

UC Riverside

UC Riverside Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Two Principals in a Policy Environment: Beliefs and Behaviors Concerning Their Role in Instruction

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1tz7n0gg>

Author

McClurg, Holly

Publication Date

2010

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
RIVERSIDE

Two Principals in a Policy Environment:
Beliefs and Behaviors Concerning Their Role in Instruction

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

by

Holly Ann McClurg

June 2010

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Natalie Becker, Chairperson

Dr. Reba Page

Dr. Douglas Mitchell

Copyright by
Holly Ann McClurg
2010

The Dissertation of Holly Ann McClurg is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

Acknowledgements

I am truly grateful to the two principals in this study who granted me permission to conduct this research. The time I spent with each of them and their school communities was invaluable. I thank them and am fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with participants who willingly opened their educational world in such a way that allowed me the ability to use their experiences for meaningful inquiry. Not only was the time I spent with them significant for this research project, but these two principals also gave me unforeseen personal reward through their kindness and consideration toward me and my work. It is with great respect that I think of them and the important work they do every day.

I also wish to acknowledge the contributions of others in the Sea Breeze and High Bluff communities, specifically, the teachers and parents in both communities who offered their time and support. Your participation in the study was significant.

In numerous ways this dissertation reveals the skilled guidance of my remarkable mentor, Natalie Becker, whose infinite support and profound expertise are difficult to capture in words on a page. I will be forever indebted to her for the many hours she devoted to me and my work throughout this process. Professors Reba Page and Doug Mitchell have influenced me profoundly and have expanded my thinking in significant ways. I am eternally grateful for all I have learned from them over the years.

I am also thankful to my amazing friends and family – you know who you are – for the joy and understanding and support you continued to give me throughout this entire process. I am lucky to have such special people in my life.

And finally, completion of this project would not have been possible without the incredible love and support from my wonderful husband, Hank McClurg. From the very beginning he was my biggest cheerleader and put up with the countless hours I spent studying and writing. Thank you for believing in me always. We can now finally celebrate the completion of this dissertation!

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Two Principals in a Policy Environment:
Beliefs and Behaviors Concerning Their Role in Instruction

by

Holly Ann McClurg

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Education
University of California, Riverside, June 2010
Dr. Natalie Becker, Chairperson

Instructional leadership is one of the most frequently discussed educational leadership doctrines, yet the definition of the concept remains imprecise. This comparative ethnography of two suburban elementary schools develops the precision of the term through consideration of the practice of two particular elementary school principals. The study explores principal beliefs and behaviors in regard to their role in instruction within the school organization.

This interpretive research concluded that these two principals constantly navigated between the institutionalized organizational influences of what it meant to be the principal of a US public elementary school and the local cultural and micropolitical demands placed on their roles as building administrators. These findings revealed that internal local sociocultural influences carried importance even though the two schools appeared to be similar to one another in demographic and socioeconomic factors.

This study found that not only were principals working with a set of formal organizational goals related to teaching and learning, but they were also forced to respond to a different set of instrumental organizational goals necessary to keep the school

functioning. In answering to these competing demands, the principals responded in two ways – they used their organizational positioning of the principal within the school and they each drew on different constructs of authority with differing degrees of effectiveness. The positioning of the principal within the organization and the ways in which the principals operationalized their authority within the school produced *real* as well as *formal* authority, thus impacting their capacity to influence others. Authority constructs defined primarily by principals' competence (expertise and experience) more effectively influenced teachers and thus the attainment of formal and instrumental goals than constructs defined primarily by positional power (hierarchy within the organization) and authority of person (social/human relations with teachers). This study presented an initial inquiry into the convergence of authority structures and instructional leadership. Additional empirical research will support the efficacy of the use of authority structures by principals to influence teachers and cultivate attainment of formal goals and thus improvement in pedagogical practice.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Acknowledgements | |
| Chapter 1: Introduction | 1 |
| Section I: Introduction to the Literature, Methodology, and the Case Study Schools | 5 |
| Chapter 2: The Principalship: Lessons from the Literature | 6 |
| Education Reform in the United States and the Principal's Role | 6 |
| Traditional Bureaucratic Positioning of the Principal | 8 |
| Effective Schools Research and the Emerging Role of Instructional Leader | 11 |
| Demands for Accountability and Results | 14 |
| Principal Perceptions of their Changing Organizational Roles | 18 |
| Summary | 21 |
| Chapter 3: Methodological and Theoretical Approach | 25 |
| Overview of Methodology and Guiding Theories | 25 |
| The Social Construction of Meaning | 27 |
| The School as an Organization | 29 |
| Authority in School Organizations | 37 |
| Overview of Research Methods and Design | 43 |
| Case Study Schools and Principals | 52 |
| Section II: Research Sites | 58 |
| Chapter 4: The Schools and Communities | 59 |
| High Bluff Elementary School: The History, The Staff, The Community, The Principal's Arrival | 59 |
| Sea Breeze Elementary School: The History, The Staff, The Community, The Principal's Arrival | 62 |
| Summary | 65 |
| Section III: The Principals | 67 |
| Chapter 5: Susan | 68 |
| The Road to the Principalship | 68 |
| The Leader | 69 |
| The View of the Principalship | 70 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Chapter 6: Kimberly | 75 |
| The Road to the Principalship | 75 |
| The Leader | 76 |
| The View of the Principalship | 79 |
| Section IV: The Principalship | 82 |
| Chapter 7: Initial Conversations with the Principals | 83 |
| Chapter 8: The Principals and the Teachers | 91 |
| Teacher Layoffs | 94 |
| Teacher Management | 112 |
| Leadership within the Ranks | 123 |
| Teachers and School Politics | 129 |
| Two Cases of Principal-Teacher Interaction: “Mrs. Jones” and “The Staff Meeting” | 134 |
| The Principal’s Use of Authority | 143 |
| Leveraging Authority with Teachers | 150 |
| The Principal’s Use of Authority Structures: Differing Consequences for Each School | 162 |
| Chapter 9: The Principal and the Parents | 175 |
| Parents and School Politics | 177 |
| Leveraging Authority with Parents | 179 |
| The Principal as Entrepreneur | 187 |
| Chapter 10: The Principal’s Impression on Each School | 202 |
| Authority over Instructional Practices | 203 |
| Section V: Discussion and Conclusion | 212 |
| Chapter 11: Conclusion | 213 |
| Guiding Conceptual Framework | 213 |
| The Application of Authority Constructs on Instructional Practices | 213 |
| The Organizational Positioning of the Principal and the Significance of the Characteristics of the School Organization | 222 |
| Practical Applications of Theoretical Insights | 226 |
| Implications | 228 |
| References | 232 |

List of Figures

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure I: Organizational Positions of Participants Interviewed | 47 |
| Figure II: Quantitative Representation of Interview Occurrences | 47 |
| Figure III: Demographic Data | 55 |
| Figure IV: Academic Performance Index (API) Scores | 55 |

Chapter 1

Introduction

More than forty years have passed since the inception of the classic, *The Man in the Principal's Office*, in which Harry F. Wolcott's ethnographic study captured the day-to-day life of a principal. While there has been great interest in what it means to "principal" a school and much has been said and written about the principalship in recent years, very few since Wolcott have spent extensive time with a principal to study the practiced behaviors of a school principal. This lack of attention to administrative practice in the literature is significant given the dramatic shifts that have occurred since Wolcott in the context in which building administrators work, namely, the current era of standards-based reform and high-stakes accountability. So then, what contribution does this ethnographic study attempt to make in the year 2010? This intimate depiction of the day-to-day life of two principals exposes a lot about the realities of US public education today. While I initially set out to study the role two skilled principals played in instruction, I quickly found myself engulfed in a world that seemed much of the time to be anything but instruction-centered.

Education scholarship has established that high-quality student performance, albeit in an indirect and complex manner, depends on high-quality school leadership. The critical contribution of school principals to improving student performance was highlighted in the effective schools research (Glasman and Heck, 1992; Bamberg, 1991;

Firestone and Wilson, 1989; Purkey and Smith, 1985; Glasman, 1984; Percell and Cookson, 1982). In the current arena of standards-based reform and high-stakes accountability, the role that the principal plays in instruction has grown more complex and consequential.

In theory, instructional leadership seems quite straight-forward: The principal's every action and decision is focused on the singular goal of ensuring that all students achieve high academic standards. Many studies have presented lists of research-based behaviors required of school administrators if their efforts are to yield positive results. The natural inclination would be to apply these standards to the practice of principals. The commonsense response that these lists of behaviors are then understood and applied by principals masks the complexity of the relationship between what the principal presumably knows and what the principal actually does in practice. Moreover, this complex connection raises an important question – why are the expressed intentions of principals and the principals' actions in everyday practice frequently incongruent? In light of research that suggests certain behaviors of principals can generate beneficial educational outcomes, such a question presents a sociological puzzle of educational significance.

Numerous studies have portrayed the role of the principal over time and informed how policy reform in general has affected public and professional perceptions of the role, but far less scholarly attention has been paid to the practices of the principals inhabiting this dynamic role during those same periods (Marks and Nance, 2007; Browne-Ferrigno and Muth, 2004; Lane, 1984; Hallinger et al, 1983). To some, effective practice may be

inferred by examining what is mandated by current policy, but this dissertation demonstrates the need to augment such inferences with interpretive inquiries of real principals in real time. As such, the existing literature does not adequately discuss the impact of current influences on how principals perform the role of principal, specifically, their role in instruction within the organization.

The following study was designed to address this critical gap in the literature. The guiding questions posed by this study are – What do principals say about their beliefs regarding their role in instruction? What in their situations and context makes what they say about their role in instruction sensible? How do principals enact the role in practice? What within the context shapes what they do and makes their behaviors sensible?

To answer these questions, I spent four months studying two elementary school principals in two different schools within the same suburban school district. This study illuminates how the two different principals enacted their roles within the context of specific school organizations, what they said and made of the organization of school and their role in instruction, and how they responded to their given situations. The following is an analysis of these sociocultural practices through the frame of both organizational theory and an interpretive methodology.

This study argues that there exists today a requisite obligation to add to our sociological understanding of the complex environment principals must navigate in order to succeed as organizational and instructional leaders. Too frequently the scholarship stops at defining essential qualities for instructional leadership without considering the context within which the principal is charged with operationalizing the role of

instructional leader. This study presents an initial inquiry into the dichotomy of prescribed behaviors and enacted behaviors, illuminating the convergence of authority structures and instructional leadership. This begets a need for empirical research to facilitate the efficacy of the use of authority structures by principals to influence teachers and thus cultivate improvement in pedagogical practice.

Section I:
Introduction to the Literature, Methodology,
and the Case Study Schools

Chapter 2

The Principalship: Lessons from the Literature

Education Reform in the United States and the Principal's Role

The leadership role of the principal has changed profoundly during the past 30 years. Having been characterized by a set of clerical tasks and bureaucratic structures prior to the 1970's, the conception of the principalship saw significant changes during the effective schools reform period of the late 1970's and 1980's and then subsequently during the standards-based reform period of the 1990's and the current accountability reform period. As these school reform movements evolved, principals experienced increasing pressure to answer calls for school improvement that would boost achievement of students. Dealing with increasing accountability in the context of systemic change, principals had not only to face society's political demands for school reform, but also local demands for teacher autonomy and shared leadership.

The election of Reagan in 1980 gave voice to those sectors of the population who believed that progress toward social equality was moving too fast, test scores were declining, and the educational foundations of society were being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity. Out of these growing concerns came a fundamental shift in the way the nation deliberated about education. One of Reagan's first and highly publicized acts was to appoint the National Commission on Educational Excellence. In 1983 the commission published *A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, National Commission on

Excellence in Education, 1983), which claimed that the schools had assumed undifferentiated mediocrity as a universal educational norm. Using vivid military language, the document proclaimed that the damage done by the nation's schools put the welfare of the country at risk. It was as if "an act of war" had it been perpetrated by a foreign power (Metz, 2005). *A Nation at Risk* called for the widespread raising of standards in the nation's schools and held government, school staffs, parents, and students responsible.

A Nation at Risk resulted in an increased scrutiny of US public schools at precisely the time when effective schools research was suggesting the means by which US public schools could be improved. Research during the 1970's and early 1980's focused much attention on effective schools studies – identifying factors within the school that can make a difference in student learning (Glasman & Heck, 1992). Among other well-publicized findings, the effective schools literature asserted the relationship between particular types of principal leadership behaviors and improved student outcomes. More specifically, this scholarship (Glasman & Heck, 1992; Bamberg, 1991; Firestone & Wilson, 1989; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Glasman, 1984; Percell & Cookson, 1982) suggested that effective principals demonstrate commitment to academic goals, create a climate of high expectations for student progress, allocate important resources, be forceful and dynamic managers, and create a stable learning environment with a clear discipline code. The research also suggested that lasting improvement in student achievement is more likely to result from policies that encourage bottom-up, school-specific reform efforts (Purkey & Smith, 1985). This type of change requires a

participatory approach to school improvement that relies on collaboration and shared decision-making. This research spoke to the relationship between principals and teaching and learning, thus affecting the role of the principal by transforming it from a traditional management/administrative position to a more contemporary role as a shared leader of instruction.

Traditional Bureaucratic Positioning of the Principal

Prior to the effective schools reform period and the concomitant call for reform in *A Nation at Risk*, US public K-12 schools were organized as traditional bureaucracies. The role of the principal emerged during the mid-nineteenth century, along with the role of the superintendent (Bidwell, 1965). The demand for some degree of curricular and instructional uniformity at the time meant that teachers and department heads could no longer exercise full discretion over the areas of curriculum and instruction. Because their emerging role required them to have some working knowledge of elementary or secondary education, superintendents and principals were recruited from the ranks of teachers. The superintendent was held responsible for academic administration, while the principalship was first put in charge of a set of clerical duties. After 1850, as curricular complexity grew, the superintendent could no longer assume the multifaceted responsibilities of academic administration. It was then that the authority for curricular and instructional supervision was allocated to the principal. By the turn of the twentieth century, the superintendent was the individual held responsible for all aspects of school operation, including academic administration (of which they delegated much responsibility to principals), while the school board held a more fiduciary role.

For years the formal organization of instruction and administration remained essentially stable in US public K-12 education, despite massive increases in the number of students to be educated in these school systems and the expanding ethnic diversity of these students. Some fundamental qualities of the bureaucratic rational model – uniformity and standardization – became predominant characteristics of the US public school district in the twentieth century. Schools had a division of labor, some definition of staff roles, hierarchical ordering of offices, and they operated according to rules of procedure (Bidwell, 1965).

Some of the earliest organizational studies of schools began to challenge the degree to which schools can or should or do, in practice, function as bureaucratic organizations. These early studies of schools as formal organizations (Bidwell, 1965; Waller, 1932) found that school organizations often did not have distinct, unified goals. Moreover, rather than a strict hierarchy of well-defined roles and expectations, what actually existed in schools was a loose coupling of hierarchically arranged roles representing an informal, rather than a formal, delegation of authority. This loose coupling meant that teachers had considerable autonomy to define their own goals and determine how to teach. Simply put, principals, although recognized as the formal bureaucratic authority, did not in practice command any direct leverage over what went on in individual classrooms.

Literature on school reform and change has linked principals to effective school production; however, a principal has authority that is at best uneven and at worst essentially weak (Bidwell, 2001). The literature consistently portrays the role of school

principal as multifaceted and complex; with challenges regarding issues of power that impact the principal's ability to do what is needed for the benefit of the organization.

Power structures related to the role of the principal within the district and school influence how individuals enact the role. The principalship can be described as "an essential organizational role that involves a multifaceted and complex set of responsibilities and a problematic claim to the power needed to carry out the essential organizational tasks so assigned" (Becker, 2005, p.112). Parsons (1956) portrays the power structure of the principal as notably weak. In his classic analysis of organizations as political systems, he describes organizations as comprised of three levels of structure: general administration (e.g., the district office), middle management (e.g., the principal's office), and the production subunit (e.g., the faculty workplace). Top managers (district office personnel) have power derived from control over the inputs that the organization requires to survive and prosper. Principals find themselves in middle-management positions. They are assigned responsibility for carrying out the directives from the top, while simultaneously performing alongside teachers in schools to produce educated students. Middle management (the principal) has power directed downward which can constrain the principal's ability to distribute resources, punishments, rewards, and direction among teachers and staff. Principals in this middle management position also have the power of selective communication, directed both upward and downward, that transpires from their unique access to people and information about the internal workings of the school organization.

Actors within the organization have power resources that are distinctive of their position (Parsons, 1956). Because principals occupy the “middleman” position, they find themselves operating somewhere between their collegial ties to their teaching staffs and their responsibilities to their superordinates (Bidwell, 1965). Principals do have bureaucratic power, but their power is limited by two important factors: 1) they are not the top managers in the organization and 2) teachers derive a great deal of authority through their claims to professional autonomy over instruction and curriculum.

Although some early research pointed to the loose coupling within school organizations and uncertain claims to power, the principal was still considered to be the traditional bureaucratic head of the school organization. However, this began to change with the effective schools literature of the 1980’s which challenged sociocultural beliefs about the principal’s role in teaching and learning.

Effective Schools Research and the Emerging Role of Instructional Leader

The effective schools research brought to light the established link between the school principal and student outcomes and in turn increased the status of the role of the principal. The elevation of the role meant increased expectations for performance in the role. At this time, a newly conceptualized view of the principal began to emerge – one of instructional leader. Instructional leadership, narrowly defined, focuses on leadership functions directly related to teaching and learning (Murphy, 1988). As an instructional leader, the principal is to complement teachers in their role as educational professionals with specialized expertise in curriculum, instruction, and assessment and with a legitimate voice in decision-making (Marks and Nance, 2007).

This first wave of educational reforms of the 1980's focused on increasing centralized controls over curriculum and instruction to improve school outcomes. Because these reforms served as the rationale for change, federal and state policy initiatives were purported to have enhanced the influence of lower levels of government (i.e., the school district) by creating opportunities for action (Bidwell, 2001). As federal and state policy influence grew, decision-making of school principals would also grow because districts typically charged schools with implementing state and federal initiatives. Early conceptions of an instructional leader focused on how to manage school processes and procedures related to instruction and supervision. This early hierarchical orientation of instructional leadership would soon conflict with the increasing call to enhance the democratic and participative nature of school organizations.

In 1986, the Carnegie Commission countered the federal and state policies of the early 1980's with a report of its own, arguing that more teacher autonomy and collective decision-making were essential for school staffs to design school programs in ways that would meet the needs of their specific communities and school populations. Schools' failure to effectively educate students was attributed to an educational bureaucracy that did not work, thus calling for a fundamental restructuring initiative to decentralize schools.

As the 1980's continued to unfold, expectations for student performance intensified. As a result, the focus for improvement noticeably shifted toward restructuring schools – altering school organizations, creating greater accountability, and enhancing opportunities for school-based leadership. Examples of site-based reform

indicated a change in the principal's role in schools. School decentralization and restructuring lessened the influence of districts on schools, with district influence on curriculum and instruction tending to be scattered and ineffectual. The inclusion of new groups of stakeholders (e.g., teachers and parents) in the decision-making process in schools increased the importance of participative principals with well-developed interpersonal skills. Their effectiveness in creating a culture of improved site-based decision-making was largely dependent on their ability to embody human resources roles including mediator, consensus builder, and builder-of-trust. As more constituencies took voice in the decision-making process, tensions among groups intensified. A conflict between parents and teachers grew because parents wanted to be empowered in core technology decisions, while teachers continued to view themselves as the experts in curriculum and instruction (Hausman, et al, 2000). Public language was deployed to manipulate belief, evoke emotion, and shape the course of events.

The intensification of research on school effectiveness in the 1980's had also advanced the use of achievement data to evaluate the school's instructional efforts in ways that impacted the role of the principal. Effective schools research had been a driving force behind political efforts to improve public education through increased accountability. This research argued that improved student outcomes could be attained through strategic school organization and strong principal leadership. External demands for improved quality of educational outcomes resulted in policy decisions aimed at holding district administrators and principals accountable for measures of schools' academic performance (Heck, 1992).

The conceptualization of the principal's role changed along with the increasing external demands for educational accountability. The principal was no longer simply a "principal teacher" as had been the case in early US public schools, nor was the principal any longer characterized by the managerial role of instructional leader (Bidwell, 2001). The reform of the system from closed (emphasizing management and centralized control) to open (emphasizing leadership and decentralized participation) meant the principal's role was now different.

The evolving conceptualization of the principal as leader reflected a greater recognition of the principal as a key actor in promoting school effectiveness (Glasman and Heck, 1992). This view of the principal entailed a new set of performance expectations. In contrast to what had been the common definition of instructional leadership – "reinforcing specific prescribed teacher behavior skills" (Pajak, 1993, p.318), the emerging dialogue stressed classroom teaching, curriculum, and staff development aspects of instructional leadership and "helping teachers discover and construct professional knowledge and skills" (Pajak, 1993, p.318). Learning was viewed as contextual and complex, teaching was based on reflective judgment, and schools were seen as democratic teaching and learning communities.

