students • Attends student functions & activities • Observes in classrooms • Serves as classroom resource <p>Staff Morale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes staff members when appropriate • Is receptive to new ideas and changes initiated by staff members • Encourages collegiality among staff members • Displays a genuine feeling of trust and respect for each staff member • Works to nurture, encourage, promote, and build a positive school culture
<p>Standard #3: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe efficient, and effective learning environment.</p>	<p>Fiscal Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducts a systemic budget development process that involves faculty, staff, resource personnel, and appropriate community members • Adheres to the established budget timeline • Formulates budget requests • Maintains accurate balance on all accounts • Monitors the appropriate use of funds • Facilitates prudent fiscal plan to address purchases and the collection and expenditure of funds • Communicates financial

	<p>policies and regulations</p> <p>Organizational & Management Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides structure for efficient use of time and effective planning • Knowledge of School Board policies and regulations • Planning skills for self, others, and student scheduling • Building management • Models and uses technology • Safe and orderly environment • Sound judgment in delegating work/authority • Anticipates personnel and space needs • Makes decisions in a timely manner • Demonstrates punctuality by meeting deadlines • Conducts meaningful and timely meetings • Selects, inducts, supports, evaluates and retains quality staff members • Effectively plans and schedules extra-curricular activities and assemblies <p>Student Behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintains a safe school environment • Sound judgment in suspension/expulsion recommendations • Keeps abreast of student morale • Accessible to and for students • Communicates Code of Conduct and other policies related to behavior to staff, parents, and students • Recognizes and commends students for positive student
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	<p>behavior; maintains accurate disciplinary records</p> <p>Supervisory Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guides personnel in accomplishing tasks • Involves others in problem solving and decision making • Delegates duties and responsibilities where appropriate • Provides meaningful feedback to teachers, staff, and students • Effective use of evaluation skills • Holds regular purposeful staff meetings • Provides strong instructional leadership that results in students learning • Encourages use of curriculum staff and other resources • Encourages teachers to participate in curriculum development
<p>Standard #4: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.</p>	<p>Community Relations Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knows demographics and needs of community/school and responds accordingly • Develops clear and effective communication, both oral and written • Accessible for parents and community • Projects positive image to community • Demonstrates cooperative interactions with PTA, Lay Advisory, Community Council, and other agencies and businesses
<p>Standard #5: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success</p>	<p>Professional Qualities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functions effectively under

<p>of all students by acting with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner.</p>	<p>pressure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses patience, understanding, consideration, and courtesy in dealing with all employees • Willingness to work for overall good of school • Responds positively to constructive feedback • Works with appropriate persons to effectively resolve conflicts • Demonstrates teamwork, collaboration, and cooperation • Continuous learner and shows evidence of professional growth • Abreast of current best practices in education and leadership • Complies with School Board Policies
<p>Standard #6: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.</p>	<p>Technology (should be embedded in each of the areas listed above)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abreast of current trends and instructional models • Promotes effective use of latest instructional technologies in all areas of the curriculum • Promotes and monitors effective use of technology by support personnel • Maintains accurate inventory and control procedures

(District C Staff Development Coordinator, personal communication, March 13, 2008)

The first recommendation leads into the next recommendation of a standardized principal evaluation tool. Since principal quality is statistically linked to student achievement, then the ISLLC Standards can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the principal's work (Kaplan, 2005). Principals can utilize an evaluation based on the ISLLC Standards to improve their work as school leaders. According to Olson (2007), there are concerns that Congress will create a definition of a "highly qualified principal" when the No Child Left Behind Act is reauthorized (p. 1). Thus the importance of using the national standards as a basis for a standardized principal evaluation tool is evident.

Another recommendation would be in the area of "human resources". Three-fifths of the participants discussed the need to add more "human resources" to assist the principal. Principals from each school size category shared the discussion concerning the need for more administrative assistance. The suggested "human resources" included the following:

- assistant principals
- administrative assistants
- special education coordinator/administrator
- bilingual interpreter
- clerical assistance
- cafeteria monitors
- bus duty assistants

All of the participants of a school without an assistant principal noted the importance of that "human resource" in their response to broad changes to the job. As

school boards are studying the school system's budgetary requests, the need for more administrative assistance on the elementary level should be considered.