Demands for Accountability and Results

By the early 1990's, the effective schools reform momentum slowed, but other reform efforts intensified. States began paying attention to accountability by putting teeth into their own curriculum frameworks, textbook adoptions, and standardized state tests. Neither the top-down efforts of the early 1980's nor the bottom-up efforts of the

late 1980's had produced significant improvement in student achievement. *A Nation at Risk* had placed a managerial emphasis on raising standards by explicitly stating the need for all agencies to produce student achievement outcomes. The next step in defining specific standards for student achievement was on the horizon.

Driving the reform efforts of the 1990's was a demand for accountability and results, with states ranking, classifying, and sanctioning districts and schools on their performance. *The Goals 2000: Educate America Act*, with its historic mission of compelling schools to raise academic standards, was signed into law by President William Clinton in 1994. By providing resources, direction, and flexibility, *Goals 2000* supported state and local implementation of school change. With demands based on the *Goals 2000* initiative coming from state governors, states began developing common curricular standards. The focus of this standards-based reform was to support state efforts to develop clear and rigorous standards for what every child should know and be able to do. As the notion of statewide standards grew, it blended with the managerial emphasis of *A Nation at Risk* and the new emphasis on schools, rather than students, as the basis for solving the problem of low academic achievement. This led to a movement to use district and statewide testing to provide a better picture of what children were learning and to provide an instrument that could be used to identify and improve schools that were less effective than other schools.

By the 2000 presidential election, the conversation no longer centered on whether there should be standardized accountability. Standards and testing were taken for granted by both major political parties. Rather, the discussion now centered around how much

testing should be done and how involved the federal government should be. The conversation among policymakers and public educators narrowed to a discussion about whether or not schools were employing rigorous curricular standards and students were demonstrating, via tests, that they were mastering those standards.

Making the most of this period of bipartisan agreement regarding standardized expectations, members of the George H.W. Bush administration crafted the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2000 (NCLB)*. This act was a reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, the historic federal education legislation designed to improve educational opportunities for disadvantaged students. In addition to mandating benchmark performance requirements for all students, not only disadvantaged students, NCLB also requires that all teachers be “highly qualified” – that they have majors in the subjects they teach. States are responsible for determining the scores that students must meet on tests each year to demonstrate adequate progress. Likewise, states must set goals for increases in the percentage of students meeting the indicators of proficiency every year until 2014, when the criterion for all students in all schools must be 100%.

The advent of high-stakes testing has placed new demands on school principals. Under *No Child Left Behind*, if schools do not meet their state’s adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals,¹ as measured by gains in student test scores, they face increasingly punitive

¹ AYP (adequate yearly progress) is a series of annual academic performance goals established for each school, district, and the state as a whole. Schools, districts, and the state are determined to have met AYP if they meet or exceed each year’s goals (AYP target and criteria). AYP is required under Title I of the federal NCLB Act of 2001. States commit to the goals of NCLB by participating in Title I, a program under NCLB that provides funding to help educate low-income children. The primary goal of Title I is

actions that can culminate in school restructuring and state takeover, potentially leading to job loss for teachers and principals (Foote, 2007). In addition to penalizing actions, incentives for high-achieving schools promise public recognition in the form of newspaper headlines and public displays of judgment, and sometimes even monetary bonuses for school personnel. Demands for improved quality of educational outcomes have resulted in policy decisions intended to hold district administrators and principals accountable for schools' academic performance (Heck, 1992).

Contemporary policy now places much emphasis on test scores and public accountability, which many claim is giving rise to a return to tighter bureaucratic control and compliance. One could infer that this is changing the perceived role of the principal. In addition to the enduring expectation that principals serve as agents of change in response to reform, present-day policies call for principals to use their leadership position to directly impact and improve teaching and learning. The principal's role within these contextual conditions is complex and uncertain. Historically, instructional leadership has been described as having advanced over time based on the emphasized principles of professional equality (not hierarchy) and teacher reflection and growth (not compliance). Despite the fact that many approaches to instructional leadership have been previously conceptualized as collaborative in nature, the political call for accountability has meant a rise in instructional leadership that involves inspection, oversight, and evaluation of classroom instruction (Blase and Blasé, 1999).

for all students to be proficient in English language arts and mathematics, as determined by state assessments, by 2014.

Principal Perceptions of Their Changing Organizational Roles

Despite these important historical developments, few studies have looked at principals' perceptions of their roles and the influence they have on teaching and learning. A quantitative study by Marks and Nance (2007) investigated principal perceptions of their influence as decision makers. This study considered how various accountability contexts – including states, local boards, districts, school site councils, parent associations, and teachers – affect the perception that principals have about their ability to influence instructional and supervisory decisions in their schools. The study was designed to examine state, district, and local levels of policy activity and their relative influence on principal perceptions of his or her ability to influence school-level decisions. To examine variation in principal perceptions of influence within and between states, the study used hierarchical linear modeling as its primary analytic technique and one-way analysis of variance to compare high and low control states and two measures of influence – 1) school supervisory and 2) curriculum and instruction. Participants included 8,524 principals from primarily regular public schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia responding to queries regarding their perceptions about their professional influence and the influence of various other policy actors on decision making in the instructional and supervisory domains in their schools.

Results from the Marks and Nance study indicate that the various accountability contexts differentially affect principals' perceptions about their influence. Influence in both the supervisory and instructional domains were strongly related to that of teachers' active participation in decision making, suggesting the benefits of mutuality in school

leadership. Administrators who consider teachers as active participants in school decision making have fewer negative perceptions about the influences of various outside entities – the state, the school district, the school site council, and the parent association – and how those entities affect the principal’s job. This perception of decreased negative influence from those entities was true for both spheres of influence – instruction and supervisory decisions – when teachers were involved as active participants within the organizational decision-making process.

Principals’ ability to influence instructional and supervisory decisions depends on factors both internal and external to the school. Internally, principals operate within sets of challenges unique to their schools and organizational conditions. Externally, multiple accountability contexts – states, school districts, local boards, school councils, and parent associations – have the potential to support or constrain the influence of school principals. Despite the embedded nature of the principalship, little is known about how contextual influences affect principals in their roles (Marks and Nance, 2007).

Limited studies pertaining to the socialization of the principal role have, however, led to some understanding of the transformations that occur as individuals enact the role of school principal. A qualitative multiple-case study addressed the issue of professional socialization of principals at the high school level (Parkay, et al, 1992). The study documented the experiences of 12 first-time high school principals during the three-year period following their appointment. These 12 principals were from 5 different states in the 4 geographical regions of the United States. The schools were located in a range of settings – rural, suburban, and urban. Seven members of the research team were assigned

to one or two of the 12 principals during the 1987-1988 school year to observe and document the principals' first year. The objective of the Parkay study was to extend and enrich the understanding of the assorted events that form the professional socialization experiences for the new principal and sought to answer the following questions: 1) What are the perceptions, experiences, and concerns of high school principals during the three-year period following their appointment as a new principal? and 2) Do these perceptions, experiences, and concerns change over time, and if so, is there an identifiable pattern to these changes?

The Parkay study found the principals to fall into five stages of professional socialization, with 5 being the most advanced. Each stage is characterized by a predominant theme or pattern that characterizes the principal's actions. Stage 1 (survival), Stage 2 (control), Stage 3 (stability), Stage 4 (educational leadership), and Stage 5 (professional actualization). This study purports that principals who have achieved a higher level of professional socialization (stage 5) take the "long view;" they are energized by their job and their visions for their schools. They empower others and they network with staff. In addition, they communicate respect for the vision of others. This study is limited in its ability to completely explain the constructs of professional socialization and organizational socialization, specifically, how the meanings are captured in the beliefs and behaviors of the principals studied. It attempts to underscore that professional socialization rather than organizational socialization is experienced more powerfully by principals at stage 5 when compared to others. The distinction is inferred because the stage 5 principals' actions are informed by a strong sense of what it

means to be a principal, and they have internalized a code of professional ethics that guides them. The principals at higher stages tend to receive much of their confirmation from within (inner-directed) than from without. Concurrently, more highly evolved principals realize they cannot do everything, rather they must empower others in meaningful ways. From these factors, one is left to infer the meanings that individual principals derive from their role as part of the principal profession. What are these words – long view, energized, visions, empower, network, communicate respect – in practice? The Parkay study references the individual’s internal code of professional ethics and inner-directedness that purportedly drives stage 5 actions, but it is limited by its inability to define how that is demonstrated by the actual actors themselves in practice.

The pressures of current educational policies and the conflicting demands they make on educators places much responsibility on the shoulders of school principals. Although states have traditionally exercised authority in the supervisory domain of schooling, the states’ increasingly dominant role in the instructional domain may be felt by principals more acutely as it hits at the core tasks of schooling.

Summary of the Review of the Literature

Scholarly literature illuminates how changing social contexts in the US have placed differing sets of demands on the role of the principal, painting a complex portrait of the school principalship. Given the multiple high expectations placed on US public schools and school principals, the diverse number of constituencies with whom they work, and the complexity of schooling, serving as a principal has been summarized in the literature as a demanding and difficult role. Social role theories offer one explanation for

the complex and often ambiguous actions of school principals. These theories lend insight into the many factors that influence how principals actively construct themselves and their role. The historical perspective of the role of the principal over time, combined with the constructs of social role theories, points to changing expectations for principals as well as assumptions about the role itself. The principal must now be prepared to serve as a so-called instructional leader in a world of (a) decentralized and centralized school structures, (b) increasing and changing environmental contexts, and (c) a market-driven, results-oriented view of education.

The notion of instructional leadership was initially developed during the effective schools movement of the 1980's and viewed the principal as a primary source of educational expertise. Aimed at standardizing the practice of effective teaching, the principal's role as instructional leader at that time was to maintain high expectations for teachers and students, supervise classroom instruction, coordinate the school's curriculum, and monitor student progress (Barth, 1986).

The hierarchical orientation of instructional leadership that emerged with effective school research conflicted with the democratic and participative organization of schools that emerged in the late 1980's with school restructuring and the movement to empower teachers as professional educators. At that time, schools' failure to educate effectively was attributed to the educational bureaucracy (Carnegie Foundation on Education and the Economy, 1986) and as a result, a fundamental restructuring initiative entailed decentralizing the school's authority over such matters as budgets, hiring,

curriculum and instruction. When principals adopted this model fully, they shared management decisions with teachers.

As the reform movement evolved, however, principals felt pressure to be accountable for school improvement and the achievement of students. Bureaucratic influences at the state and federal levels mandated student proficiency rates and school growth targets. Dealing with accountability in the context of systemic change, principals had to face the implications of the standards movement, curriculum frameworks, and new forms of assessment. All this called for principals to once again take a central role in teaching and learning. Critics, however, regarded the traditional models of instructional leadership as paternalistic, archaic, and dependent on docile followers. Rather, some purport that principals should encourage teachers to be informed and active in improving schools by facilitating teachers' exercise of initiative and responsibility in instructional issues.

Complicating any accurate interpretation of the role of the school principal is the reality that the role is plagued by challenges regarding issues of power and authority. The principal's authority and influence are dependent on both internal and external factors: 1) those internal challenges unique to their schools and organizational conditions and 2) the multiple external accountability contexts – federal NCLB requirements, state standards, school district mandates, local board expectations, school council involvement, and parent association participation. Looking at the role of principal historically and sociologically, one can see both highly institutionalized aspects that have not changed over time, as well as policy that has called for reform. Constant structured aspects of the

role are in conflict with appeals for change. This study sheds light on how principals in concert with others cope with deeply institutionalized structures that constitute the role, while at the same time sorts out the changes in the political context that call for reform to the role.

Although some progress has been made in understanding the relationships among instructional leadership, teaching, and even student achievement, most aspects of this complex phenomenon have not been adequately studied. Thus far, research on instructional leadership has provided lists describing what the individual should do to “effectively” fulfill the role, but missing from the scholarship is an understanding of the complexity of those two words – instructional leadership – within the daily practice of principaling.

Chapter 3

Methodological and Theoretical Approach

Overview of Methodology and Guiding Theories

The core focus of this study was how the principal functions in a school organization that was situated within the context of a complex set of political forces and environmental influences. This study rested on my assumption that the school as an organization represents a specific type of social arrangement and as individuals participate within this social arrangement they interpret stimuli that is socioculturally produced in this particular arrangement. In turn, their interpretations, continually under revision as events unfolded, shaped their actions and brought meaning to the behaviors within the organization. Thus, the fundamental inquiry of the dissertation project was to identify the school-level organizational characteristics (including environmental and contextual characteristics) and to relate those characteristics to behaviors that suggest particular patterns of principal actions. Put simply, I sought to show how and why principals behaved as they did within the context of their school organizations, what they said and made of the organization of the school and their role in instruction, and how they responded in their situations.

The underpinning conceptual frame that I brought to this study was a blending of sociocultural theoretical frameworks: organizational theory (including authority structures and the roles of participants within the organization) and culture theory.

Whereas I was interested in the cultural system that people produce and employ in everyday lives in schools, I employed the theoretical contribution that the study of organizations can make to framing and, thus, interpreting the symbolic social structures that constitute human cultural systems.

These theoretical assumptions and the questions I sought to answer led me to employ interpretivist methodologies. Interpretivist methods:

combine close analysis of fine details of behavior and meaning in everyday social interaction with analysis of the wider social context – the field of broader social influences – within which the face-to-face interaction takes place...investigating the slippery phenomena of everyday interaction and its connections, through the medium of subjective meaning, with the wider social world (Erickson, 1986, p. 120).

As Erickson discusses, interpretive methodologies focus on human meaning with the intent to reveal sociocultural processes that explain why and how sociocultural phenomena happen or how specified sociocultural relationships exist. Other approaches seek to determine how frequently a particular sociocultural phenomenon occurs or the probability of causal relationships between variables, while interpretive approaches seek to understand the sociocultural patterns by exploring how those patterns are produced through time. I sought to illuminate the behaviors of two case study principals who operated within two organizational structures and the social processes that produced patterns in the meaning interpretations held by the principals. The social processes I wanted to explain were the ways in which the experiences of the two case study principals interacted with others at their respective schools and how those interactions influenced instruction.

The Social Construction of Meaning

Culture theory is used to capture how principals made sense of what they did within their particular organizational and institutional locations. Using the principles underpinning “new ethnography,” (Agar, 1996) I investigated the power and interests of the local world of principals, specifically, those that influenced the context and meaning within which principals enacted their role.

As Geertz (1973) defines culture, it is a web of meanings in which we are suspended and in which we are spun. Using ethnographic methods, I have attempted to illuminate the patterns of culture - how culture both affects and reflects the principals’ world. Culture is characterized “not as a systematic set of logically interrelated propositions about values, norms and natures of the empirical world, but a broad, diffuse, and potentially contradictory body of shared understandings about both what is and what ought to be” (Metz, 2003, p. 54). Meaning varies by context and is better understood by locating the local contexts with larger contexts. The cultural codes within the local and larger contexts establish the perimeters within which the two principals perceived and enacted their role. As the principals acted within the school’s culture, they continuously recreated and redefined the culture, borrowing from the existing cultural tool box and using those tools to fit particular situations and functions. Culture was available publicly and through the collection of data (e.g., the use of principals’ words), which has allowed me to understand and interpret meaning, specifically, what made the principals’ behaviors sensible to them (Ortner, 1999).

Principals enter schools and districts with clearly defined and distinctive cultures of their own. By examining principals within the first five years of assuming the position, this study looked at how these principals enacted their role in the social world of the principal; how principals were affected by the existing culture and how they made sense of their role within it. These frames have helped to illustrate the personal and organizational experiences and conditions that influenced role conceptions and principal behaviors.

With this in mind, interpretive methodologies required me to be present in the social world (the school) to capture the sense that human beings made of one another in their social arrangements. The two principals' interactions with others in the environment were observed to explain what it means to "principal" a school that is socially constructed, how the two principals made sense of what they did, and how the environmental context in which they behaved influenced how the principals fulfilled the role. Moreover, an important question was to explain how emergent social structures were reproduced by the individuals who comprised them.

I organized my inquiry into the practice of instructional leadership by attending to the following issues: 1) how the principal functions in an environment that is influenced by multiple factors; 2) how the principal functions within the context of the organizational structures; 3) how the principal makes sense of what it means to "principal" a school and fulfill his or her instructional obligations; and 4) the behaviors of the principal as the individual socially constructs the role.

The School as an Organization

The role of principal is situated within a firmly institutionalized organization. The application of the research on organizations contributes to sociological knowledge by increasing our understanding of how generic social processes operate within distinctive social structures. Understanding and considering the institutionalized elements of the school organization and the role of the principal within that organization were key to my sociocultural interpretation of the role performance of the school principal.

I used three prominent sociologists of organizations and schools as organizations – Richard Scott, Charles Bidwell, and Willard Waller – to form a working definition of the word *organization* and develop a conceptual framework that would help to frame my thinking and inform my data collection. Scott (2003), defines the term organization as “social structures created by individuals to support the collaborative pursuit of specified goals” (p. 11). Social structure refers to “the patterned or regularized aspects of the relationships existing among participants in the organization” (p. 18). According to Scott, organizations are viewed as “the primary vehicle by which, systematically, the areas of our lives are rationalized – planned, articulated, scientized, made more efficient and orderly, and managed by ‘experts’” (p. 5).

Organizations are diverse and complex, however rooted within the concept of “organization” as it is defined, is the theme that all organizations share some basic characteristics. In gathering and continuously evaluating my data, I was mindful that these common elements provided a way to explicate the data by categorizing which pieces fit within each of the elements existent within an organization. Throughout this

project, I considered the *school as an organization* to be defined by the common elements present in organizations as described by Scott (2003) - structures, participants, goals, technology, and environment.

An organization's social structure is dependent on the relationships of its participants, who are defined as "those individuals who, in return for a variety of inducements, make contributions to the organization" (Scott, 2003, p. 21). The term goal is defined as "conceptions of desired ends – ends that participants attempt to achieve through their performance of task activities" (Scott, 2003, p. 22). The organization's technology refers to the process or mechanisms utilized by individuals within the organization to do their work, thus, it can be said that the technology is employed to achieve the desired goals of the participants (p. 22). Lastly, the environment refers to the physical, technological, cultural, and social contexts to which the organization must adapt (p. 23).

Social science makes the claim that social behavior is complex and contextually bound. Randall Collins (1994) gives us a useful way to examine this theoretical claim by presenting four categories – four differing ways of interpreting the social system: the conflict tradition, the rational/utilitarian tradition, the Durkheimian tradition, and the microinteractionist tradition. The paradigm one chooses to work in at any point in time is dependent on the schema of the situation, and individuals act within the explanatory schema of paradigms.

In what follows, I apply the Durkheimian Tradition. Durkheimian tradition emphasizes that people accrue benefits and essential necessities by associating with one

another. Through association, people make the social rules, norms, and structures that help them navigate through their lives. By examining different kinds and degrees of social order, one is able to look for causes and correlates within the social system (Collins, 1994).

To frame my analysis, I applied Durkheim's set of ideas about social order to Scott's (1998) three theoretical definitions of organizations: rational systems theory, natural systems theory, and open systems theory. First, rational systems theory is defined by the distinctive characteristics of organizations, including their normative structure. The rational system theory describes organizations as "collectivities oriented to the pursuit of relatively specific goals and exhibiting highly formalized social structures" (Scott, 1998, p. 26). Using this definition, I attended to the notion that organizations are purposeful and have specific goals to which they are oriented.

A second definition of organizations is natural systems theory, which points to an informal and interpersonal structure. This lens drew my attention to the informal behaviors of participants that illuminate underlying factors involved in the social processes between principals and others within the organization. The participants within the organization have varying interests, but they see the value in being part of the organization and view it as an important resource. Organizations are "collectivities whose participants are pursuing multiple interests, both disparate and in common, but recognize the value of perpetuating the organization as an important resource" (Scott, 1998, p. 26).

Taking it one step beyond just the informal processes at play within the school, Scott's third definition provides the lens which views the organization as an open system that is not only informed by that which occurs within the organization, but is also dependent on the outside for resources, personnel and information. This definition, referred to as the open systems theory, views organizations as a system of interdependent activities in which the systems are dependent on the environments in which they operate. I used this lens to assess the effect of outside social influences on the social behaviors occurring within the schools where the two case study principals worked.

Charles Bidwell (1965, 2001) helped identify more specifically the relevant sociocultural rules, norms, and structures produced within the associative exchange we recognize as a formal school organization. As one of the first to apply the elements of organizations to schools, Bidwell identified the discerning characteristics of the school as an organization, and his analysis produced three broad assumptions about the nature of the school organization.

Bidwell's first assumption is that school systems are client serving. Their primary mission as a social unit is the moral and technical socialization of students, thus preparing them for adult roles. Bidwell's second assumption is the notion that there exists in the school organization a fundamental dichotomy between student and staff roles. Students attend school because their participation is mandatory, but staff members enter their roles voluntarily. The third assumption is that schools are to some degree bureaucratic. Rationalized activities are necessary for the school system to function. (e.g., functional division of labor, defined staff roles, hierarchic ordering of staff, operating according to

rules of procedure). This third assumption proved valuable to my line of inquiry by providing the comparative lens of bureaucratic rationalized behaviors with what was occurring in the two schools in which the case study principals were situated.

Waller's (1932) description adds further understanding to Bidwell's explanation with his claim that schools are not only bureaucracies, but also small societies. Schools are permeated by the community and their environments, but they are also given much autonomy. Although there is uniform bureaucratic basis for expectations from teachers and principals, such as criteria regarding standardization of results and student outcomes, teachers have broad discretionary jurisdiction within the boundaries of the classroom.

Bidwell explains this complex set of dynamics and argues that the school organization is inherently bureaucratic due to the implicit conflict that exists as a result of the need by some participants (i.e., the super-ordinates) in the organization to employ hierarchical authority structures in schools and the fact that in large part the technology used by some participants (i.e., the subordinates) within the organization are interpersonal, emotional, and dependent on the professional competence of individual teachers. On the one hand, the "loose coupling" that exists as a result of the need to create spaces within the organization that provide teachers with desired autonomy in schools can be problematic to the authority of the administrators, for teachers have much independence. On the other hand, the autonomous nature of teachers and schools can also be seen as functional for the organization as it provides teachers with the opportunity to exercise their personal and professional judgment (Bidwell, 2001).

Interpretive theory and organizational theory are used to capture the formal organizational goals and reasons people come together, as well as the informal occurrences that occur in context. To help illustrate how it is empirically insightful to study principals through the frame of organizational theory, I refer to Metz's (2003) study of three magnet schools. In her study, Metz portrayed the lives of each of three schools as wholes, conveyed the experiences of staff and students in schools, and described the feelings and actions of the participants. Writing as a sociologist with training in the study of organizations, Metz uses the description of magnet schools in an urban district to analyze and understand the characteristics of school organization that shape the lives of teachers and students in fundamentally important ways.

In her examination of schools as organizations, Metz compared traditional bureaucratic understandings of the school with what actually occurs in schools. By weaving interpretivist approaches with organizational theory, Metz's work portrays schools as characterized by the social construction of authority through both formal and informal structures. Metz argues that the uncertainty of technological elements within the school as an organization, together with the inconsistent and changing needs of students, make it necessary at times to deviate from the formal hierarchical authority structures found in the bureaucratic model. Influences from outside the school set conditions which interact with internal processes to form the context of school life. In her study of the magnet schools, Metz (2003) describes common meaning systems shared by the faculty that take on the tacit qualities of a subculture and influence how teachers understand and respond to initiatives from the district and directives from the principal.

To fully illuminate the factors that influence principal behaviors, I also looked to new institutionalism and its contribution to identifying external mechanisms that structure schools. Although actors within these organizations make the decisions that adapt school structure, the constraints to which school structure is adapted arise from the processes of cultural influence and social control that create and maintain institutionalized beliefs about schools.

Schools are formal organizations that are characterized by their highly institutionalized structures. The term institution is understood to be “the social and cultural systems that influence the social processes that comprise individual organizations” (Becker, 2005, p. 45). Institutional thinking and organizational thinking overlap when formal organizations become institutionalized, resulting in patterns that become understood by large numbers of people. School is a formal organization whose rules and roles are understood by large numbers; therefore, “school” is an institution.

According to Bidwell (2001), “These environments encompass beliefs about the purposes of education, about the way in which education should be conducted, and about the organizational arrangement for its conduct” (p. 107). Schools have developed organizational structures that reflect institutional rules. Schools are impelled to incorporate the practices and procedures defined by prevailing notions of organizational work (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). They hold responsibilities in the socialization of youth – to provide experiences which instill knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values of society in their students. Schools are expected to prepare students for effective work and for occupational mobility. High schools are charged with the duty to create high school

graduates. Elementary and middle schools are expected to prepare students for success in high school. Many formalized structures and programs – the graded school, the specialization of teaching by grade and subject matter, specialized programs, the use of textbooks to teach, and intervention when students have problems - within the school are also highly institutionalized. In turn, teachers should be certified to teach and principals should be certified to have the skills to run schools.

Meyer (1977) positions individuals within schools and the schools themselves as part of a highly developed institution. Meyer describes schools as:

organized networks of socializing experiences which prepare individuals to act in society. More direct macrosociological effects have been given little attention. Yet in modern society education is a highly developed institution. It has a network of rules creating public classifications of persons and knowledge. It defines which individuals belong to these categories and possess the appropriate knowledge (p. 55).

Careful inspection of schools as organizations sheds light not only on how meaning is socially constructed, but also on how symbolic actions transform notions of agency and are shaped by institutional forces. Therefore, organizations are viewed as much more than systems of production and rational-choice among individuals, but by their customs and obligations as institutions. Young's definition of an institution – “recognized practices consisting of easily identifiable roles, coupled with collections of rules or conventions governing relations among the occupants of these roles” – is constant with these sociological theoretical assumptions (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991, p.8). This is important to consider when analyzing the social functions within schools.

In this view, institutions are seen as systems of behavior norms – organizational structures and processes that are seen as functioning at multiple social levels and

transcend any one particular organization. Thus, individuals' behaviors are potentially recognizable by their similarity in different settings and are not particular to one organization or locale. An institution is recognized to be the social and cultural arrangements that include the social processes that make up particular organizations. This thinking helps to explain the homogeneity in many organizations, including schools. Although the technology of schools is often uncertain and ambiguous, much similarity exists from one school to another and from one district to another. Institutionally held norms about what schools *should* look like and how they should operate cause this reproduction of schools to occur. Sociological assertions about institutional theory illuminate a connection between how schools are very much alike and at the same time very different from one another. Attention to this universal phenomenon has exposed historical traditions, beliefs, and norms about education and schooling that operate at a societal level in the United States.

Authority in School Organizations

At the onset of this dissertation project, I hypothesized that what principals express their role to be and how they behave in the role would be influenced by the formal organization of the school system and the multiple pressures on site administrators to affect school production. My research sought to capture the internal local sociocultural influences that carried importance even within schools that looked similar to one another, thus I situated my study within two schools of similar socioeconomic makeup. I sought to better understand how principals made sense of their role by looking at the ways unique individuals enacted the role. I theorized that differences in the ways principals

behave would be impacted by the informal processes that shape ideologies and structures within two different schools despite a district's attempt to formally structure them.

As the internal and external influences and the interactions of individuals within the schools unfolded throughout this project, I began to see how the causality of the two principals' behaviors was influenced by the social settings within which they were operating and how their responses to those situations were characterized by the employment of the structure of authority. This phenomenon enlightened and expanded on my original hypothesis, causing me to explore the underlying structures of authority within the socially constructed organization.

In order to develop a pragmatic understanding of the term "authority," I looked to the work of other sociologists and the body of empirical inquiries focusing on organizational behavior. To facilitate my ability to identify potential relevant external contexts and to help analyze the ways those external contexts might influence organizational behaviors, specifically, the use of authority structures within the organization, I employed the work of organizational theorists, Emile Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, and Max Weber. I took note of the views Durkheim, Parsons, and Weber developed to contextualize the work of principals and their attempts to influence others within the organization. Both Durkheim and Parsons assert that organizations are comprised of individuals sharing a common set of objectives. Thus, the underlying assumption is that the basis of social order relies on the existence of cooperative behavior and shared norms and values of participants which subsequently create organizational stability.

Despite numerous attempts at conceptual clarification and a growing body of research, Herbert A. Simon, one of the early pioneers of the science of administration, concluded in 1957 that “there is no consensus today in the management literature as to how the term ‘authority’ should be used” (p. 294). Although this assertion holds true today, I employed the widely recognized descriptions of authority supplied by German sociologist, Max Weber, and Harvard scholar, Talcott Parsons, as a springboard to frame individuals’ behaviors.

My approach to looking at the principals’ actions borrows from Max Weber’s (1968) description of “rational” or “legal” authority and the application of Philippe Aghion and Jean Tirole’s (1997) subsequent theory of the allocation of “formal authority” and “real authority.” Weber distinguishes three types of authority. First, traditional authority rests on the established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them. Second, rational-legal authority rests on a belief in the legality of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands. Third, charismatic authority rests on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him or her (Scott, 2003). Using Aghion and Tirole’s explanation of how authority is allocated, formal authority refers to the right to decide and real authority refers to the effective control over decisions within organizations.

I also drew from Weber’s (1978) placement of social relationships within the context of power to provide further clarification of the link between power and authority.

Weber defines social relationships as “the behavior of a plurality of actors insofar as, in its meaningful content, the action of each takes account of that of the others and is oriented in these terms” (Weber, 1978, p. 26). Subordinate to this definition, he defines power as “the probability that one actor within the social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests” (Weber, 1978, p. 53). Parsons explains the relationship between power and authority as one being directly derivative of the other – power is derivative of authority. According to Parsons, authority is the institutionalized legitimation which underlies power, and is defined as “the institutionalization of the rights of ‘leaders’ to expect support from the members of the collectivity” (Parsons, 1956).

To facilitate his research, Parsons developed a voluntaristic theory of action model. Parson’s theory of action, along with Weber’s and Aghion and Tirole’s theories of authority, allowed me to consider the effect of authority structures within a series of external social contexts on educational reform and the principals’ use of authority to exert influence. These models allow me to operationalize the concept of the principal as an individual acting within the construct of the school organization and provide a sensible way to interpret the relationship between what the principal says and does and how her use of authority is manifested within the context of her actions. I examined these behaviors within the constructs of the school as an organization, including the school-level organizational phenomena and the broader social context in which the phenomenon unfolded.

While Weber's and Parson's views of authority served as an important foundation for the development of my conceptual framework, as I applied my data collection and analysis, I adapted these models in significant ways. First, my unit of analysis was the school principal's actions specifically related to instruction, so I further unfolded the findings according to the leadership functions described as directly related to teaching and learning (Murphy, 1988). Second, I applied the constructs of authority structures as they were used within the context of defined instructional leadership practices, resulting in the following set of authority structures: principal as friend, principal as learner, principal as teacher, and principal as advocate.

In his synthesis of the research on instructional leadership, Murphy (1990) noted that principals in productive schools where teaching and learning were strong demonstrated instructional leadership both directly and indirectly. These principals emphasized four sets of activities with implications for instruction: (a) developing the school mission and goals; (b) coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating curriculum, instruction, and assessment; (c) promoting climate for learning; and (d) creating a supportive work environment.

Finally, I added to Murphy's definition of instructional leadership. In the context of authority and power, the existing models of instructional leadership can be seen as, at worst, paternalistic, archaic, and dependent on docile followers and, at best, harmonious and cooperative. Here I borrowed from the traditions of Weber (1965), Durkheim (1965), Parsons (1956), Poole (1995), and DuFour (2006) in applying the notion that teachers demonstrate positive changes in their pedagogical practices when they interact

with principals and engage in activities jointly with them. This led me to see how the principals involved teachers in activities related to instruction, specifically, how they encouraged and influenced teachers to assume leadership responsibilities, and how they used authority structures to influence teachers and parents in other ways. This narrowed the focus of my attention to the various ways in which instructional leadership was portrayed in practice and the influence exerted by principals as demonstrated by their actions.

Shared leadership for instruction, therefore, is not dependent on role or position. Its currency lies in the personal resources of participants and is deployed through interaction (Ogawa and Bossert, 1995). Such leadership extends throughout the organization with revised structures permitting coordinated action (Ogawa and Bossert, 1995; Pounder, Ogawa, and Adams, 1995).

I disagree with the findings of Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) that adding the notion of leadership to teaching does a disservice to both teachers and leaders. I argue that my findings demonstrate the importance of cultivating teacher leadership for enhanced student performance. Arguably, principals who share leadership responsibilities with teachers, elicit high levels of commitment and professionalism from teachers, and work interactively with teachers in a shared instructional leadership capacity have the benefit of integrated leadership that functions productively together to learn and perform at high levels.

In a departure from what Parsons' work implies, I do not see these instructional leadership practices and adherence to the collective goals of the group as strictly bound

by focusing on the teachers' individual motivation, that is - What makes each individual teacher happy? Rather, I employ Durkheim's (1965) notion that self-fulfillment is not an internal good generated independently by actors; self-fulfillment is itself a collective good dependent upon the group. For that reason, I have positioned the individuals within the context of social groups and the phenomenon of how they socially construct their situations to gain manifest collective benefits.

Overview of Research Methods and Design

Methods Employed

As an interpretivist who uses ethnographic methods, I located myself physically within the sociocultural world of two principals, gathered whatever data was available to help shed light on what was occurring from the perspective of local actors, in real time, and tried to understand how these occurrences were sensible to them.

I used three customary qualitative methods to collect such data. First, human behavior was observed in real time, in a natural setting, and was recorded in systematic field notes. Second, direct dialogue with the participants took the form of casual conversation and formal interviews. Third, data collection/data analysis of artifacts included written documents from the participants, schools and district. My data analysis and data collection were done sequentially, with preliminary data analysis informing subsequent data collection. As rich points presented themselves, the quest was to look for meaningful events that were similar in principle.

Research Design

I chose to conduct a comparative study of two principals, Kimberly and Susan,² situated within two schools within the same district in a suburban school district in the United States. The specific district and schools in which the principals were situated were selected for specific reasons. The two principals that I examined, Kimberly and Susan, were also selected for specific reasons. Schools are both similar and unique (Metz, 1986). Thus by comparing principals from two schools within the same district, I sought to capture what was both similar and unique in both case studies.

Agar (1996) emphasizes that new ethnography is participatory, with the researcher serving as a participant within the world being studied and uncovering the story as it unfolds around him or her. Participant observation assumes that “the raw material of ethnographic research lies out there in the daily activities of the people you are interested in, and the only way to access those activities is to establish relationships with people, participate with them in what they do, and observe what is going on” (Agar, 1996, p. 31). As participant observer, efforts were ongoing to describe the settings, participants, activities, interactions, and factors within both schools. Through the collection of data over a period of four months, I explored how the principals performed their daily duties, made decisions, and socially constructed the reality of the context within which they worked.

² The names of all people and places in this dissertation are pseudonyms that protect the identity of research participants. Some identifying factors associated with specific events may have also been changed to protect the identity of the participants.

As participant-observer, I shadowed the principal and spent time at the school for all or a part of the day on 30+ occasions at each school over a period of four months extending from March through June, 2009. I also spent one full week in each school “surveying the land” in various locations – front office, playground, staff lounge, hallways, the neighborhood – to get a sense of the context within which the principal was embedded. The time at schools included participant observation in real-time with the principal during the school day and attending district administrators’ meetings, daytime and evening parent meetings, after-school and weekend family events, district Governing Board meetings, and formal interviews. While present at the school, I took extensive notes regarding my observations and transcribed those notes each evening.

As a part of the study, interviews were conducted with the two principals, twenty teachers, eighteen parents, and two district office administrators. In addition to the two principals, the participants I chose to interview were selected because I wanted to interview a heterogeneous group of teachers and parents representing a variety of subgroups from each of the schools. The two district administrators were chosen because they were part of the Instructional Services Department of the school district organization.

Multiple interviews with each principal ranged from twenty minutes to over three hours, and were conducted both formally (with prior scheduling) and informally (on-the-spot as the occasion presented itself) and ranged from structured question-and-answer sessions to more unstructured dialogue about a topic or situation. Interviews of teachers and parents ranged from thirty minutes to over two hours, averaging about an hour in

length. Interviews with district office administrators were sixty minutes each. Figure I and Figure II provide an itemized representation of the interview participants and number of interviews.

These qualitative interviews served as a search for meaning. Ambiguities of language and of interviewing, discrepancies between attitude and behavior, and/or non-responses provided an important part of my data analysis. Information before, during, and after the interview were all important and crucial to what the interview data meant. Interviews provided additional data regarding social structures, political dynamics, and accountability measures. Formal (with prior scheduling) interviews were tape recorded so I could capture the most accurate data from each interview. In addition to the formal interviews, much data was collected during ongoing dialogues with the two principals, assistant principals, teachers, and parents.

Figure I: Organizational Positions of Participants Interviewed

| | Sea Breeze | High Bluff | District Office | Total |
|----------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------|-------|
| Principal | 1 | 1 | | 2 |
| Teacher | 10 | 10 | | 20 |
| Parent | 9 | 9 | | 18 |
| Director of Elementary Education | | | 1 | 1 |
| Director of Special Education | | | 1 | 1 |
| Total Number of Participants | 22 | 22 | 2 | 44 |

Figure II: Quantitative Representation of Interview Occurrences

| | Sea Breeze | High Bluff | District Office | Number of Participants in this Category | Total |
|--|------------|------------|-----------------|---|-------|
| Principal | 5 | 5 | | 2 | 10 |
| Teacher | 1 | 1 | | 20 | 20 |
| Parent | 1 | 1 | | 18 | 18 |
| Director of Elementary Education | | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Director of Special Education | | | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Total Number of Interviews District-wide | | | | | 50 |

In addition to participant observation and interviews, I collected documents including that which had possible relevance and that which was available. Artifacts were collected from a variety of sources, including emails, hard-copy correspondence to and from principals, district publications, state and federal publications, news releases, local newspapers, school yearbooks, school websites, and various communication sources within the schools (e.g. whiteboards in staff lounges, emails from principal to staff, notes from principal to staff, etc.). Those artifacts were used to capture meaning through an analysis of the written documents that were acquired during long-term and sustained contact with the participants.

Analysis of the Data

In addition to field notes and interview transcriptions, I continuously accessed theoretical assumptions, related observations to one another, developed new frames of understanding, and linked those new frames to those in the theoretical and empirical literature. I observed during planned, structured times as well as other times to see what was occurring in various day-to-day situations. These occasions included, but were not necessarily limited to, school staff meetings, parent meetings, teacher conferences, and district meetings for principals. Communication and emails from district personnel were studied, as available.

A key characteristic of ethnographic research is “the importance of the unexpected to occur” (Agar, 1996, p. 33).³ It was through those surprises that “rich points” in the data presented themselves. When something happened that was not understood, as it did with Agar’s (1996) experiences in a South Indian village, a rich point was derived. In Agar’s case, he asked the village cook the relevance of a piece of charcoal that the cook had placed on the top of the lunch he had made for him to take on the road. To Agar this lump of coal didn’t make any sense. He knew what charcoal was, but had no idea why it would be placed on top of his lunch package. When asked, the cook simply stated, “Spirits,” which Agar later found out referred to the coal for its known use among the village people as a spirit repellent. The meaning of the coal was uncovered by Agar when he asked further questions about the occurrence that didn’t make any sense to him. Its relevance to his safety and well-being was then understood, thereby filling in the gaps between the two cultural worlds. (Agar, 1996, pp. 30-31). As this example illustrates, the rich points (e.g., the coal) were made and it was important that I used the rich points to guide assumptions, which set the research in motion. Because my own assumptions and experiences were not adequate to understand an occurrence, I relied on the knowledge of the informants in the situation to make sense of it.

³ I describe Michael Agar’s specific experience as an ethnographer to illustrate how I capitalized on the pieces of data that I did not completely understand (rich points), with the intent to understand how those pieces of data made sense to the participants – their meaning and how they were producing it. The patterns were derived from the meaning as it was understood through the participants.

When a rich point occurred in my field research, I attempted to make sense of it by considering it within frames that I may not have realized existed prior to my fieldwork. The frame was then modified as rich points appeared. Gradually, I integrated my theoretical notes with my data as participant observer, looking to develop some type of metaphor, general scheme, or overall pattern for data that accounted for the phenomena observed from the perspective of the “natives” and of social science. My task as researcher was to determine how all of the frames were interconnected.

Meaning and meaning making are paramount in interpretive research, for it distinguishes the human world and is causal for action. Critical for me to capture in my research was the interpretation of what the principals must have known that made their behaviors sensible. It was my task to attempt to learn what they knew that I did not understand, including that which was tacit knowledge. In this study, the entire school organization was explored to determine how organizational structures affected the behaviors of principals and the significance of formal and informal organizational and institutional goals. The focus of my research was school organizations as sociocultural processes, while the locus of the research was principals in two schools as they socially constructed the role of principal and how they performed in their roles as instructional leaders within the organization. It was important to consider what was taking place locally and what was occurring in the societal context. I attempted to specify the mechanism that linked the local to the social and cultural. For example, teacher expectations can be a link between the teachers’ views of students and the curriculum they deliver (Page, 1987). Can a connection also be made between the principals’ views

of principaling and the instructional leadership they provide? Principals' use of authority within the organization can be a link between the principals' views of principaling and the type of leadership they engaged in, specifically, as it related to their role in instruction. What societal factors were influencing the principals' views of principaling?

By studying two cases in great detail and then comparing them to other cases studied in great detail, I arrived at universals and generalizations about the findings. I have attempted to uncover what is broadly universal about principaling (Wehlage, 1981), what generalizes to other similar situations, and what is unique to the given situation (Erickson, 2004, Wehlage, 1981). As an interpretive researcher, I continuously looked for disconfirming data and compared data in which the level and direction of reactivity vary. Behavior and attitudes were sometimes not stable across contexts and this became central to the analysis. One theoretical assumption that was attached to one exercise in ethnographic interpretation was then employed in another, pushing it forward to greater precision and broader relevance. Theoretical ideas were adopted from other related studies, refined in the process, and applied to new interpretive problems. Detailed descriptions including explicit framing will allow others to generalize this study with other studies. Further clarification comes from Agar's massive over determination of pattern, which claims "the more the number and variety of strips that the pattern accounts for, the more massively determined and credible that pattern is" (Agar, 1994, p. 41).