Lastly, the researcher recommends the need to prepare and mentor aspiring school leaders. According to Kaplan (2005), a 2003 study cited that within the next five years educational leader positions are expected to increase by 20%. The preparation programs for school leaders should include an in-depth study of the expectations set by the ISLLC Standards, as well as, opportunities to work with experienced and effective practicing principals. Mentoring aspiring educational administrators is another way to help new leaders develop the capacity to apply what he/she has learned.

As universities and colleges are redesigning the school leadership programs it is even more important that state and local boards align the administrative standards with the ISLLC Standards. Currently, the state of Virginia has intensified the approved administration and supervision pre K-12 endorsement by increasing the number of hours that must be completed in an internship program. In addition, candidates must complete the requirements for the SLLA (School Leaders Licensure Assessments) as set by the Board of Education (Virginia Board of Education Agenda, June 28, 2006). The increased requirements for principals in the state of Virginia may be the precursor to more stringent requirements for principal licensure, as well as, the possibility of a "highly qualified" definition of a principal set by Congress in the reauthorization of NCLB. Thus this sets the stage for states and localities to work collectively to align the professional qualities and responsibilities with the ISLLC Standards. "Standards spell out clear expectations about what leaders need to know and to improve instruction and

learning and that forms the basis for holding them accountable for results" (CCSSO, 2008, p.10).

Limitations and Self-Reflection

Limitations

There were several limitations inherent in and that complicate any interpretation of the possible findings. The first area was in the conclusions drawn about school leadership. They were drawn solely from the interviews with the elementary principals. Others (i.e. superintendents, researchers, teachers, parents) surely had different ideas about what they expected of principals.

Secondly, the researcher's experience in education as a teacher, resource teacher, assistant principal, and principal in various elementary schools introduced issues of research bias or positionality into the study. The researcher controlled for bias by writing down all of the thoughts and/or beliefs about the job of elementary school principal and memoing how the job of instructional leader and manager could be completed and prioritized. This was done before the research began, during the interview process and data analysis. The researcher read over the personal journal notes throughout the study in order to control for bias. Understanding one's bias helped the researcher analyze the interview information from a third party base point of view. Inquiry into a single case study can lead to better understanding, better theorizing, and better implementation. Readers can vicariously experience the phenomenon from the rich data and draw their own conclusions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

As a current elementary principal, it is possible that the principals in the study were not entirely candid in their interviews responses. Strategies for addressing this were to promise confidentiality to the principals, and to their schools' name and location. The second strategy was to use other documents (the one day logs of activities and the school's mission statement) to triangulate the data that were obtained from the interviews and test its veracity. Through the triangulation of data the researcher attempted to minimize any bias in order to present reliable research. In addition, the goal was to develop a connection with each participant so that he/she understood the basis of the research was to ultimately add to the professional knowledge base of not only new principals but also current practitioners.

Another limitation was in the area of principal's age and years of experience. Twenty of the participants were in 41-60 years of age category and thirteen had 26 years or more of educational experience. This may have affected the results especially in the area of knowledge of the ISLLC Standards. In 1996 the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium produced the ISLLC Standards and its purpose was to establish a framework for education policy that would help states define educational leadership. If the principal did not receive staff development in this area then he/she would not be familiar with the national standards.

An additional limitation was in the area of school size research. The researcher created the school size parameters based on limited research in the area of elementary school size.

Finally, the researcher acknowledged that each principal in the purposeful sample might not agree to participate. Receiving permission to conduct research in a locality was not a guarantee of principalship participation. Working as a researcher in one's work site locality assisted with gaining access due to the professional relationships. This was not the case in the two other localities. Thus this limited the ease of access during data collection. During the data collection 32 elementary principals were contacted, six principals from large-sized schools and one principal from a medium-sized school chose not to participate when permission was requested. The researcher received permission to interview 25 principals. "Qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of people, nested in their context and studied in-depth-unlike quantitative researchers, who aim for larger numbers of context-stripped cases and seek statistical significance" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27).

Self-Reflection

The researcher included self-reflections in this section because the researcher is also a current experienced elementary principal of a medium-sized school. Being able to separate oneself from the research can cut off the researcher from a vast area of insights and hypotheses. Maxwell (1996) shared that the researcher can utilize a "researcher experience memo" and prior to beginning a study write down all of one's beliefs, assumptions, and expectations about the job of the elementary principal (p. 27). According to Maxwell (1996), this exercise can prove to be valuable throughout the study as the researcher tests for bias or positionality.