Upon completion of my fieldwork, I transferred all field notes, transcriptions, and applicable passages from Microsoft Word documents into NVivo 8, a computer software program designed for qualitative research. Using NVivo software and my own framing

of behaviors, I conducted an analysis that involved an inductive search for patterns in meaning and behaviors that helped to explain the relationship between organizational structures and principal behaviors, specifically as they related to instruction.

Case Study Principals

Two principals in two different elementary school settings within the Sunnydale Unified School District were the primary participants. Both schools were situated within the same school district in the southwestern part of the United States. Because this study attempted to understand how the internal sociocultural influences affected principals as they enacted the role of instructional leader, both principals were located within schools that had similar demographic, socioeconomic, and academic characteristics.

The specific district and schools in which the principals were situated were selected for specific reasons. First, I wanted to place the study within schools of similar demographic composition. Second, I wanted to study principals within schools that had traditional organizational characteristics within the same district. Third, I chose a suburban district because it would allow for examining external and internal social structures within the influences within those contexts.

The two principals that I examined, Kimberly and Susan, were selected for specific reasons. First, I chose them because they had served as principal for approximately the same amount of time. Because I wished to keep years of experiences of both principals similar and see the professional socialization perspective from one who has more recently assumed the role, both principals were within their first five years of beginning in the role. Second, the two principals in these case studies were the same

gender and race, to mitigate the possible dependency that variables of race or gender would have presented. Third, both principals were white females, which was consistent with the demographic profile of the majority of elementary principals in the United States (Drake & Roe, 2003). Fourth, I chose elementary principals because previous scholarship pointed to the demands placed on elementary principals within the framework of instructional leadership.

The Schools and School District

The study took place in the Sunnydale Unified School District, a public school district serving 18,000 students in a southwestern part of the United States. The district's geographic area encompasses 49 square miles and its boundaries cover a suburban setting consisting of all or portions of four suburban communities. This particular suburban school district is somewhat unique in that it encompasses a very diverse demographic and geographic region. Portions of this district are comprised of expensive homes with ocean views, while other parts of this district are characterized by low income housing areas further inland. The socioeconomic classification and English language learner percentages of the district's students vary greatly throughout the district's schools, depending on the school's location within the district. The district average for students from lower income families as measured by free and reduced lunch data was 37%. The low income averages of schools in the district ranged from a low of 10% low income students at one of the schools to a high of 86% low income students at one of the schools. The district average for students who were English language learners (ELL) was 27%. The English learner averages of schools in the district ranged from a high of 80% English

learners at one of the schools to a low of 8% English learners at one of the schools. The school sizes were approximately 750 students (Sea Breeze Elementary) and 900 students (High Bluff Elementary).

Site selection was based on three main criteria. The schools had a white female principal with no more than five years experience as a principal. The locations of the schools were within a reasonable distance from the site at which I lived and worked, allowing me to get there frequently to do my research. Both schools met the demographic considerations for my study – similar socioeconomic status and student achievement scores. The socioeconomic status of each school was determined by free and reduced lunch statistics. The academic achievement levels of students was determined by their current Academic Performance Index (API) scores and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) target goals. Both schools in this study were characterized by higher socioeconomic status and higher student achievement. High achievement was defined by an API score of greater than 875 and the school's attainment of AYP target goals for all subgroups. Although both schools had an API score of above 875 and met all AYP target goals, both schools declined in their academic performance index scores from 2007-2008. Both schools showed declines during the previous year in the academic achievement of students performing at proficient or advanced on the California Standards Test in English Language Arts and Mathematics in all grades, with the exception of Grade 5 (students were tested in grades 2 – 5). Tables III and IV provide a breakdown of Demographic Data and Academic Performance Index Scores.

Figure III.

Demographic Data

| | Asian | Black/ African American | Filipino | Hispanic / Latino | White | Free & Reduced Lunch | Female | Male | GATE | ELL | Students with Disabilities |
|---------------|-------|-------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|-------|----------------------------|--------|------|------|-----|----------------------------------|
| District | 5% | 3% | 3% | 48% | 39% | 37% | 49% | 51% | 9% | 27% | 9% |
| High Bluff | 6% | 3% | 1% | 17% | 71% | 13% | 50% | 50% | 9% | 10% | 5% |
| Sea Breeze | 8% | 4% | 4% | 19% | 62% | 18% | 49% | 51% | 18% | 9% | 10% |

Figure IV.

Academic Performance Index (API) Scores

| | 2007 API Score | 2008 API Score | API Growth |
|------------|----------------|----------------|------------|
| District | 786 | 810 | +24 |
| High Bluff | 906 | 898 | -8 |
| Sea Breeze | 883 | 878 | -5 |

The District's Goals

The previous year, SUSD had conducted a thorough strategic planning process to address the district's mission, beliefs, and priority/actions. The district's mission statement reads, "The Sunnydale Unified School District is innovative and collaborative community providing an unparalleled educational experience. Through an engaging and

supportive environment, all our students are challenged, inspired, and poised to excel.”

The guiding beliefs of the district as defined in its strategic plan are, in no particular order: 1) Every student deserves to learn every day. 2) Positive relationships and a strong sense of community connect students to learning. 3) Teachers who challenge and care for students make a significant impact on students’ lives. 4) To attain excellence we can accept only the best from every individual in our learning community. Finally, the strategic plan of the district identifies four causes to which they commit: 1) Providing each student with an appropriate and challenging educational experience. 2) Maintaining a respectful environment that fosters learning through positive relationships among students, adults, and our diverse community. 3) Hiring and retaining only the best educators and investing in their success. 4) Providing quality education based on high standards, effective practice, continuous improvement, and innovation. An 11” x 14” poster of the mission statement, belief statements, and commitments was provided to every teacher in the district and was posted in most classrooms at the two schools in this project. Two of the district’s stated priorities during the school year during the time of this project were to ensure that 1) each student was afforded a guaranteed and viable curriculum that was standards-based, and 2) instruction was effective for meeting each student’s needs. (TDO: Anderson 6-23-09)

Gaining Access to Schools and Case Study Principals

I attained access to the sites by discussing my request to do this research with the district superintendent, specifically, to conduct fieldwork from March 1, 2009 – June 30, 2009 that consisted of shadowing site principals, collecting artifacts, and interviewing the

principals, selected staff, and parents. With approval from the superintendent, I approached the principals to explain my role as participant observer in this study. I explained that I wanted to look at her role and responsibilities as a principal at the site. I also requested to meet and talk with teachers and parents at the school. Upon approval from the principal, I discussed with the principals how to best approach my role as participant observer in the school community.

As an administrator in the district I was studying, I was aware that I had the potential of influencing the participants considerably. Consequently, I made decisions intended to shift my role from one of a director who oversees personnel and programs to being a member of the group. Those strategies included dressing similarly to those around me at the school site (I left my suits at home), keeping my actions almost entirely to observing and listening (talking only on occasion), and having no role in formally evaluating the performance of the teachers or principal. I was also cognizant of the setting, specifically, trying not to intervene as they positioned themselves in the room, positioning myself in ways that did not portray an authority position (e.g., not at the head of the table), deciding when to participate in the conversation, and not favoring some participants' remarks over others. I sought to distance myself from my official role of "director" in the district in order to alter the formal structure that would normally exist between a director and the principal and the teachers.

Section II: Research Sites

Chapter 4

The Schools and Communities

High Bluff Elementary School

The History

The Staff

Although only in operation a short period of time – in its third year at the time of this project – High Bluff Elementary School was already rich with history. As the newest school in the district, its staff was diverse and their stories chronicled the creation of the school and the school’s albeit short, but full history. The teaching staff was made up of two primary groups, typified as those employees who had transferred to High Bluff Elementary School from another school in the district and those who had been hired into the district from elsewhere. Within those two groups existed another sub-grouping of staff members, which was distinguished by their years of service in education within the district. Those subgroups were often referred to by the labels “veteran teachers” and “new teachers.” Regardless of which groups they fell into, the teachers at High Bluff could be described by their general sentiment of pride. They were proud to have been hired by the principal to teach at the school. They were proud to be a part of the newest school in the community. They were proud to be associated with the community of High Bluff, the school’s namesake and thought by many to be one of the newest, nicest communities in the entire area. Even the school building itself seemed to radiate a sense

of pride as the stunning modern structure appeared to sit beaming near the top of a magnificent hill surrounded by beautiful views and elegant homes with sweeping views to the Pacific Ocean.

The Community

This sense of pride was not only expressed by the staff at High Bluff Elementary School, but also the parents. Their pride was evidenced through their spoken sentiments about the school and also through their considerable involvement in school-sponsored events, requests for support, and calls for action. The High Bluff population consisted of families with middle- to upper middle-class incomes who worked hard for the privilege of living in this community. The charming community of High Bluff was a new master-planned community that was built around a town center, with the library, the Quigley's Grocery Store, the elementary school, and middle school serving as community gathering places. Other than these hubs, all other amenities were miles away up and over the hill. This contributed to the close-knit sense of community that seemed to be felt by many parents at the school. The local newspaper was quite impressive for this size of community and focused largely on the school events and stories of interest about its community members. Each month the principal was spotlighted in a large section of the paper with many subsequent pages dedicated to school events and causes.

The history of High Bluff, though only three years old, was already defined by strong community involvement and an entrepreneurial spirit. One High Bluff parent described the school through its short, yet important history:

Even though we've only been open three years, this school is alive and fun and invigorating. We have a wonderful leader, Susan, who makes the

school exciting. My daughter started here when it opened and now she's in fourth grade. This school has extremely active parents and that started from the very beginning. Susan has put together an amazing group of teachers in the past three years. Our parent population is very diverse and over the years we've seen many parents who have dual incomes. They have always been very supportive. We have reached out to our community so successfully. We worked hard together from the very beginning to get community sponsorships and to get them on board. Now it's part of our culture. When we started three years ago, our main goal as a parent group was to facilitate friendships, strengthen families, and support teachers. (TH:Oswald 6-11-09)⁴

The Principal's Arrival

The principal's arrival plays a significant part in the history and ensuing events at both schools in this study. High Bluff's principal was the very first person hired by the district to work at that school and she subsequently hired every staff member at the school. The arrival of the principal played out quite differently at Sea Breeze, whose staff had been firmly in place for years, and, with the exception of the ten new teachers hired during the past 18 months, all teachers were hired by a former principal. On multiple occasions teachers at both schools commented on whether they were hired by the principal or not. In the case of High Bluff, when teachers mentioned it, they said so with pride in believing that Susan had chosen them. Along with that came a sense of fondness and loyalty from the teachers toward their principal at High Bluff. The same could not be said about some of the veteran teachers at Sea Breeze.

⁴ I will reference ethnographic documents in the following way: FN=field notes; T=interview transcript; A=paper artifact. This document will be followed by the name of the school or district office (H=High Bluff School; S=Sea Breeze School; DO=District Office), the name of the interviewee if applicable, and the date the document was produced.

Sea Breeze Elementary School

The History

The Staff

In contrast to High Bluff's pristine, contemporary building, Sea Breeze School was built 20+ years ago. A fresh coat of exterior paint and a few cosmetic touch-ups had been done the summer prior, but the building itself was ultimately defined by the modular formation of what appeared to be temporary structures that had worn out their welcome. By no means could the humble physical makeup of Sea Breeze compare with the exquisite construction of High Bluff.

The history of the staff at Sea Breeze seemed to mirror the school building itself. As was the case at High Bluff, the staff was greatly made up of two sub-groups described as "veteran teachers" and "new teachers." Of significant difference, though, was the tension that existed between these two groups at Sea Breeze. While there was a sense of unity and pride among the veteran and new teachers at High Bluff, something quite different unfolded between those two groups at Sea Breeze. Metaphorically, the new teachers at Sea Breeze were the fresh paint and facelift that many would say was much needed to breathe new life into the school. Although it looked fresher upon first glance, below the surface still remained the old bones of the school, that is, those staff members who were the "old veteran guard." This difference was understood through the accounts told by staff about the history of the school, specifically, the history of the Sea Breeze staff. One of the key factors in this divisiveness was the issue of who hired them. Unlike teachers at High Bluff, most of the teachers at Sea Breeze were hired by one of the

school's former principals. Only the newest ten teachers had been hired by the current principal, who was just in her second year at the school. The subsequent series of events that played out among the principal and these two groups of teachers – the new teachers and the veteran teachers – gave meaning and understanding to the divisiveness among the teachers and the different perceptions of loyalty and value expressed by teachers toward their principal at Sea Breeze.

The Community

The Sea Breeze community was in a nice suburban area not far from the Pacific Ocean. While High Bluff's community was entirely new, Sea Breeze's community was more diverse with a combination of new high-end home developments with impressive ocean views, as well as relatively modest middle-income housing developments, some of which had been built 20 to 30 years ago. The school itself was situated within the suburban city limits and was made up of many smaller neighborhoods, not isolated in a master-planned community setting as was the High Bluff neighborhood. The diversity of its community members reflected the diversity of the community developments, with middle- to upper-middle class families inhabiting most of the dwellings in the surrounding neighborhoods. Some of the families had been with the school for decades, while others had just moved into the area. The history of Sea Breeze, as described in a descriptive account from a parent:

This is a wonderful neighborhood school. It's been around a long time and we've had a great experience here....For several years we floundered. There was a lot of change in leadership and I think the school suffered for awhile. But now Kimberly has been fabulous. She has breathed new life into the school. She's hired really good teachers. She holds parents accountable and she has a backbone. That is something that this school

has needed for awhile. I remember when the last principal said that teachers wouldn't do certain things. The last one said, 'It can't be done.' Kimberly says, 'How.' Life is easier for PTO now. This has always been a safe environment, but now it's even better. (TS:Nelson 6-09-09)

While the structure of the school building itself was quite modest and by many measures outdated, the breathtaking views from the corners of the playground seemed to point to the potential for greatness that existed at the Sea Breeze School. One couldn't help but be in awe of the beauty when standing on the blacktop looking to the west and taking in the big blue ocean only a few miles beyond.

The Principal's Arrival

Just as the views from the playground at Sea Breeze seemed to point to the potential that existed at that site, the new principal seemed to be trying to capture that potential. When she took the helm, she had been told by the superintendent that the school was in need of leadership because it had been without a strong principal for some time.

Kimberly's arrival at Sea Breeze was met with mixed feelings among staff. Although they were tired of functioning as a "ship without a rudder," (TL:Edwards 6-05-09) many in the old guard presented resistance to Kimberly's attempts to bring about change. Teachers who had been teaching at Sea Breeze for years quickly began to see that Kimberly's primary mission was to bring in new teachers. Kimberly herself made it very clear that hiring new teachers was her big focus that year, and that was how she was going to make the biggest difference at the school. At the end of her first year at Sea Breeze, ten veteran teachers retired, leaving ten spaces for Kimberly to hire new teachers.

Summary

Although both schools had different history, they both had historical traditions, customs, and beliefs that defined them. The two schools in this study were both similar and unique in their makeup and in how they operated, just as the principals from the schools were both similar and unique. Both schools were situated within the same suburban area and drew from similar demographic populations. Both schools had a business-like approach to interacting with the public which was reflected in the roles and responsibilities that individuals within the organization were assigned. Both schools had definite procedures in place for parents and staff, such as gaining access into the campus, acquisition of instructional materials, and reporting absences. Sometimes it was the principal who specifically oversaw the carrying out of those procedures, but often times it was the front office staff. The principal at High Bluff even joked about needing to gain permission from her secretary about which shelves she (the principal) could get things from in the supply room. Although purposeful in their routines and functions, variations at each of the schools seemed to send different underlying messages to teachers and parents.

Although both principals were accomplished professionals and considered themselves close principal colleagues and confidantes, each one embodied the role of principal quite differently from the another. Even though these principals were tackling many of the same issues at both schools, significant differences emerged in their actions and in their influence at their respective schools, specifically, in their influence with teachers.

I had initially set out to examine instructional leadership in practice, seeking to understand the *how* and *why* of these principals' behaviors as they were unfolding. As the pieces began to unravel, I realized I needed to look outside the prescribed facets of instructional leadership and into the personal, relational similarities and differences of these two principals. In doing so, the explanation helped define their leadership approaches and provided insight into the philosophical beliefs and principles held by each of these two school leaders. I refrain from using the word "leadership" to exhaustion when interpreting principal characteristics because the term is ambiguous and complex by nature, but I make an exception in attempting to explain the respective leadership styles of each of the two principals. The similarities and differences in these two principals' personalities and their approaches to leadership deserve much attention in this particular study. These pieces help explain the differences in teachers' feelings of self-worth and value at each of these schools as this story unfolds, as well as loyalty toward the principal and the principal's goals.

Section III: The Principals

Chapter 5

Susan

The Road to the Principalship

Susan was in her third year as principal of High Bluff Elementary School, a new, modern K-5 school in a suburban upper middle-class neighborhood. Prior to her appointment as the principal of High Bluff, Susan was the assistant principal of the K-8 feeder school that housed the elementary students while the new High Bluff Elementary school was under construction. The elementary students eventually broke off from the K-8 school to attend the new K-5 High Bluff Elementary School when it opened. Prior to becoming an administrator, Susan was a teacher leader in the district and held a position outside the classroom that was designed to provide leadership and support to the district's beginning teachers. Prior to that role, Susan was a classroom teacher in the district. Preceding her career in education, Susan worked as a bookkeeper and office manager for a grocery store, as well as worked in a group home and did a brief stint caring for others' children while her own children were young. It wasn't until after her youngest child started school that Susan began her career as an educator. She describes herself as mature beyond her years in education, jokingly saying she's much older than most of her staff.

The unique positioning of the principal within the organization was captured by Susan when she explained her background to me. Of note in her comments was the

importance she placed on her prior roles and their positive contributions to her ability as a principal. She expressed that being a mom and the experiences with her prior employer had affected her views as a principal and, in particular, some of the important things to consider as one who oversees teachers. At one point in a conversation, Susan shared with me her thoughts on job shares.⁵ This conversation then led to her telling me how she ended up as a teacher. It was not her first profession. Susan said,

“I knew I would support them (job shares) because it’s the right thing to do for teachers. People will always say I always say family comes first. I never had to teach with a newborn. Before teaching, I was a bookkeeper. I have had life conversations with my older daughter..... My degree was psychology, but there were no jobs in that field in 1977. I originally wanted to work with autistic kids, but there was nothing. The closest I could get was working in a group home. I worked for Woodgate Farms for seven years. It’s like Henry’s. I did accounts receivable. It was a great job. They let me be really flexible. I didn’t have to do day care much for Mark (her oldest son). When Jimmy was born I did day care in my home. I hated it. I had another newborn – it was not my thing. I stayed home for three years. I even had a car with seven seatbelts. The last three years I took classes for my credential. Chrissy (her daughter) is a warmer, kinder person. When I was 32 when I started teaching, I was warm – I *had been* a mom. Chrissy doesn’t need to be a mom first – she’s warmer and friendlier. I taught for 12 years, I was a TOSA for 4 years. I loved teaching from the beginning. I had amazing professional development during those years. That set me up for the instructional leadership when I was a principal.” (TH:Susan 3-26-09)

The Leader

At High Bluff, the principal took great care to make sure the school was orderly and safe. On most days, she positioned herself in the front of the school during arrival and dismissal times to greet parents and to help keep order. She modeled for teachers

⁵ The term “job share” refers to a contract for one full-time teaching position that is shared between two certificated employees.

and support staff how she wanted students greeted in the morning and evening – each car door was opened and each child and family was greeted warmly with a smile. A balance between relaxed friendliness and mature refinement was evident in the warmhearted way she spoke and the professional manner in which she dressed and conducted business.

As principal, Susan paid attention to the details that gave the school a personal, loving feeling. On any given afternoon at dismissal time, one couldn't help but notice the unique and special sound that was heard by all at the end of each school day. The dismissal bell wasn't the typical dismissal bell noise that most of us grew up with and didn't even resemble the more modern pleasant tones I had also heard of late. No, when the dismissal bell at High Bluff rang it was akin to a church bell – three slow bell dings that I had heard only one place before – in church. I would learn during my time at High Bluff that those small touches were actually quite intentional on the part of the principal and seemed to send an underlying message that High Bluff Elementary School was not only a professional place of conducting the serious business of educating youth, but it was also a place with a caring touch.

The View of the Principalship

Susan's view of the principalship seemed to suggest a responsibility she held to create an environment where good teaching and learning were valued and the contributions of everyone at the school – teachers, support staff, students, parents – were appreciated. She often described the school as a place where learning and enjoyment happened concurrently. When questioned in an interview about the principal's priorities, Susan explained to me:

Being visible. I can see everyone from my office. It is comforting for everyone that every visitor that comes here has to walk by my office to go to their work or go do their volunteering. I am out in classrooms. One of the things they say is 'we can't believe how often you are out in the classrooms.' The important part is to be visible, be the leader, the one that's not afraid to lead, make a decision, have the hard part of a conversation, explain why a decision is made, be open. One thing that I admire about Barack Obama is that he is willing to have a team come in and ask the hard questions and be open. It's important to be a good listener. The most important thing is to make sure the kids are here and safe at school and if I ask a child if they're safe, she would say yes. If she is asked if she's learning, she would say yes. Those are the most important things. (TH: Susan 3-23-09)

On three different occasions, Susan equated the atmosphere at High Bluff to childlike wonderment:

When our kids arrive, they are as if they're walking in the gate of Disneyland. That's the feeling I get from them because I stand at the gate almost every morning. There is a sense of excitement – they're happy to see their friends. (TH: Susan 3-24-09)

Schools should be joyful – that's what I value the most. It's a great place to spend the day. They come in through the gates every day and they're thrilled to be here. I value that. I think that's what's going to make it work. (TH: Susan 5-18-09)

One of the best things is when the kids run through the gates. I want to create a place that is not judged by a number, but those things happen (referring to high test scores) and the kids don't know why they're running in happily. But we get results because we're doing the right things. As we struggle with union issues and struggle with other things, I want the teachers to run through the gates, too. I want people to say, 'Yay, it's a school day!' because 'I am a professional, I want to come and listen and learn from my teammates.' (TH: Susan 6-26-09)

Susan was frequently described by her teachers as professional, someone they respected and could count on for her expertise and good judgment. Many had known her and had worked with her before she became a principal and while she was working in the district as a teacher. During one interview with a teacher, the teacher expressed:

I have known Susan for a long time. She was teaching in the district. One thing I appreciated about her as a teacher was that she had a passion for making learning fun and very hands-on. Talking with her and talking with parents who had students in her class - she was able to make her classroom inclusive. She is someone I always respected as a teacher and now as an administrator she is someone who has that passion for teaching and she knows her role is an administrative role and to support what goes on in the classroom. She sets a goal to be an instructional leader and goes about doing what it takes to fulfill that role. Whether it be taking classes, working with other administrators, her number one goal is to be a great instructional leader. (TH:Foyle 5-26-09)

As I spent time at High Bluff, I began to see that Susan's day-to-day behaviors sent a very important message that resonated throughout the organization. Through her actions and words, Susan continuously focused on students first. When Susan spoke of the top priorities of the school, it always started with the students. Whether it was about student safety or academic success and whether the audience was parents, teachers, or me, Susan continuously spoke through the lens of what she/they needed to do for the students. The teachers seemed to rally around her and take pride in the fact that they were all responsive to the highly-involved parent community and they all wanted the same thing – what was best for their children. Susan described her primary role as principal as such:

Well, there are many focuses that a principal needs to have, many plates that a principal needs to spin. They all come down to what's the best thing to do for kids. Whether it's learning, teaching, playing, living the Hawk way⁶. The role of the principal is to be the model of that. Parents know that I will be the model of that. Parents know that I'm a parent and I will

⁶ Both schools used their mascots – Hawks and Lions – to refer to a code of conduct and/or expectations at the school in terms of doing things the “Hawk way” (High Bluff) or the “Lion way” (Sea Breeze). Although school rules were in writing and they were published in numerous locations at each school, the remainder of what was considered to be the “code of conduct” at each school was left to individual understanding and interpretation.

model for them what is important and what is the right thing. It's the instructional leader. The chief modeler. The person that needs to put on the happy face, I'm happy to be here. I love what I'm doing so that everyone else is happy too. I'm pretty Pollyanna. (TH: Susan 3-23-09)

This did not mean that Susan was afraid of making the tough decisions and taking on a problem. It was quite the opposite. On numerous occasions while I was there, Susan approached difficult situations head-on and explained that what allowed her to do so was her steadfast belief that it was what was right for her students. This came with a price, though, as Lynda often wore her emotions on her sleeve when it came to expressing worry for her teachers or students. Although she tried to remain outwardly positive, she often expressed feelings of distress and anguish over what was occurring at her school. Her frustration would show through in the look of concern on her face and the overall appearance of being exhausted and worn out by the end of the day.

When managing the school on a daily basis, Susan relied on the skills and expertise of her competent office staff and assistant principal to do many of the routine functions. She was aware of the daily operational duties, but many of the details such as playground supervision assignments, attendance record keeping, and discipline were either delegated to other personnel or jointly shared by the principal and those personnel. The support staff, teachers, and assistant principal commented on how they appreciated having opportunities to participate in leadership roles in the school and help with some of the decision-making. Teachers often expressed that Susan was a good listener and they felt valued to have been chosen by her to work with her. They also expressed feelings of "family" and "team" at the school, and attributed that in great part to the people Susan hired and the way she involved them in establishing the school during their first three

years in operation. Her leadership style and persona signified that this principal sought to inspire others to do the right things for students at the school and that it was her responsibility to model a steadfast focus on students.

Chapter 6

Kimberly

The Road to the Principalship

Kimberly was in her second year as principal of Sea Breeze Elementary School, an established school built twenty-plus years ago located within the boundary of a relatively affluent demographic area. Kimberly was quite a bit younger than the principal at High Bluff Elementary School and she had taken a different path to her current principalship. Prior to assuming the principalship at Sea Breeze Elementary, Kimberly was the principal of another school in the district for three years. Kimberly was asked by the superintendent one year ago to assume the principalship at Sea Breeze and she was given the charge of providing much-needed leadership to a school that had suffered for a few years as a result of ineffective leadership and a principal who was absent much of the time. Prior to becoming a principal, Kimberly was an assistant principal for two years in the same school district and a classroom teacher in a different school district where she had started her career right out of college at an early age. Kimberly spoke often of her role as a mother to her three young children, all three of whom attended different schools in the district. Kimberly oftentimes shared stories about her children, and on occasion, her second grade son would accompany her to work after school hours. Kimberly described herself as wanting to have fun at work while also knowing the importance of her job as a principal.

The Leader

At Sea Breeze, the principal's style was much more casual and relaxed when compared to her principal peer at High Bluff, but she also had a seriousness about what she believed her mission to be. Kimberly related to her staff frequently on a personal level, was friendly with them and often participated in outside social functions, particularly with several of her newest teachers. She talked about times that she had gone out for a beer with them or played games with them in the evenings. It wasn't uncommon for Kimberly to, on occasion, kick off her shoes, pull up a chair in her office and have a casual conversation with a teacher – even throw out a curse word here and there every once-in-a-while.

While Susan's personality conveyed a calm, professional, seriousness much of the time, Kimberly's personality exuded an excited, energized restlessness. Nevertheless, there was still a seriousness about the way Kimberly conducted business. Even though she was more informal and casual in her interactions and appearance, Kimberly would not hesitate to take on a difficult situation or tackle an issue that needed confronting. Kimberly's boundless energy and passion were evidenced by the many things she continuously handled and the way she flew back and forth between them at any given time. Nonetheless, Kimberly's tendency to jump from one issue to another contributed to an atmosphere that, while full of action, seemed at times hectic and exhausting.

Her day-to-day management style reflected an attention to multiple foci at any given time. Most mornings she would quickly jot down a list of things she needed to accomplish that day and then she would often comment at day's end about how she had

not gotten to many of the things on her list. Each day would present a multitude of events and issues going on simultaneously to which Kimberly would respond. While both principals spent time establishing goals and then planning and preparing to meet those goals, Kimberly's tendency to react to issues in the moment oftentimes pulled her away from what she said were actually the most important parts of her job. One such instance was illustrated as Kimberly reflected on doing classroom visits, saying "I know I should be in classrooms more, but it's crazy around here. I just can't seem to get into classrooms as often as I'd like." (TS:Kimberly 4-02-09)

The history of Sea Breeze Elementary School presented a distinctive context for its leader. Some individuals yearned to hang on to the history and keep things as they once were, while others looked favorably at Kimberly's arrival and what she was doing, describing her as trying to move the teachers toward a more collaborative way of doing business. These differences among staff members were expressed in the sentiments of teachers. One such teacher, who, in addition to being a classroom teacher served in several leadership capacities at the Sea Breeze, had come from a different district and had been at the school five years. She described what she had seen during her time at Sea Breeze:

We had a lot of people retire last year. That was huge. We've had teachers that were here before that taught fifth grade for twenty years. They were like, 'This is the way I do things and if you want to join me, fine, but don't tell me I need to do your new thing.' So it wasn't as collaborative as it is now. We still have some people who have been around for a long time. It's like with the technology that we're doing - and they realize 'it's okay, I can do this.' The atmosphere of 'we're all kind of doing our own thing' has changed and I love it. I came from Orange where we did everything together. I think it's great that we're moving more toward that. I think with teachers it's a self-esteem issue.

I'm sure what they're doing in their classrooms is better than what I do. Then it's a pride thing. This is what I do and I don't want everyone else to do that. There's still a little bit of that going on. (TS: Bartell 6-03-09)

This teacher went on to describe the many changes the school had gone through with the turnover in principals:

Kimberly is the third principal we've had since I've been here. Mary (former principal) was in over her head. I loved her, but some of the veteran staff did not like her at all. She had her kinds of views of how she thought things should be and she tried to change too much. Coming into a school of very established teachers, she said, 'We're not going to play soccer because it's dangerous.' People were so angry with that! Parents wrote letters. We have high maintenance teachers in a way and high maintenance parents in a way. It was my first year here. Teachers had lots of opinions. Then we got Ernie (another former principal) and he wanted to be everybody's pal. When it came to people not showing up to meetings on time and he called them on it, they would be like 'What, aren't you our pal?' Kimberly has done a great job of balancing that. She is always my principal, even when we're sitting around eating lunch and talking about *American Idol*, she's still my boss. She's friendly and approachable, but she's still the one who lays down the law when it needs to be. I think most people are appreciative of that. I don't really hear people griping about that. Maybe it's because the staff has changed. (TS: Bartell 6-03-09)

Still other teachers expressed a longing for the past and conflicting thoughts about the present, as was portrayed in an emotional response from one of the veteran teachers about the history of the school when I asked her to tell me to explain the school's vision and goals.

We've had a lot of shifts because we lost so many who have retired and we have so many brand new teachers. There is a big gap in the experience and the age of the teachers. We are heavy on both ends and not a whole lot in the middle. As far as a shared vision, I think what Kimberly wants for the school is for it to be the best it can be and it's not there. I think she doesn't want children falling through the cracks and I think it's an admirable challenge on her part because this is a school that doesn't get that kind of support – we don't have the Title I money. If you can't read at Sea Breeze it's no different than if you can't read at Mark Twain or

Thomas Edison Elementary (two Title I schools in the district). She wants her kids to leave here making sure they are educated and ready. I think she's worked really hard to get the PTO to help with that. One of the hardest things was losing the art teacher because she was part of the staff for eighteen years and it's a really hard decision to make. It was one I was fairly upset about. Kimberly wanted to have an intervention specialist. It (when the art teacher was released) upset some of us who had personal relationships with the former art teacher. It upset me because I wanted Sherry S. here – (she took a moment to stop and think) – because I know what she was doing in that classroom was huge and we felt a real loss. I think Kimberly thought she needed to get someone in who could work with children in small groups with reading. Those are hard choices to make and she's willing to make those decisions.
(TS: Barry 5-28-09)

The View of the Principalship

Although firmly grounded in years of history, Sea Breeze seemed to be a school looking for an identity. While the infancy of High Bluff – only three years had passed since its opening – called for the creation of new traditions and the taken-for-granted need to establish ways of doing business, so too did the maturity of Sea Breeze call for attention to those elements. At Sea Breeze, there were two opposing camps - an appeal for the reestablishment of historically held traditions and ways of doing business, or, as Kimberly was pushing for, a major shift in those ways of life in the school. Kimberly repeatedly expressed two needs: 1) the need to make changes at the school and 2) the need to make sure there was harmony. This was brought to light in an interview where I asked her to describe her role as a principal:

At this school? That's a big question because I see myself in a lot of roles at this school. I see my role as making sure that kids get what they need when they come to school every day. Making sure parents get what they need every day. Making sure that teachers get what they need. Kids are why we're here. Teachers, parents, and myself all come here for that reason. They're the reason teachers - and we all - come to school every day. I see my role as one where I need to work with all three of those

groups. Maybe kids a little bit more, but teachers and parents here need a lot of work, too. If one of those groups - it's kind of like a marriage, if you're not happy, your spouse won't be happy. You've got to work together. There's got to be some harmony. If mom's not happy, it'll all go to pot. My job is to keep harmony and keep each group running. Some things I manage, some things I lead, and some things I'm a team partner with. When I have to make a decision, I make a decision, when I have to get input I get input. I think those three groups have to be in harmony. If my teachers aren't happy, my kids won't be happy. When I say happy, I mean that they're learning and they're safe and they like coming here and they're challenged. That they're learning something. I believe you need to be a person who works with all three of those groups. (TS:Kimberly 4-01-09)

Although Kimberly's stated intent was to create a place where everyone was happy and the focus was on students, the message sent to others throughout my time at Sea Breeze via her expressed comments and behaviors eventually morphed into something quite different much of the time. From the onset, Kimberly knew she had to make a difference at the school and her purpose was to follow through on the directive from the superintendent to provide strong leadership. One of Kimberly's first contributions came in the way of hiring new teachers who she believed would contribute to the forward movement she planned for the school. Throughout the year, though, the external pressures that ensued created a set of circumstances that imposed cuts to budgets and teaching staff, which meant that many, if not all, of her newly hired teachers would be let go at the end of the school year. In response, Kimberly began a campaign to save those positions. Although it could be said that her message was ultimately focused on students through the quality instruction that her new teachers provided, the message heard by many was one that focused on *saving the positions* of those teachers. These same teachers whose positions were in jeopardy had been hand-selected by Kimberly to

join the staff and had been assigned key grade-level positions and leadership roles within the school. By some accounts, the worth of these new teachers was elevated, and certain veteran teachers would say the new teachers were valued more than the veteran teachers on the staff. It became quite apparent through Kimberly's actions that she believed it took courage to rally supporters and to fight for what she thought was right. She was not afraid to take on the "old veteran guard" and do whatever she could to save the new talent she had acquired.

Section IV: The Principals

Chapter 7

My Initial Conversations with the Principals

From the very onset of this project, the local and micropolitical demands and their subsequent influences on the behaviors of principals were evident. As the researcher, I had set out to make initial contact with each principal via telephone for the purpose of setting up dates for the ethnographic research to begin at each school, and I had assumed it would be a benign, quick conversation. However, it was as if with that initial call to each principal a jigsaw puzzle box had been opened up, poured out on the table, and the first corner pieces were put into place. As jigsaw puzzle experts understand, the corner pieces serve as the starting point for what is to come with the rest of the puzzle. The pieces of this puzzle began to fall out onto the table prior to any on-site fieldwork with the principals. It wasn't until the other pieces began to fall into place that it became apparent that those initial contact calls with each principal were the foundation pieces of what would become *the rest of the story*.

I am sure the enthusiasm in my voice as I uttered one little word – “Hello!” – followed by, “This is Holly McClurg. How is your day going?” would have been recognizable to most. I was eager to talk with the principal of High Bluff Elementary School about the days and times I would be spending with her at her school in the upcoming months and wanted to get them on her calendar. But to Susan, picking up the telephone was obviously not at the top of her list of “things to do” at that moment in time,

as was evidenced by the abrupt way in which she answered the telephone, “This is Susan.” She answered my inquiry about her day with, “Oh, I’m alright.” But I could tell by the way her voice trailed off at the end of her response that she sounded anything but “alright,” as she had claimed. She actually sounded fatigued, and even, perhaps, miserable. In what I considered a typical response, coming from someone who knows her on a limited, yet collegial and friendly basis, I tried to provide some comfort and also apologize for having to bother her. So I responded, “You don’t sound alright.” She was in no mood to chat, though, and curtly said, “It’s just really busy this morning. How can I help you?” Hearing her quick reaction and realizing she obviously didn’t want to talk, I responded, “It sounds as if you’re really busy. Why don’t you call me back when you have a few minutes?” I was quite surprised when she agreed and said, “Okay, that would be great. Bye.” (TS:Susan 3-10-09)

Perhaps I was shocked that the principal would not simply stop what she was doing and take a few minutes to schedule her calendar or that she seemed comfortable letting me know that she was not going to be conversing long with me just then. This would eventually make more sense as I got to know Susan, her role within the school organization and how she enacted that role.

Another interesting conversation would happen the next day when I called the second principal, Kimberly, to schedule dates to spend time observing at her school. I left a message earlier in the day on her voicemail and she returned my call late that same afternoon. I answered the phone the way I always do with, “Hello, this is Holly McClurg.” I could barely get the final word of my greeting completed before Kimberly

quickly continued, “Oh, Holly. I got your message.” I don’t know how she managed to get a breath in – she didn’t wait for me to say anything – and she quickly rattled off a litany of events describing the day she had had, listing every event that had occurred one-by-one in sequential order. Her voice was loud and her speech was flying through the telephone line at a quick rate of speed, so quickly that I surmised that she either sounded exasperated or energized – it was hard to tell which. At three times during our ten-minute chat she stopped mid-sentence to make the point that the events she was describing to me had all been occurring at once during her day. She went on to explain that she had had an IEP with advocates that morning.⁷ At the same time she had a child care issue to deal with. At that moment she inserted, “Then the district superintendent shows up! So, of course, I stopped everything and spent time talking to him.” She proceeded to tell me about a parent who was angry because the technology teacher gave S’s instead of E’s on the report card and that the parent had demanded to see the principal. She added, “Then the parent goes to the DO!”⁸ We called the DO to let them know about that parent. Then the DO called us back after the parent showed up there to let us know that the parent had been there. The DO receptionist told the parent, “You need to go back to the school and make an appointment with the teacher.” Once again,

⁷ An individualized education plan, commonly referred to as an IEP, is mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Public schools are required to develop an IEP for every student who is found to meet the federal and state requirements for special education. IEP refers both to the educational program to be provided for a student and to the written document that describes the educational program. In the school setting, the term IEP is also commonly used to describe the meeting that takes place to discuss the program.

⁸ The term DO is commonly used by both principals to refer to the district office personnel, either to signify one particular position/person or to refer to the district office personnel that collectively represent the super-ordinate hierarchy.

this was not an exchange of conversation between Kimberly and me, but rather, Kimberly spilled right into the next incident, which involved a boy who wanted to play basketball with another boy. Kimberly explained, “The boy is hard to understand and the boy playing basketball couldn’t understand him. He said that the boy was bothering him. The first boy’s father is mad about that, so I had to follow up on that.”

I said to her, “Wow, you have had a lot going on today,” to which she responded, “And yesterday, on the way to the staff meeting – now mind you I had popcorn I popped for the teachers on the cart – this parent was so mad about the technology grades. I was walking to the staff meeting and she came up to me upset – I told her, ‘This isn’t on my mind right now.’ She spent one hour with Shelley, the technology teacher, yesterday and now with me. She said she was formally requesting that her son’s grades be changed. The parent asked me, ‘Will this be on your agenda?’ (referring to the staff meeting that was about to occur with the teachers). I couldn’t believe it! Here I am pushing this cart to a staff meeting – all my stuff with me and I’m trying to get there on time. I looked at her and told her, ‘No, it won’t be.’” At that point Kimberly took a deep breath, sighed, her voice came down in tone and she said, “Oh, Holly. Come spend a day with me – I’ll get you involved!” I expected her to get back to the reason for my original call to her, but no, she had more to tell me about her day. Then she conferred with me about “a mom who was angry about something and now her daughter is going to go to Collins (another school in the district). The parent is mad over something that happened at the neighborhood social event. You can see that I haven’t gotten out of my office today. Oh, and I forgot to tell you about the student who was making inappropriate comments!”

I said, “Oh, Kimberly. It sounds as if you had quite a day.”

Her response, “You have no idea what kind of day it’s been. When would you like to come? This should be fun!” and she chuckled after she said it. The tone in her voice actually sounded as if she was eager to have me come. A little sarcastic, yet in a playful way - perhaps she was sending the message of, “Welcome to my world.” We arranged our calendars and exchanged pleasant good byes. (TS:Kimberly 3-11-09)

The world of the principal was alive and well in these initial two exchanges with the principals. Although the conversations were distinct from one another, they were also pointedly similar in some aspects. I would begin to frame these initial conversations into the cultural web of the school as an organization and the complexity of the principal’s positioning within the organization.

While it is widely understood that principals answer to numerous constituencies and are challenged with constantly juggling multiple demands, what is distinctive to the contemporary issues principals face is the increased call for principals to explicitly affect teaching and learning. It is expected that principals not only manage the previously acknowledged myriad demands, but they must do so amid the intensified pressure of high stakes testing and accountability.

As I looked more closely at how these principals were responding to their environments throughout this study I became aware that, while the principals’ behaviors were focused on goals concerning their involvement with teaching and learning, they were simultaneously dealing with another completely different, albeit important, set of goals to which they attended. There were the formal goals educators had established to

affect teaching and learning, and there was also another set of goals I refer to as the instrumental organizational goals (Metz, 1978). That is, those goals outside the direct realm of teaching and learning that serve the purpose of ensuring that the school organization functions as it should.

It is important to note the particular contextual time period within which this study took place. This study was situated in the heart of a local and global economic recession, referred to by many as “The Great Recession” for its duration (eighteen months at the time of this study) and intensity. The mood of the local community could be characterized as agitated and energized in the midst of a national and regional economic downturn the likes of which had not been experienced since the 1930’s.