The researcher maintained a personal experience journal throughout the research process. The researcher added personal thoughts to the journal after each interview and made it a habit to re-read the journal entries. Maxwell (2005) stated that the researcher bias couldn't be eliminated. Thus it can be difficult to put aside one's bias and the journal proved to be an effective method of acknowledging this limitation. The journal reflections helped the researcher to remain open to new ideas and beliefs. The researcher found it beneficial to read her journal notes after each interview. Interestingly, her personal beliefs were challenged and the practitioner made professional changes in how she prioritized her day as a principal in a school without an assistant principal. Getting out of the office and being in the classrooms became a personal challenge each day. The researcher made that her number one focus. The focus had always been on instructional leadership yet often times the researcher found that managerial interruptions separated her from the most important aspect of her job. Distributed leadership became a professional priority and this helped to open up more time for classroom observations and pre and post instructional conferencing. Listening to the voices of the 25 elementary principals from the three localities helped the researcher to view her professional strengths and challenges with a renewed appreciation. After 33 years of educational experience, the researcher affirmed her belief that building strong relationships with her students, parents, teachers, and the school community was her strength and her elementary colleagues acknowledged its importance to them as well. As a result of this qualitative research, a personal journey of self-reflection and improved professional practice took place.

Implication for Further Research

There are several implications for future research based on the findings of this study. The first would be to compare and examine practicing middle and high school principals to determine how they prioritize the job responsibilities. This investigation would seek to find out if there is a difference between the principal jobs of elementary, middle, and high schools. The investigation of job responsibilities of the practicing principals would also include examining the local professional qualities and responsibilities for school leaders as compared to the ISLLC Standards. It is important to note that the 1996 ISLLC Standards were revised in 2008. The framework and language of the six standards in both the 1996 and 2008 version are similar but not identical. The "indicators" are not in the revised standards. ISLLC, 2008 lists "functions" that define each standard instead of the "knowledge, skills and dispositions" (CCSSO, 2008, p. 6).

In addition, studies are needed to examine and compare elementary school principals with and without assistant principals and how this impacts his/her school leadership. This study would need to compare each school size with and without an assistant principal in several localities. The results would be of assistance to school boards in better understanding the needs of the elementary principal.

Summary

Due to the increasing demands on educational administrators, it has become essential that leadership priorities be established. This study investigated elementary school principals' job responsibilities and how the school administrator prioritized the

many facets of the job. The literature supported the continued escalation of job demands on the school principal. Thus with growing accountability, it is essential that school leaders learn to balance the responsibilities of being the instructional leader and the school manager.

A purposeful sample of 25 elementary school principals in central Virginia was used in a qualitative study. Principals from small (0-350), medium (351-750), and large (751-1200) sized schools participated in the research. The data did not support any trends or patterns related to school size and the work of the elementary principal. In addition, the research regarding the fulfillment of the ISLLC Standards suggested that localities should correlate their local professional responsibilities and qualities with the national standards in order to help with the use of a common language when discussing principal job qualities and responsibilities. The study also suggested that although instructional leadership was a principalship priority, it was often overshadowed by the school managerial demands.

Each participant maintained one-day logs of activities and the results supported the interview responses in the area of instructional leadership. The principals' day included a variety of situations that interrupted the scheduling of classroom observations. Principals shared that they wanted to be more of an instructional leader yet management demands often prevented them from being actively involved in the classroom. Elementary leaders described the frustrations of time management and the desire to have more "human resources" available to assist them with the very

demanding job. In addition, school administrators explained various methods used to prioritize the job responsibilities in order to "run the school".

The educational future of our children and of our schools demands that we better understand the job responsibilities of the school principal so that supports can be in place to assist the school leaders of the 21st century. This qualitative research gave voice to the work of 25 elementary principals. The researcher is honored to be an elementary principal and found the words of one school leader an interesting commentary on the principalship.