Local sociocultural influences placed pressure on principals to act and respond. District mandates demanded that test scores go up at both schools, specifically, student academic achievement in all sub-groups needed to improve. Simultaneously, district mandates also directed principals to drastically decrease spending and to make plans for less teaching staff, fewer support staff, and increased class sizes in the subsequent school year.

There exists a constant conflict between the institutionalized organizational influences of what it means to be the principal and the local contemporary demands on what the principal must do. Upon initial observation, High Bluff Elementary School and Sea Breeze Elementary School appeared to be quite similar in demographics and student performance, however, the sociocultural influences in each school were quite different.

In turn, the two unique individuals who embodied and enacted the role of principal at each school did so quite differently from one another.

The principals of both schools participated within the larger system of the school district, which placed demands on them to increase student achievement/standardized test scores, plan for upcoming drastic budget cuts, prepare for increased class sizes, and reduce teaching staff that meant layoffs of all of the district's newest teachers. They also participated within the local system of the school which included answering to the demands and needs of teachers and parents.

In these two schools I saw an interesting dilemma play out before my eyes as principals dealt with competing demands for their time, multiple mandates placed on them by others, and their quest to unify staff around common causes. Despite the school district's attempts to formally structure the district's schools by standardizing the principals' approach to teaching and learning in the schools in order to improve student academic performance, differences in the ways the two principals responded and behaved were impacted by the informal processes that shaped ideologies and structures within the two schools. This call for standardization from the district was manifested in the direction to principals to lead their teachers in functioning as professional learning communities⁹ as defined by collaboration and a focus on results. Although these were the formal goals set forth by the district and by the principals themselves, the principals'

⁹ Professional Learning Community, commonly referred to in this district as PLC, is described in this district as a results-focused approach based on clarity of: a) what students are expected to learn, b) how educators know when they have learned, c) how educators will respond when students haven't learned, and d) how educators will respond when students have learned.

attention to the day-to-day operations of running a school helped define the additional goals – the instrumental goals – at play. While the principals said it was important for the principal to address the formal goals, their behaviors showed they believed they must attend to all of the other goals as well. In looking more carefully at how principals managed the many demands, specifically, how they attended to the various formal and instrumental goals, I began to understand how they managed these competing demands through unique applications of available claims to authority. To paint the picture of what this looked like within the world of these two principals, I illuminate the principals' distinct interactions with two significant groups: teachers and parents.

Chapter 8

The Principal and the Teachers

Although the stated goals of the school district and of the principals themselves were to increase student achievement and improve teaching with an unmistakable direction from district administration to implement professional learning communities, the default goal developed into something quite different: deal with catastrophic budget cuts and struggle to save jobs of the school's newest teachers. The interesting dynamic portrayed in the behaviors of principals and teachers, though, was that this default goal, although a top priority of principals, was not necessarily agreed upon by everyone within the school organization. In contrast, some veteran teachers at one of the schools, in particular, were quite offended by the pressure placed on them to sacrifice part of their own salaries to save the jobs of their less-senior colleagues and the attention given to this matter. While both principals made efforts to keep instruction at the forefront through a focus on implementing structures to support professional learning communities and providing information to teachers regarding best practices involved in that work, there was constant conflict between those efforts and the demands placed on principals to address the urgent issues of the district's budget and the emotional turmoil caused by teacher layoffs. The need to attend to the formal goals associated with teaching and learning while simultaneously attending to the instrumental goals – namely, address employee layoffs and manage the borders between teacher groups as well as the

boundaries between teachers and parents – helps explain how the principals’ behaviors made sense to them.

When I initially began my fieldwork at both schools, I was met with an interesting blend of expressed beliefs and enacted behaviors from the principals. On the one hand, each principal was eager to tell me that a top priority for her was to be an instructional leader. On the other hand, what I saw enacted was oftentimes quite different. The principals’ self-proclaimed title of instructional leader, specifically, their belief that it was important that they were first and foremost the school’s instructional leader, was repeated to me throughout my time with them. This was of particular interest to me as I had not explicitly told either principal that my project had a focus on instructional leadership. I had simply told them that I was interested in learning more about the principal’s role in a policy environment and how principals enact their roles within the school organization. I informed them that I was particularly interested in the role of the principal as it is portrayed within the daily practice of principals. I conscientiously approached them this way so as not to influence their behaviors according to what they thought I would be “looking for” based on any specific criteria. Since it was they who initiated this notion of “instructional leader,” I was eager to observe their practice firsthand and hear more from them to understand what this meant in their eyes.

One of my first conversations with each principal was an interview done early on during my fieldwork, during which time I took the opportunity to ask each principal to describe a typical day. Important to note is the attention to students and classrooms expressed by both principals in their descriptions. Susan and Kimberly explained that

portions of a day were typically spent with children on the playground, walking through classrooms, in meetings, answering to parents, and planning for upcoming events. Each principal's comments also supported the notion that school issues, teachers, and parents influenced what they did in a typical day:

Kimberly:

A typical day depends on the day of the week. A couple days I always start with IEPs. Let me start over, a typical day usually starts with some kind of meeting – IEP meeting, leadership meeting, it may be a meeting with a parent, usually some sort of meeting. Depending on what's next, sometimes meetings go throughout the day. Sometimes I walk through classrooms. I try to walk through classrooms one time per week. Aside from having meetings with parents or being in classrooms, I try to get out to the playground, monitor kids, talk to employees, answer questions. Then I try to plan things. I usually block out an hour before staff meetings because I'm prepping. I deal with behavior around lunchtime there's always behavior issues that need to be addressed. More urgent issues I'll do right away. I check email messages and phone messages. A couple days a week I have IEP meetings, structured teacher collaboration time meetings, grade level meetings. After 4:00 I stay and follow up on phone calls. I would like to say I'm prepped ten days ahead. (laughter) I do a weekly newsletter, so I have to do that. (At this point, Kimberly's sentence dropped off, not necessarily to signify she was done, but rather to signify that she could go on and on and never be finished describing a typical day.) (TS:Kimberly 3-24-09)

Susan:

My AP (assistant principal) and I meet. We make sure we're all on board with goals of the day. We make sure the white board in the staff lounge is ready with the agenda of the day. I try to make myself available to teachers especially on Mondays and Fridays before school – at the start of the week and the end of the week. We try to do two walk throughs each week during the language arts block. I also try to go to the playground during recess. When we (the assistant principal and the principal) are out there things run smoother as far as students behaving. I need to be available for playground supervision and discipline. That's also a time when our upper grades have math so it's a trade off. Some days I'll be out on the playground and some days I'll be in upper grade classes observing math. This community has high expectations that their emails will be

responded to within a of couple hours. So I check my emails every hour-and-a-half and respond to them right away. Then is the walk through time. I tell my office manager that I can't meet with parents during that time because it's walk through time. Now we're finished with formal observations, so that frees me up to do other things. Monday and Tuesday also includes determining the agenda for the staff development day. After school I try to make myself available to teachers as well. We have a very active PTO. Thirty percent of my emails will be in regard to a PTO event - something coming up or decisions that have to be made. Late afternoon I work on big ticket items like staff development or teachers on assistance plans. (TH:Susan 3-23-09)

Although this is the picture painted by the two principals to depict a typical day, what I saw in the real-life practice of each of the principals often included pieces of these descriptions, but frequently something quite different than what they had proclaimed their typical day to encompass. Their behaviors often seemed to conflict with what they asserted were their primary responsibilities. Their behaviors – and the behaviors of teachers – often seemed out of sync with the top priorities and goals of the school. So, why were many of the activities people were engaging in seemingly unrelated to the stated district goals and to the school goals?

Teacher Layoffs

The need for the principal to continuously respond to multiple demands was obvious in both schools. My first full day with Susan gave a glimpse into district office demands, specifically, the directives which held principals responsible to carry out certain administrative responsibilities related to layoffs. I arrived at the school at 8:00a.m. and greeted the office clerk and the office manager. I told them I didn't want to interrupt Susan if she was in the middle of something, and then I took a seat in the front office. The office manager walked down the ten-foot hallway to the principal's office to

tell Susan I was there. Susan came out immediately and greeted me warmly as I sat in the chair checking my email on my Blackberry while also listening to the front office chatter occurring around me. She graciously said, “Come on back” and waved me to join her in her office. She proceeded to tell me about the letters she had been required to distribute the previous day regarding the pink-slipped teachers who had requested a layoff hearing. Susan said it was upsetting that she had to interrupt their classes to present them with the letter, but that had been the directive from the district. One teacher asked Susan if she was allowed to change her mind about the request for a hearing¹⁰. Susan said she did not know the answer to that question and had called the assistant superintendent of human resources to ask. He answered Susan by telling her the teacher needs to put the request in writing. At that point, Susan stopped and asked me if I had seen the wording of the letter she had been required to deliver. She said it was “obviously written by attorneys,” and continued on telling me, “I think it sounds very scary.” She then walked out to her office manager’s desk to find the letters, pulled one out, and showed me the wording. After I read it, she said, “See, don’t you agree it sounds scary?” She then started to walk down the hall toward her office again and I followed her. She sat at her desk and motioned with a wave of her hand for me to sit at the chair across from her desk. (FNH: 03-23-09) I would eventually understand that Susan’s expressed concern for the teachers at her school and her positioning as principal at the school would influence many of her subsequent actions during my time at High Bluff.

¹⁰ The hearing provides the certificated employee who received a notice to layoff an opportunity to present his/her case before a panel. The administrative law judge makes the final determination whether or not the school district followed required legal processes in determining layoffs.

It became apparent that the heightened concern about the budget and the domino effect it had from the district level to the site level created a situation that required immediate action at each school. As a result, a dominant focus at both schools turned out to be the overwhelming need to develop a plan to generate revenue and fight to save teaching positions in response to the directive from district administration to prepare for drastic budget cuts, reduction in staff, and reduction in programs. Both principals responded by trying to rally the staff and parents around saving positions in the school. Neither principal wanted to lose the newest members of their teaching staff to impending lay-offs.

These external pressures presented the principals with conflicting demands for their time, attention, and priorities. While the district pushed for a focus on teaching and learning and the implementation of professional learning communities in each school, there was the competing dilemma presented by the budget and looming teacher layoffs. This quandary was met head on by both principals. Because these two principals occupied the “middleman” position of principal, their actions in responding to the local cultural and political demands showed them to be functioning somewhere between their collegial ties to their teaching staffs and their responsibilities to their super-ordinates (Bidwell, 1965). The principals did have bureaucratic power, but their power was limited by three important factors: 1) they were not the top managers in the organization, 2) teachers derived a great deal of authority through their claims to professional autonomy over instruction and curriculum, and 3) barriers, distractions, and conflicting demands

affected their actions and often hampered their positioning to do what they stated was most important.

As each day unfolded an assortment of events filled each principal's plate. On separate occasions the principals told me that the formal observation cycle had ended for the year, which meant they were not required to do any more classroom observations as stated in the contract between the district and the teachers. Both principals did mention on multiple occasions, however, that they needed to be in classrooms and that they knew they should be in classrooms more. Each principal expressed this ongoing dilemma of knowing that she should be present in the classrooms, while being forced to make choices about whether or not to do so at any given time.

While I noticed a dominant focus on the budget cuts and staffing issues at both schools, I also noticed a difference between the principals' stated priorities and what they actually did on a day-to-day basis. Principals continued to say they knew they should be instructional leaders and believed they were such, but what they did in real time was not necessarily closely tied to the classrooms. The principals' impact on instruction seemed to be indirect much of the time.

When I asked Kimberly to tell me about the last time she saw a teacher teaching, she said, "Gosh, it's been awhile. Let me see. I guess last Friday I went through some classes because I was taking tours with parents of a special education child. They want their special education child fully mainstreamed." (FNS: 3-30-09)

Although Susan said her primary job was to be an instructional leader, she also seemed to contradict herself in what she said and what she did at times. One day when I

asked her about the important things she attends to before she leaves every day, without hesitation she told me:

Student safety is always number one. Any kind of communication that comes across is no one. Family issues are very important to me. I communicate to my staff that family always comes first. I communicate to my staff that if there is a staff member who is having some kind of crisis that involves their family or their personal life, I would always take that and help them solve that. And then, of course, instruction. Learning is the goal. Anything that impacts learning would definitely be a priority. (TH: Susan 5-26-09)

When looking back at what Susan spent time on, much of her tasks *were* related to maintaining safety – and sometimes even more than that – preserving the reputation of safety among the parents. This meant that she had many conversations with parents and exchanged many emails with parents about safety-related issues while at the same time she expressed that she knew that the school was a very safe place for all of the children. She said that if she did not follow up with parents immediately, they would assume the worst and the situation would become even greater.

Susan was aware of limits to her time and commented on how she would wait to do some things on her list until the children were gone for the day. She explained:

Later afternoon, I'll usually work on big ticket items like staff development. Teachers on improvement plans, things like that. Of course, I'm always in communication with the district office and if there's something that we've attended like PLC I follow up with that and spend some time thinking about how that is going to be implemented. I check my emails, voice mails. I don't leave until I make sure that everything has been addressed within a reasonable time. People who have contacted me can reasonably expect some type of response - whether it's been solved or it's been be addressed. It's on my radar for tomorrow. One of my professors said you've got to prioritize how your responses go. A big part of our job is prioritizing. (TH: Susan 5-26-09)

The principals said their role in instruction was important and they typically labeled themselves as instructional leaders first and foremost, but as they responded to internal and external pressures oftentimes it was not easy to distinguish which of their actions they considered related to their role as instructional leader and which actions they believed were “something else.” Because of the direct proximity to the teaching and learning that principals have when they observe in a classroom and their repeated declarations about the importance of being in classrooms, one can infer that these principals believed their role as an instructional leader was tied to their connection to the classroom, and, more specifically, their presence in the classroom. They were also directly connected to teaching and learning via their regular bi-weekly staff meetings, during which times both principals planned and led staff through conversation and activities related to teaching and student academic performance. But although these more apparent connections to formal instructional goals were observed, I could see that the contextual demands of budget woes and teacher layoffs were influencing these principals. The principals were somehow negotiating their actions and balancing these formal demands with the need to help the organization function and survive. They suddenly found themselves in a position to address the problem of losing valuable new teachers and revered programs – and it was their responsibility as principals to lead others in working toward solutions. It was important that I consider how they were mediating these conditions in my attempt to grasp how their actions were making sense to them.

To help me understand the individual pieces of behavior and the underpinning social processes, I turned to Parson’s explanation of power within the organization. As

Parsons (1956) made claim, actors within the organization have power resources that are distinctive of their position. So then, how did these principals attend to the individuals within the schools to influence behavior? In order to engage in coherent activity, humans unify themselves around shared understandings; they unite around a common definition of what they are trying to achieve. Parsons' work imports the significance of paying attention to individual consciousness and why individuals would orient themselves to shared understandings and be obligated to orient themselves to act in a way which is in accordance with them. Humans require collective goods created by groups of which they are members; access to those goods is monitored by other participants in terms of honor and shame. Consequently, out of fear of exclusion, humans are obligated to engage in coherent social practice (King, 2009).

In his critique of the work of contemporary social theory as it relates to the previous work during the 1960's of Talcott Parsons and Ludwig Wittgenstein, Anthony King (2009) underscores that Parsons provides a sociological explanation of why humans necessarily engage in collective rule-following. For Parsons, social order can be explained by reference to the existence of shared values. A society can only be subject to a legitimate order, and therefore can be on a non-biological level something other than a balance of power of interests, only insofar as there are common value attitudes in society (Parsons, 1966, p. 670). Thus, social order is possible only insofar as participants have common values – they share an understanding of their common interests and goals.

In responding to the pressure to cut budgets and thus teaching staff, the principals at Sea Breeze and High Bluff attended to a shared value common in most societies – an

implied innate willingness to help others who are in human need – to energize their teachers and parents around the common interest and goal of saving teachers’ positions. The principals almost behaved as if they were “called” to do such work at this point in time. It became a passion and a cry for others to join the effort. It was up to the principals to make sure the social order was maintained at their schools. This did not involve simply maintaining a functional level of the organization by securing program stability at their schools, but also a humane plea for the livelihood of individuals within the organization. As I watched how the principals were managing this monumental feat, there were differences in how they interacted with individuals within the school and there were differences in the subsequent impact each principal had on her ability to persuade. Ultimately, individuals within the organization were free to choose whether they would join the cause or not. And in these two schools, some did and some did not.

From the onset it was quite apparent that the history of the teaching staff came into play at both schools. Both staffs were made up of veteran and new teachers, which created interesting dynamics at the schools, but there was a sense of animosity and divisiveness that was much more intensely felt and influential at Sea Breeze than at High Bluff. Although they also had a staff made up of veteran and new teachers, all of the High Bluff teachers I heard from – veteran and new – expressed a sense of loyalty and closeness to the principal.

These patterns shed light on this significant instrumental goal impacting the principals – managing the unique qualities of the teaching staff at both schools took much time and attention. This distinct element within the two schools can be better understood

by examining the actual makeup of the staffs. Both schools were made up of a cross-section of teachers, with the most “visible” qualities defined by years of experience and length of time each was employed in the district. Both staffs were comprised of large groups of teachers from opposite ends of the career continuum – those who were in the infancy stages of employment and those who were nearing retirement. At Sea Breeze, ten teachers were within their first two years of employment in the district, an equal number had at least 15 years of teaching experience, and several were nearing retirement. At High Bluff, eight teachers were within their first two years of employment in the district, ten teachers had at least 15 years of teaching experience, and several were nearing retirement. The composition of the teaching staff became a major influencing factor impacting the principal. The staffs at both schools shared this unique feature about their makeup: teachers were very diverse in years of experience and age, with a large number of first- and second-year teachers. Although the schools were similar in this way, the makeup of the staff played out quite differently at each of the schools. When I asked individual teachers about the staff at his/her school, almost every staff member at both schools discussed the diversity of the staff, specifically, how many teachers were veteran teachers and how many teachers were new.

Of particular relevance was whether or not the teachers had been hired by the current principal or by a previous principal. Typically, the more veteran staff members at Sea Breeze School were hired by someone other than Kimberly, and only the ten newest teachers had been hired and brought to the school within the past two years by Kimberly. High Bluff School was a new school, having only been open three years, which meant

Susan had hired every teacher. The teachers at High Bluff were either experienced teachers hired by Susan from within the district or new teachers to the district.

Conversely, Kimberly inherited a very veteran staff when she became the principal of Sea Breeze eighteen months ago. Since that time, many veteran teachers retired and she was able to hire ten new teachers. Kimberly saw this as an advantage and a way to affect positive change and forward movement, but some members of the veteran staff viewed quite differently. When I asked one veteran teacher to describe the staff, she replied, “Young, inexperienced, friendly.” (TS:Terrell 6-09-09) Another put it this way, “My feeling was that Kimberly wanted to get rid of the dead wood.” (TS:Moore 5-13-09) Referring to the former group of veteran teachers, this teacher explained that “those people said, ‘We’re going to do whatever we want to do.’ She (Kimberly) had to move people out who were impeding her progress.” I asked this teacher if that had changed since then and she responded:

Yes, immensely. Now we have teachers who are, ‘Yes, maam. Yes, maam. Yes, maam.’ Because they want their job. (Referring to the new teachers who were laid off and are hoping to have their pink slips rescinded.) We have so many teachers who are scared of not having a job. I understand. She’s got her agenda. But to see people walk away – and no history shared – we have a history in this community. It was sad to have all of that knowledge, experience not valued. (TS:Moore 5-13-09)

This sense of resentment was palpable at Sea Breeze, for some veteran teachers not only seemed to be expressing a loss of history as a result of teachers retiring and new teachers joining the staff, but they also seemed to be questioning the community’s perception of their own sense of value and worth at the school.

Much of Kimberly's time was spent with the newest teachers at the school. Susan also spent time with new teachers at her school, but the time spent with them at High Bluff was not as dominant as it was at Sea Breeze. Kimberly routinely conversed and met with new teachers throughout the day. She often provided encouragement and moral support to those who received pink slips. She also complimented them regularly for their contributions to the school and credited them with bringing enthusiasm and new ideas. Her attentiveness to their needs and the time she spent with them resulted in a close relationship that developed between the principal and the new teachers at Sea Breeze. Their principal was much more likely to have a conversation with those new teachers at any time – before, during, or after school – and didn't hesitate to initiate contact with them at various times.

It was not uncommon for Kimberly to mix casual social conversation in with professional work discussion with these teachers, as was the case one Monday at noon when Kimberly walked into the staff lounge to get a second-year fifth grade teacher, Tiffany, during her lunch to follow up on an email that the teacher had sent Kimberly the previous Friday night. Tiffany got up and followed Kimberly into her office. At the start of the conversation Kimberly said to Tiffany, "I texted you on Friday after I got your email – it was late and you were still here and I was worried about you. I was going to tell you if you were driving home to stop by my house for a glass of wine." Tiffany informed Kimberly that she was already home by then and they turned their conversation toward answering the questions she had raised in the email she had sent to Kimberly: questions regarding how to record assessment data, a student's medication, a layoff

hearing, and a possible child abuse case. After they were finished with the conversation and Tiffany had gone, Kimberly looked at me as she was walking toward her office door and explained to me, “I stop into the lunch room and talk to a couple of people. I know who I can do that with.” (FN:S 3-30-09) As I reflected on that statement later I asked myself, “Does that mean there are people she cannot do that with? If so, who are they? Would there be reasons she would or would not stop by the lunch room to talk to a person? What was going on with these friendly social relationships?” I began to realize that she had this type of relationship with the newer teachers – one of comfortable friendliness – but I did not see her ever pull one of the veteran teachers from the staff lounge during lunch time or ask any of them to do anything socially.

An interesting dynamic played out during my time at Sea Breeze. On the surface, the school appeared to be an active place of jovial friendliness, but that was often overshadowed by an undercurrent shaped by the turbulent nature of the “old guard” veteran teachers who had been a part of the school’s history. Those teachers seemed to be in competition with the new teachers who had recently come on board since Kimberly’s arrival. Comments from teachers alerted me to these undercurrents and I continuously sought to understand more about what was going on. Throughout my time at Sea Breeze, I became aware of the patterns of behavior that emerged and framing those patterns helped link those behaviors to root sociocultural processes. Ultimately, the message Kimberly was sending to individuals at her school was being interpreted differently than the message Susan was sending at High Bluff. Kimberly’s top priority was clearly to save the positions of the newest teachers on her staff. According to her,

she had placed these new teachers in leadership positions and groomed them to be invaluable to the teaching staff and to the school as a whole. Kimberly clearly believed she was looking out for her students when she hired the very best teachers, placed them in the right positions, and gave them the support and training they needed to be successful. Kimberly was very public and frank about the talent of the new teachers and the important role they played at the school, for she said so at the PTO meeting, school site council meeting, community budget meeting, and leadership meetings. She was determined to do anything she had to do to save those positions, and, more specifically, the people attached to those positions. At Sea Breeze, the message that people heard was about the positions and programs, which in turn impacted students, but more immediately affected the adults.

In contrast, most of the dialogue about teacher layoffs at High Bluff took place directly between the principal and the new teachers who were affected, and there was not the underlying resentment expressed by the veteran teachers I spoke with or heard from. Rather, when they did speak up about the layoffs, their comments had a common theme - that they were a family and they supported each other. More characteristic at High Bluff was a silence among the veteran teachers – it just was not discussed as much. Susan did discuss the budget issues with various parent groups and with her staff, but there wasn't the divisiveness that existed at Sea Breeze. I began to wonder if perhaps the lack of expressed tension was for fear of upsetting their colleagues and thus the “family atmosphere” they had worked so hard to create.

At Sea Breeze, the principal became immersed in her involvement with the needs of her new teaching staff and issues related to teacher layoffs. She made it very clear that the last thing she wanted was to lose all of the staff she had hired. The job layoff situation affected every new teacher at her site – all ten teachers. Kimberly’s time was consumed with thinking about how to save teachers and developing strategies to do so. I observed that the principal spent much of her time and attention on the newest members of her teaching staff – the very individuals who received layoff notices. Kimberly said on numerous occasions that she knew she was brought to the school to provide strong leadership and help the teachers improve. She also said she thought she could influence change and get things done by working with the newer teachers, and she attributed this to their positive attitudes, hard work ethic, and astute teaching ability. Newer teachers looked to Kimberly as someone who could reinforce and support them – help them succeed in their first years of teaching. Perhaps most importantly, someone who could help secure their employment. This alignment was resented by veteran staff and veteran staff spoke of this often. There seemed to be distinct, noticeable boundaries between these different groups of teachers at Sea Breeze, namely the old guard and the new guard, and Kimberly was contributing to this production.

Kimberly threw herself into spreading the word about the importance of saving those teachers and took every opportunity to do so. PTO meetings, School Site Council meetings, and leadership meetings all centered around this issue. She spent extra time planning and preparing a special community forum meeting for the specific purpose of rallying the community around the current budget issues, explicitly detailing how the cuts

would directly impact staff at Sea Breeze. Her preparation for the community meeting even involved meeting individually with the superintendent and asking members of the district's Board of Trustees to help present at her community forum budget meeting.

Both principals' relationships with new teachers were significant. Although it looked quite different at each school, an instrumental goal of the principals was to take care of the newest teachers.

Susan often assumed a maternal role with the new teachers and they looked to her as a mentor and superior, someone they could turn to for advice. One day when I arrived, Susan was with a second-year teacher in his late twenties who was about to get married – she was teaching him about how to secure a home loan. Susan was providing in great detail the information he needed to know, what he needed to look for, and what he needed to watch out for. While I saw Susan acting much of the time as a teacher and mentor to teachers at her school, it seemed as if Kimberly took on a role more closely defined as a friend or an advocate with some of her newest teachers and they went to her for advice – not just regarding instructional issues, but also for personal issues and social interaction.

As veteran teachers at Sea Breeze discussed the staffing dynamics at their schools, they expressed that the newest teachers had a certain status. In particular, the new teachers' perceived power came from positions they had been given on leadership teams, their friendly and social relationship to the principal, extra time they spent with the principal, and the perception that they were the “chosen ones” because they had been hired by the principal, as two of the veteran teachers told me outright. Teachers

themselves expressed a disjointed feeling even in the staff lounge. For instance, one veteran teacher who was particularly candid in an interview described the staff as having “definitely a disjointed feel to it. Very rarely do I see a full staff lounge where people are taking their breaks.” She went on to explain her pointed feelings of resentment about the friendly relationships some new teachers had with the principal.

I think it’s interesting, because of Kimberly’s age I sometimes wonder if she doesn’t feel comfortable with older teachers here. I do see her trying to reach out to the newer teachers here, and I can understand that because she’s trying to build a team that’s going to be with her for some time, which is why it’s hard for her to have so many of these teachers she’s going to lose because she’s invested so much emotionally into these people. It takes time to build relationships. (TS: Barry 5-28-09)

While this teacher said she understood why the principal hired these teachers and she knew why the principal did not want to lose them, this teacher was also forthcoming with the bitterness felt by some staff about the special relationship that had developed between the new teachers and their principal. There was an interesting line in the sand that was visible not only by a generational divide, but also by this disjointedness expressed – the new teachers brought value to the school, but their arrival stirred up a different set of dynamics within the web of relationships among teachers and with their principal. The veteran teachers themselves said they knew how hard the new teachers worked and several commented on how good they were with kids. But they also said the arrival of these new teachers came with a price. It was no secret that the freshness and talent brought to the school by these new teachers was highly valued by their principal, for Kimberly herself stated it both privately and publicly on many occasions. In and of itself this may not have seemed problematic, but some veteran teachers viewed their own

importance to be less as a result. One teacher even expressed that she wasn't sure the new teachers valued their veteran colleagues' teaching skills, saying, "There needs to be value to both the older people and the younger people. Granted, maybe he's (referring to a fellow veteran teacher) doing things differently than you because he came into education at a different time, but it has to be valued." She went on to say, "You can see that on a leadership team how people's input, whether it's respected or not, or whether it's just heard, put on a piece of paper, and set aside." (TS: Barry 5-28-09) This sense of disillusionment was visible in social events at the school as well. Not only did veteran teachers choose not to attend some staff social events planned by newer members of the staff, they at times weren't even invited to casual, social occasions between new teachers and their principal.

Adding to this divisive formula was the inescapable looming cloud of teacher layoffs targeting these newest teachers. There was pressure to help save this valuable commodity at any cost, which was quite threatening and off-putting to some seasoned teachers on the Sea Breeze staff. Consequently, some of the veteran teachers formed an informal "group" to combat the threats of the new staff who they viewed to have power by virtue of their relationships with the principal.

These new teachers were young, and, compared to the older veteran staff – many of whom had friends who had retired the year before – youth was thought to be idealized at the school. Veteran teachers looked at Kimberly as someone with much energy and many good intentions, but also as one who perhaps wasn't to be completely trusted because she couldn't possibly understand things the way they did.

Unlike what I saw unravel at Sea Breeze, Susan's teachers expressed pride in being "chosen" by Susan and seemed to have a built in loyalty to her and to each other as a result. High Bluff School was only in its third year of operation and almost every teacher interviewed talked about the close-knit, family-like atmosphere at the school. Susan seemed to confide primarily in her assistant principal and did not share that same type of confidential relationship with any other individual at the school. Newer teachers looked to Susan for support, but they also looked to other teachers as well. The new teachers at High Bluff were devastated over the thought of losing their positions, and three of them cried and spoke passionately as they participated in interviews with me. Susan told me that she, too, had cried right along with them as she hugged them and talked with them.

At Sea Breeze, there was a noticeable division among the ranks of teachers. There existed a pronounced feeling of "who was in the inner circle and who was not" by some of her veteran staff. Some teachers acknowledged the difficulty the principal faced when she came into the school. She had been given the task of following in the footsteps of a principal who was weak and she had a variety of issues to tackle as a result. As one of her veteran teachers put it, "The most important part of a principal's job is to keep the staff happy. Before, I would have said everyone here is a bunch of hens. Kimberly has brought us together. Her biggest challenge is to bring them in. I feel like now she (Kimberly) thinks, 'I've tried and if they're not willing to drink the water, then that's that.'" Then she added, "It's like a Mormon man with a bunch of wives. I'm a people pleaser and I like everyone to be happy." (TS:Moore 5-13-09) When I thought about this

teacher's comment about "a Mormon man with a bunch of wives" in relation to the difficult, but necessary task of keeping each one happy, I saw the pattern at play. There were many teachers with many needs and viewpoints at Sea Breeze, but there was a general desire to be accepted by the principal and a general desire to be happy. The story being told, though, conveyed that some teachers did *not* feel as worthy and valuable as others.

Teacher Management

In addition to tackling the issue of layoffs and negotiating the relationships among teachers, the principals had other major issues regarding their teachers that required their attention. Both principals had teachers on staff who were on assistance plans and needed support to improve their teaching. At Sea Breeze, the teaching skills of three newer teachers were a concern; one would definitely not be reemployed by the district. Another teacher was diagnosed with a life-threatening disease mid-year. These critical situations, along with the layoffs, consumed Kimberly and became the focal point above all else for her. Susan, too, had teachers who needed support from her to improve teaching, but her daily schedule had more balance related to various issues at hand.

Both principals spent much time and energy responding to the personal needs of their teachers. Teachers at both schools expressed the importance of having a principal who paid attention to their personal lives. Both principals stated this was important for them to do. The difference with Susan, though, seemed to be that a line was drawn at professional concern and caring, whereas I began to see that Kimberly was also socially involved with those same teachers she was concerned about. Kimberly had become quite

close on a personal, social level to several of the newest teachers on her staff, as was apparent on the Friday when Kimberly offered to meet one of them after work over a glass of wine to talk about questions the teacher had asked. This was quite different from Susan's interactions with teachers. Although she had grown close to her newest teachers and supported them in many ways, she maintained a role that clearly marked the hierarchy of principal and teacher.

At High Bluff, Susan was very aware that her teaching staff was greatly affected by the layoff notices – eight were given at her school – and loss of positions for the following school year. Susan was sick about the possibility of teachers losing jobs, but she kept the message focused on the day-to-day business of teaching and learning. She provided comfort and compassion, while maintaining the focus on doing what was best for their students. She proceeded with their work on professional learning communities. She continued to do walk-through observations in classrooms. She continued to follow up with a struggling teacher on an assistance plan. During those conversations and events, she put the issue of layoffs aside and focused on the task at hand. This seemed to help the teachers keep their focus on teaching and on their students in the day-to-day activities of the school. This seemed to contribute to their ability to maintain some sort of professional code of conduct during the day. While at High Bluff, I was aware of some underlying staff issues that were occurring at the school, but they were not the dominant topics during every conversation and they did not constrain the actions of the principal.

Teachers at both school looked to their principals for a variety of reasons and the principals interacted with teachers about a range of issues. Through their communication with teachers, principals did influence classroom practice, albeit usually indirectly, in significant ways. The two principals spent time responding to teachers' needs for information and provided support to them on a variety of issues. Staff meetings were held regularly every two weeks at both schools, with the principal leading the staff meeting. The topics at the staff meetings I attended were centered around assessment and teaching strategies for student engagement. It did become apparent that during my time at the schools Susan spent much more time in teachers' classrooms and on the playground than did Kimberly.

Both principals were subjected to numerous meetings at the district and school levels. Teachers at Sea Breeze even commented on numerous occasions about the amount of time their principal spent in meetings. Some teachers at the school identified why they believed that might be the case and one such factor they attributed it to was the district special education program at Sea Breeze, which teachers (and Kimberly herself) said seemed to consume much of her time. I was a bit surprised by the candor expressed during an interview with one of the veteran teachers at Sea Breeze who had initially come across as quite positive and happy about her school and her principal. When sitting down one-on-one with no one else around at a small reading table in the back of her classroom at the end of a school day, I asked her what a typical day was like for the principal at her school. She began by saying it had "changed erratically since we got more special education here. I used to see her on the playground – now I see her in her office all the

time – in meetings all the time or at the DO. I used to see her all the time and now I only see her if she's on a mission. She used to be more visible.” She paused and then she added, “I imagine part of her day is also spent helping kids.” (TS:Moore 5-13-09)

Many of the principals' days were filled with attention to myriad disparate events and issues. This seemed to be even more apparent at Sea Breeze, as Kimberly's time seemed to be impacted by the programs and events occurring at her school at any given time. In Kimberly's case, it seemed that whatever specific situation she was responding to at the moment became the priority and other things were forced aside. Much of the time, Susan maintained a steadfast focus on school and district goals even in the midst of the immediate budget situation and staff issues. Susan seemed committed to not letting other influences dominate and keep her from pursuing those goals with her staff. In contrast, the statements made by teachers at Sea Breeze and my observations indicated that a good deal of Kimberly's time was spent involved in meetings which were primarily in her office. Even Kimberly herself said she was in her office much of the time. Kimberly seemed to prioritize and value the chance to work with smaller groups of teachers and parents in her office and to help out with situations in times of crisis. At Sea Breeze, her responses to these situations seemed to come at the expense of paying attention to the normal day-to-day operations of teaching and learning at the school. She was rarely in classrooms – only twice to observe during the entire time I spent at Sea Breeze – and she was rarely on the playground with children. And yet, Kimberly worked long hours and many evenings.

Susan said she constantly battled this pull toward her office and meetings as well, but she continuously stated that she was determined to be an instructional leader. That was observed the morning she had shared with me her distress over delivering the hearing notification to new teachers. Immediately after she had finished her conversation with me that morning regarding concerns about the notices, she told me she had planned to go into classrooms to do walk-through observations and provide feedback to teachers about their teaching. At that point, Susan grabbed her clipboard and I followed her as she started with the classroom observations, beginning in the teacher's classroom who was on an assistance plan to address concerns about her teaching. It wouldn't be until later in the day that she would return to her office, answer her emails, and plan for the two evening parent meetings scheduled to be held later on that week.

Susan went about what seemed to be her routine daily activities. She escorted new students to their classrooms to meet their new teachers on their first day; she met with their families and promised that the school would be a good, safe place for their children. She routinely did playground duty during recess and lunch. She met children on arrival each day and watched as they were dismissed. She walked through classrooms. She conferred with her assistant principal regularly throughout the day wherever their paths crossed. Although she also had some parent and staff meetings, many of those were held after school hours and her activities kept her out and about the campus during the day.

The personal needs of a teacher who had been diagnosed with a life-threatening disease became a major issue for Kimberly during my time at Sea Breeze, for this teacher

was struggling on multiple counts. In addition to her health problems, this teacher had already been having difficulty managing her classroom and handling the stress of her position. The issues presented by the problems this particular teacher was having had a ripple effect that extended throughout the entire time I spent at that school. The particular needs of this critically ill teacher captured how the very nature of the role of the principal can be defined by a set of circumstances occurring within the school organization, not simply by a job description or by the institutionalized notion of what it means to principal a school. Given the situation, if a teacher needs help – whether it is a professional or personal nature – the principal responds. In this particular incident, a first-year teacher showed up at Kimberly’s office sobbing about the personal and professional problems she was encountering. She was forthcoming in telling her principal, “I can’t do it anymore. I have other students who need to learn and then I end up doing what happened today all the time. It’s not fair to those other students. And then I’m going to lose my assistant by the end of the month.” As she spoke, the teacher’s voice got forceful, indicating desperation and a feeling of helplessness. She continued to sob with every word uttered. “I need medical help... I need help. I can’t do it anymore. And tonight is gallery night for parents. I can’t do the gallery night.” Kimberly responded with a comforting, yet confident tone, saying, “You said you need medical help. We can help with that. You need to go to the parent night tonight. I saw your room today. It looks good. What do you have to do to get ready for the gallery night?” Kimberly would later go on to help this teacher prepare for the parent gallery night, assist her in obtaining professional medical help for this teacher, and even drive her to a

medical appointment (FNS: 4-2-09). Her response to this one particular situation typifies how crisis conditions at the school dominated Kimberly's time.

As Kimberly prepared to take the teacher to the medical appointment and as she was packing her things into her purse she began to tell me about what her day was going to look like "before this happened." During her description she told me about another teacher whose performance she was concerned about. This was a new teacher she had been documenting for poor performance. The teacher had recently been informed she would be non-reelected, which meant she would not be extending her probationary status as a new teacher and she would not be employed in the district beyond her first year. My exchange with Kimberly as she described the day ahead,

Kimberly: I have two boys to follow up with behavior, Vicki will be in SST's all day – she does all of these, I have an IEP at 1:00 – don't know if the speech teacher (who was released) did the goals. I have no idea if she wrote the goals – she won't talk to me. (Teacher who is angry because she is being released from employment.)

Me: Is this week pretty typical for you?

Kimberly: It might be a little crazier than usual with the kid episodes and now the teacher thing.

A few minutes later a parent walked into the front office and Kimberly overheard her say that her child is sick today.

Kimberly laughed when she replied, "Everybody is falling apart around here!" (FNS: 4-03-09)

These scenarios portray how Kimberly was responding to the circumstances around her and how she perceived her role. It seemed as if she believed it to be her responsibility to – using her words – "keep everybody from falling apart." (FNS: 4-03-

09) She was quick to take action and was typically spontaneous and reactive. Her responses sometimes contributed to a frenzied, flurry of activity that accompanied her leadership. She was frequently reacting to a “big issue” and she was personally in the middle of those situations.

Sometimes it seemed as if Kimberly was responding to legitimate issues and at other times it seemed as if she was creating additional issues to which to respond. Such seemed to be the case with her concern over the contents of the soda and candy machines in the teachers’ lounge. In the staff lounge one afternoon, I was purchasing a diet coke from the vending machine. Kimberly happened to be standing in the lounge and came over to me and said it was a new machine. She explained that a parent owns the vending company and gives the school twenty percent of the profits. She then showed me the selection of healthier options for teachers. She said that last year officials from the state came to the school because of the health grant the district had received. She continued to explain to me that adult health is part of the district wellness policy and she had served as a consultant on the committee. During the visit from the state officials, they had looked at the machine in the lounge and written down that there were not healthy options for teachers. Kimberly proudly declared to me, “Now if teachers want something healthy they can get peanuts, popcorn, a granola bar.” She said she “can’t stand it when teachers are drinking out of a soda can during work. We need to model the healthy food choices.” I asked if the issue of staff drinking soda had gotten better and Kimberly said, “Not yet, but I’m working on it.” (FNS: 5-12-09) This involvement in yet one more committee

group, the Wellness Committee, fit a pattern of behaviors signifying many foci that were not necessarily tied to a set of formal goals and priorities.

A substantial factor in each school was the placement of educational programs, which was much more apparent at Sea Breeze than at High Bluff due to the district's special education classes that were a part of the school. The special education program at Sea Breeze was extensive and absorbed much of Kimberly's attention. The school had four special day classes in addition to the RSP class.¹¹ Much of the principal's time was spent supporting her special day class students, teachers, and parents. One of the new teachers assigned to a special day class needed much mentoring and support from her principal. Another teacher had just been informed by Kimberly that her teaching contract would not be renewed. The dilemma of needing to support her teachers and yet relying on the director of special education at the district office presented an issue for Kimberly, as she said she knew what needed to be done and she knew the support she needed from the district, but she was disturbed by her inability to make those things happen without direct involvement from the district's director of special education.

On any given day at Sea Breeze a different situation with special education could skew Kimberly's preconceived idea about what she thought she would be doing at any given time. Such was the case one morning when one of the special education teachers brought a student to the principal's office because he had swung at an instructional assistant in the classroom. While the teacher left Kimberly's office to retrieve a social

¹¹ The Resource Specialist Program (RSP) provides educational support to students as designated on an individualized education plan (IEP). The support can include modifications to curriculum, instructional strategies, and expected student outcomes.

story that she would try to use to help focus the child's behavior, Kimberly was left in her office to work with the child who was visibly agitated. The student ran around Kimberly's office, crawled under her desk, pulled at the box on top of the counter, tipped back in his chair, then got up and knocked it over. Kimberly kept him safe by protecting him from anything that would hurt him and she tried to get him to sit back down and make good choices. When the social story did not seem to work, the special education teacher went to get the school psychologist for additional help with the situation. Kimberly also told the office manager she needed the psychologist, at which time the office manager immediately responded. After the psychologist came to the office, they were able to calm the child and the SDC teacher took him back to class. Following this incident, Kimberly expressed her concern about this teacher's decision to bring him to the office, saying, "Bringing him here is useless." The psychologist told her that she was working on a behavior support plan that should help the special education teacher know what to do in such a situation. (FNS: 4-02-09)

A bit later, Kimberly again expressed distress over her lack of ability to make decisions regarding the special education programs at the school, specifically, her complete dependency on the district to make those decisions. She told me she wanted to take me to the four special education classes so I could see what she was talking about. While we were walking there, she expressed concern about the make up in one of the classes. She said it is supposed to be a learning handicapped class, but it has students in it whose placement she was considering. She told me they perhaps need more support. Kimberly said the teacher has been under much stress as she dealt with the makeup of the

class throughout the year. We went to all four classes and she continued to dialogue with me about her lack of ability to make some of the decisions regarding important programs at her school.