I said that it is a terrific job and I continue to agree that it is a terrific job. It is challenging. You will never get bored. In terms of prioritizing, we would like to have a set agenda that we could follow each day, but we are dealing with the greatest variable on earth which is human beings, especially children and their parents. It is emotionally charged and there is nothing we can really do to change the fact that what we get hit with every day or what we get presented with every day is going to change every single day and I don't think that will ever be changed. (small school, 9 years experience)

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Demographic information

Demographic information (to be completed for each participant at the start of the interview)

1. Gender: Male or Female
2. Age Range (20-30), (31-40), (41-50), (51-60), (over 61)
3. Number of years in education:
4. Level of Education (highest degree earned):
5. Teaching experience (grade level and years):
6. Administrative experience (job description, school level, number of years):
7. Current school category (small--0-450, medium—451-750, large—751-1200)

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Standard Interview Questions

1. Leadership Questions

- A. What does leadership mean to you?
- B. What does it mean for you to lead your school?
- C. What are your greatest strengths as a leader?
- D. What are the challenges that you face as a school leader?
- E. Do you think that your faculty responds to you the way they do because you are the principal (*out of respect for authority*) or do they respond to you because of how you lead (*out of respect for your leadership*)?

2. Job Requirement Questions

- A. Are you familiar with the ISLLC Standards for principals?
- B. If yes, do you think that you fulfill these set job responsibilities?
- C. If no, what standards do you use as your professional responsibilities' guidelines?

3. The Demands of the Principalship Questions

- A. How do you balance instructional leadership and school management responsibilities?
- B. Do you spend more time as a school manager or as an instructional leader? Explain your answer.
- C. How do you set your job priorities?
- D. In what ways is your job similar to what you thought it would be before you were appointed to your position?
- E. In what ways is your job different from what you expected it would be before you were appointed to your position?

4. Accountability Questions

- A. For what and to whom do you feel accountable?
- B. How does your accountability affect your leadership?

5. Changes to the Principalship Questions

- A. Is there anything that you wish you could change about your role and responsibilities in the job of elementary principal? Explain your answer

- B. If you had the authority to change the elementary principalship, broadly, what changes would you make and why?
6. Is there anything that you would like to share regarding the elementary principalship and the prioritizing of job responsibilities that we have not addressed?

Appendix C
Principal Log

Please briefly list your day's activities. This should be completed the day before our interview.

Date: -----

6:30-7:30 a.m.

7:30-8:30 a.m.

8:30-9:30 a.m.

9:30-10:30 a.m.

10:30-11:30 a.m.

11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

12:30-1:30 p.m.

1:30-2:30 p.m.

2:30-3:30 p.m.

3:30-4:30 p.m.

4:30 p.m.-and beyond

Please share if you consider this to be a typical or atypical day and why.

Appendix D
Letter of Introduction to Participants

9113 Rural Crosse Drive
Mechanicsville, VA 23116

Dear Elementary School Principal,

My name is Marcia Muse and I am currently a doctoral student at Virginia Commonwealth University in the School of Education. The purpose of my dissertation research is to give voice to the principals' perceptions of the job of principalship and how they lead their particular school. Understanding how the principal sets priorities each day, each week, and each month will also be a focus of the study.

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to be a participant in this study. Your participation is voluntary and you can stop your participation at any time without penalty. I hope that the information that I gather from my research will benefit the profession in the following ways: preparing the next generation of administrators, mentoring new administrators, administrator evaluation, and the professional development of practicing administrators. If you choose to be involved in the study, I would ask you to complete a brief daily log of activities for one day and participate in an interview. The interview session will take approximately 45-60 minutes and will be scheduled at your convenience. If you choose to participate please be assured your identity and your school's identity will be kept confidential. Enclosed please find a list of questions that will be the focus of the interview and a one-day log of activities. I ask that you complete this log the day prior to our scheduled interview. If you are interested in participating or have any questions about the study please contact me at (804) 730-4239 or (804) 261-5095.

I look forward to talking with you about your profession.

Sincerely,

Marcia D. Muse

Enclosures

VITA

Marcia Diane Muse is a practicing elementary principal in Henrico County Public Schools, Virginia. She has been an elementary school administrator for the past nine years. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Meredith College in Raleigh, North Carolina and a Master of Education degree in Learning Disabilities from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia. In addition, she has the following licenses in the state of Virginia: Administration and Supervision (PreK-12), Elementary Teacher (grades 4-7), and Specific Learning Disabilities (K-12). She is currently a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at Virginia Commonwealth University. Ms. Muse has been a member of the Henrico County Doctoral Cohort. In addition, she holds a current Virginia Division Superintendent license. Her work experiences include 24 years as a classroom and resource teacher at the elementary level in North Carolina and Virginia. She has been involved in mentoring aspiring and beginning principals.

Ms. Muse is a member of the VAESP (Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals), NAESP (National Association of Elementary School Principals), and The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International.