Later that afternoon, the phone rang. Kimberly looked at the displayed name on the telephone and said, “Oh, it’s George!” (outwardly excited to see that it was the director of special education calling her back). She picked up the phone, said hello, and then said, “Thank you for calling me back. I’ve been trying to get a hold of you.” She told George, “Emily’s class is not set up right. We’ve got people in the class because their parents want it, but perhaps it’s not the best placement.” The dialogue between the director of special education and the principal continued and at one point Kimberly was obviously responding to some decision-making that would be occurring in the future when she said, “I want to be a part of that. (I would later learn that she was referring to conversations about classes and student placements at sites.) Otherwise it ends up being in my office like this morning. (Referring to the incident with the boy in her office earlier that day.)” (TS:Kimberly 4-2-09)

As each of the principals plunged through their daily activities, they were presented with a plethora of details to manage. Their responses to these details directly impacted the atmosphere that existed at their schools. At High Bluff, the details seemed to be quite neatly arranged and often focused around instructional purpose. This was another indication of the sense of unity and common focus, and “family feeling” at High Bluff that was not as present at Sea Breeze.

Leadership within the Ranks

A primary element at work within the organization was how leadership was allocated throughout the school. As the days went on I realized that this leadership allocation, specifically in the ranks of teachers, played a vital part in how the principal used authority and why it played out differently in both schools.

Both Kimberly and Susan shared leadership responsibilities with teachers, which elicited high levels of commitment and professionalism from most of the teachers who were directly involved as leaders in the group. Several main leadership groups existed at both schools: a) the school site's leadership team (made up of the principal, one teacher from each grade level, and a special education teacher), b) school site council (made up of the principal, teachers, classified staff member, and parents), c) student success team (made up of the principal/assistant principal, approximately three teachers, school psychologist), d) social committee, and e) the parent teacher organization (PTO). Kimberly also had a technology leadership team (made up of several teachers, most of whom were newly hired) and Susan had a scheduling team (who worked on initial scheduling recommendations for the following school year).

Kimberly worked primarily through the leadership teams at her school to communicate, set goals, and plan (grade level leadership team, special education team, student success team, technology committee, school site council, and PTO). Most of Kimberly's conversations were with teachers who were involved as leaders in one of the teams and many decisions were made and communicated through the leadership team members. Much of her time was spent in meetings with them or in follow-up

conversations with them and most of those conversations took place in her office or in the office area (in a conference room/designated meeting area). A majority of the teachers who served on the leadership teams at Kimberly's school were among the group of newest teachers who had been hired by Kimberly within the past year. Kimberly was forthcoming and honest about the purposeful way she selected those teachers and the rationale behind why it was important for them to be on the teams. According to her, she needed new people with expertise who could help move the school forward.

Some level of frustration was expressed at Sea Breeze from each of the five teachers interviewed who were not a part of the leadership groups and, hence, perceived themselves as sometimes uninformed and not involved in significant decision-making related to the important work of the school. Three teachers expressed that they (teachers on the leadership teams) thought select members had the benefit of working interactively with other teachers in a shared instructional leadership capacity. As one teacher put it, "only some are *in* with Kimberly" in that capacity.

I did not hear these same concerns expressed at High Bluff. Perhaps the history of the school lent itself to the notion that they were all selected by Susan to work there during the hiring process, therefore, they were all valued by Susan as teachers. That is not to say that there was true integrated leadership in which all functioned productively together to learn and perform at high levels, but High Bluff was more collegial and friendly and less adversarial and disapproving. The teachers on High Bluff's leadership teams were identified somewhat mutually, with teachers jointly deciding who should serve in which capacity and volunteering among themselves. Susan was part of those

conversations and made the ultimate decision about which teachers served in which capacity, but as a general rule, the teachers were part of the selection process. Using Durkheim's (1965) theory to consider how the teachers' behaviors were socially constructed, the self-fulfillment of individual teachers at High Bluff seemed to be manifested in the collective belief that they were all a family unit – chosen by Susan, supported by Susan, and also supported by one another. Teachers at High Bluff School – at least publicly – offered much more support to the new teachers who were facing job layoffs. The dependence on one another propelled work on the configuration of professional learning communities forward in the midst of the budget crisis and personal impact on teaching staff.

At High Bluff, a cross-section of teachers participated in various leadership roles and all were encouraged to be involved in some type of leadership capacity. There didn't seem to be a pattern of teachers from particular grade levels or specific informal groups represented in leadership, either in formally defined leadership roles (e.g., grade level leaders, school site council, parent teacher organization, social committee) or less formally defined capacities (e.g., who speaks up at staff meetings, who adds notes to the whiteboard in the lounge).

A different set of circumstances at Sea Breeze became clear through interviews with teachers and the blunt admission by the principal. Patterns were evident in the formal and informal ways teachers were involved as leaders. In an interview with a veteran teacher, she described the staff this way,

I think some of the staff thinks she has favorites – when they do something wrong they don't get in trouble. If there is an undercurrent, that is it. The

previous social committee people were trying. They were told by Kimberly last year that we're going to get fresh blood in here. (TS:Moore 5-13-09)

Kimberly bluntly rationalized that she had hired people for specific purposes and she wanted certain people in leadership positions. She said the staff needed a change so she hired new people. On many occasions she expressed relief that many had retired last year, which opened the opportunity for her to bring in new teachers.

Kimberly formally delegated much leadership to people she had hired, many of whom were new to teaching. In response, I began to see that some veteran teachers used their positioning as tenured, safely employed individuals to assert their power and influence in less formal, yet not always subtle ways. They expressed their displeasure to me and they expressed their displeasure in less private ways, including public displays in the staff lounge.

It is important to point out that there were, according to Kimberly, legitimate problems with teachers at her school that she was faced with. In multiple ways, Kimberly's behaviors demonstrated that she believed it was her job as the principal to address those problems. In a straightforward manner, Kimberly described to me some of the issues that she had previously confronted with some of her veteran teachers and it was apparent that she was honest in her assessment and somewhat fearless in how she had approached some of the veteran teachers she has had concerns about.

There is a group of senior people here who won't agree with anything I say. Trudy – I won't go there. She likes to tell me how she's right and I'm wrong. I have an issue with a teacher who will be on cycle next year and probably an improvement plan after that because she's just not nice. She left three students and went on a field trip with the rest of her class one day because she couldn't find them. I don't usually yell, but I yelled at

her... I shouldn't say that – I had three parents call irate. Now she did leave another teacher in charge because she couldn't find them. I made her meet with the parent and apologize and then I moved the student out of her class because that's what the parent wanted. She was mad at me for doing that. I said, 'You put yourself in that parent's position. She has every right not to trust you!' I'm pretty honest with them. (TS:Kimberly 4-01-09)

The obvious elevation of new teachers on many levels, including their involvement in teacher leadership roles, bred further resentment and animosity from some of the more veteran staff at Sea Breeze. Many of their comments even suggested that they were not only offended by the special treatment Kimberly gave the new teachers, but they were actually threatened on a professional level. Two senior teachers mentioned to me certain shared sentiments that some of them had collectively been talking about regarding the new teachers' status at the school and the pressure they were feeling to save their positions at the school.

The importance of cultivating teacher leadership for enhanced student performance was evidenced in the impact it had at each site. The application of Ogawa and Bossert's (1995) explanation of shared leadership would assume that shared leadership for instruction is not dependent on role or position and it relies on the personal resources of the school's participants. Leadership, therefore, is deployed through interactions among individuals within the schools. I posit that the principal plays an integral role in this process in many ways. First, how the leadership roles are established and communicated is critical and varied greatly between these two schools. Second, the principal serves on each of the leadership teams at the schools. This presents an interesting dynamic, as the principal never leaves the position of "principal." This is

where the institutionalized positioning of principal was very apparent. The principal is always positioned in the hierarchy of the school as the teachers' primary evaluator and boss. This is not necessarily always good or always bad, but a factor to be considered because it affects how teachers perceive their roles and how they will subsequently act. The principal is also a member of each of the other leadership teams, which is not true of the other membership in each team. This gives her access to information and insight that other members from which the respective teams do not benefit. She, in turn, decides what is important for others to hear and shares it with them accordingly. In addition, because of the positioning of the principal, she typically serves as "leader among leaders" in the group, even if there is another participant who is formally assigned the leader. Thus, the real authority within these groups is afforded the principal even though the formal authority is placed elsewhere. Such was the case when the principal served as part of the School Site Council and PTO. In those groups, the principal wasn't technically the formal leader, but it was clear that the principal held *real* authority.

Leadership at both schools was shared not only with teachers, but also with an assistant principal. In addition to the principal, both schools had an assistant principal. The role of the assistant principal was quite different at each school. At High Bluff, the assistant principal was a full-time employee at the school. She was involved in the day-to-day operation of the school and could be seen doing many of the same types of tasks that the principal did – crossing guard duty in the morning, recess duty, talking with teachers, observing in classrooms. The principal and assistant principal at High Bluff met frequently to discuss ongoing issues and priorities. Susan's assistant principal went

to Susan frequently for advice and feedback, to which Susan readily responded.

Kimberly's assistant principal was only at her school part-time and had a much more adjunct role. When she was there, she operated quite separately from Kimberly and seemed to do assigned tasks that were separate from Kimberly's tasks. She organized and attended student success team meetings, she took care of discipline, and she did some of the teacher evaluations. Kimberly did confer with her and confide in her about issues when the assistant principal was there and not in a meeting, but that did not happen very frequently. Although they did talk about how to proceed on particular issues, I rarely saw the assistant principal go to Kimberly for advice or to seek feedback.

Teachers and School Politics

The political agendas of teachers and parents were evident at both schools, but the teachers were much more divisive and militant at Sea Breeze than at High Bluff. On one of the whiteboards in the teachers' lounge at Sea Breeze were two articles that were apparently put up by teachers. This particular whiteboard had, for the most part, union-related issues posted and written on it, but I noticed that union issues were also posted on other boards throughout the staff lounge periodically, too. The two articles brought attention to the political undertones expressed in this informal way among the staff at Sea Breeze. The first article was titled, *What Finland Could Teach the World*. I was curious about the article and read it, finding it telling that the author's theme was about paying teachers the respect they deserve. One quote from the article, 'Teachers in Finland are well-paid and enjoy great respect.' The other article posted on that white board was

titled, *Teachers Not Running an Assembly Line*. This, too, had a theme of respecting teachers and the work they do. The last paragraph of this article stated,

It's time to give teachers some praise for what they have accomplished considering everything previously mentioned and stop blaming them for all the educational woes. It's time to look at all the educational factors that influence a child's education. Direct parental involvement in a child's education will have a far greater impact on a child's educational growth than anything NCLB could ever begin to do. It's time to give teachers some praise for what they have accomplished. (AS: 4-28-09)

The undercurrent of resentment at Sea Breeze always seemed right below the surface. One place this was evident were the dynamics surrounding the leadership team and the feelings of resentment toward some who served on it, many of whom had been selected by Kimberly and were predominantly from the ranks of the newest teachers.

During an end-of-school-year leadership team meeting at the school, one of the only veteran teachers on the team blurted out a question about the departure of the laid off teachers, bluntly asking Kimberly, "When will the teachers have to move out?"

Kimberly said with a tightness signaling a bit of irritation in her voice, "I haven't got that far. I hope nobody will have to move out." Later that same day Kimberly commented to me, "Can you believe Carl (the veteran first grade teacher) brought up the thing about the other teachers moving out? I couldn't believe that, but it doesn't surprise me about him. He does that and, trust me, I'd like to keep the ones that are having to leave more than anything." (FNS: 5-29-09)

At another time Kimberly expressed her frustration about some of the senior teachers' attitudes while meeting with two principal colleagues to make tentative plans for next year's roll out of professional learning communities, specifically, how their

kindergarten teachers could work out their schedule to regroup their students to meet the unique needs of various groups. In essence, the teachers would share the responsibility of knowing what every student in the grade needed on identified standards and/or objectives, then group them into appropriate groups, assigning each teacher to instruct one of the groups for those particular learning objectives. The three principals were discussing the scheduling challenges they would face if they had their kindergarten teachers participate in professional learning communities. Kimberly pointed out to her principal colleagues the necessity of having the kindergarten teachers participate because she believed her kindergarten teachers were not challenging some of the students enough. At one point she stated out loud to her two colleagues, “We have smart kids coming into our kindergarten and I don’t think we’re pushing them enough. Not everything needs to be copied off the board. I have kids who are just copying off the board and not really doing the work.” One of the other principals said she could see the possibility, “I can see a regroup in kindergarten for writing.” Kimberly replied that she believed that the regroup should be selected objectives and standards, but that she anticipated a problem with some of her senior teachers because last year one of her veteran teachers had gone to the union to complain, saying there was no time for lunch because she was being forced to work with the other class; she didn’t get a lunch break. (FNS: 5-27-09)

Interesting to note, with the exception of the general militant undertones of some at Sea Breeze, the impact of the two teachers’ unions was not the driving force at either school until one incident at Sea Breeze toward the very end of the school year. The union leadership and members were present, but during the time I was there they were rather

silent. Perhaps this can be attributed to the sensitive nature of the teacher layoffs, the mission of the union to protect all of its bargaining unit members, and the personal affect it was having on so many of the teachers at both schools.

The pressure at Kimberly's school continued to build throughout the days and weeks that I spent there and the tensions escalated among her staff. This seemed to peak one day in early June when I arrived to interview a teacher at her school for this research. Kimberly saw me walk in and said, "Oh good. You're here, Holly. I really need to talk to you when you're done." I went down to the teacher's class to do the interview with the teacher and then went back to see Kimberly. She immediately began to tell me about the staff meeting she had just had with her staff earlier that day. She said the timing was terrible and the meeting was awful. She said, "You could cut the tension with a knife! Talk about bad tenor!" She told me about "the blowout" between two teachers that had happened earlier. One of her probationary teachers had emailed the staff saying she would go to the union meeting tomorrow to find out what the union was fighting for – if they were fighting for the probationary jobs and class size reduction at the elementary level. Kimberly had called this teacher into her office the day before and had told her that she and three of the other probationary teachers who weren't previously on the chopping block to receive pink slips were now on the chopping block. Kimberly told me she singled out Tiffany to talk to because "Heidi is a confident person and not afraid to speak up." The email that Heidi had sent to her teacher colleagues sparked an uproar among some other teachers, including Sally, the teachers' union representative at the school. Sally said she was angry that Heidi sent the email to all staff, which she said was

a misuse of district email. Sally said it had violated policy. Kimberly had told her she would check with the assistant superintendent of human resources to see if policy had been violated and would email both of them. Kimberly did call the assistant superintendent to find out if Heidi had violated any policy regarding use of district email and he told her that Heidi had not violated policy. It so happened that the staff meeting was immediately following this episode. Kimberly described the friction in the staff meeting as terrible. She went ahead with the meeting because this was the only meeting remaining in the school year, and she had planned an activity to have each team create a poster to tell the story about their grade level accomplishments for the year. She then showed me what each team had done during the meeting. (AS: 6-03-09) She said that “third grade did the best story of their accomplishments and it makes me sick that they’re the ones getting fired! (She was obviously referring to the lay-offs.) All three are new and look what they did. All positive.” After showing me each grade level’s poster, Kimberly finished with more comments about the previous email episode, saying, “I told Heidi she’s not in trouble. If she doesn’t speak up, who else will? She’s the only one of the four of them (second-year probationary teachers whose jobs were now in jeopardy) who would do it.” (FNS: 6-03-09)

It was apparent that Kimberly had become enmeshed with the politics of saving teaching positions. She continued charging ahead at every corner with what she believed was right.

As my time at each school elapsed, I began to see that things at Sea Breeze seemed more scattered and random, and so too did the activities Kimberly was involved

in. Her behaviors were not always predictable. Her responses were often fragmented and her actions sometimes didn't seem focused on formally defined goal(s). What *was* predictable was that she *would* respond, as she typically reacted instantly to whatever was occurring around her. When looking at the two schools, this dichotomy was noticeable in the differences at High Bluff and Sea Breeze. While the principal at High Bluff was also responding to many of the same political pressures and district directives, Susan's behaviors were more focused on formal goals and as a result, what was starting to come through was a clear message focused on students as well as teachers working as professional learning communities. I began to see how the instrumental goals at Sea Breeze were driving the principal's actions as she worked to keep the organization functioning. Explicitly, the goal was to attend to the staffing crises at the school: save the new teachers who she believed were at the core of the school's survival, contend with the staffing dynamics at work between veteran and new teachers, and attend to the other staff who had personal emergencies.

Two Cases of Principal-Teacher Interaction: "Mrs. Jones" and "The Staff Meeting"

As my time at each school went on, both principals expressed frustration over having to spend time in their office when they said they should be in classrooms. Kimberly's actions were perpetually dominated by events that kept her in her office. Her interactions with people quickly jumped from one item to another, oftentimes seemingly unrelated, and she frequently had conversations with people that addressed many separate issues at once. More often than not, the issues were related to instruction indirectly, at best. Such was the case on one particular day when Kimberly abruptly picked up her

desk phone in the middle of the afternoon and called down to Mrs. Jones, a veteran teacher, during class about a student who had been in the office earlier for his behavior during PE. I could hear one end of the conversation, during which she told Mrs. Jones that she, as the teacher, needed to add something to the behavior contract that the student had previously been placed on. Kimberly told Mrs. Jones to add “behaved in pull out” to his daily contract and explained to her that the student would now be required to also get a signature for good behavior from the PE teacher. She informed Mrs. Jones of the student’s consequence if he did not get the contract signed by his parent each day – loss of recess. At that point in the conversation, I could tell that Kimberly abruptly switched subjects and began to tell the teacher about a recent incident in which a noon supervisor had come to Kimberly crying about an incident she had had with Mrs. Jones. Kimberly told her that this noon duty supervisor was upset because one day on the playground at the end of lunch recess the noon supervisor tried to give Mrs. Jones a form (discipline about a student) and the noon supervisor said Mrs. Jones had yelled at her for approaching her about a student’s behavior. Kimberly explained to Mrs. Jones that since this incident she had told the noon supervisor to put the discipline form in Mrs. Jones’s staff mailbox rather than approach the teacher. Kimberly explained to Mrs. Jones that they (noon supervisors) have authority to give consequences, and that she also understood that they want to communicate with the teacher. Kimberly told Mrs. Jones that she followed up with the leadership team and they had decided to have the noon supervisors place discipline notes in the teacher’s mailbox which solved both issues – it gave noon supervisors the chance to communicate with the classroom teacher without

needing to approach the teachers as they were picking up their students from the playground after lunch. Kimberly said to Mrs. Jones, “I just want you to know that happened. She (the noon duty) was crying because you talked to her that way.” At that point I could tell from my end that Kimberly proceeded to change the subject again, “The next thing – PTO is giving you \$200 for your pizza party.” Mrs. Jones obviously said something on her end of the line which I couldn’t hear, but based on Kimberly’s response she was also requesting popsicles and drinks from the PTO. Kimberly responded abruptly to Mrs. Jones with, “I didn’t realize you needed popsicles and drinks, too. I already had to really work with them and asked them one last time about the \$200, so you guys are going to have to make it work.” This telephone conversation went from one topic to the next without stopping, covering three distinct topics: the boy’s discipline incident and behavior contract; the noon duty supervisor crying; and the PTO \$200 for popsicle party.” (FNS: 3-30-09) The timing of these conversations wasn’t necessarily predictable, and neither were the topics.

After she hung up the phone with Mrs. Jones, Kimberly seemed to want to explain to me why it was important that she had had that conversation with her even though it had made the teacher upset. Kimberly explained, “I wanted to let the teacher (Mrs. Jones) know that she upset the noon supervisor; how whether or not she did or did not say anything to upset her – *she* needs to *live* with it.” (“She needs to live with it” accented the words “she” and “live”- which would suggest that Kimberly believed this was a problem that the teacher [she] needs to know she created and therefore needs to suffer the consequences [live with it]). So what were the consequences? A not-so-nice

conversation with the principal in the middle of class? A feeling of regret over causing another person to cry? Or was this statement suggesting that Kimberly was rationalizing her decision to bring up the crying, upset noon duty during the phone conversation with the teacher in the first place? Upon further consideration of the conversation, it seemed as if the teacher was saying on the other end of the phone that she didn't know she had caused the noon supervisor to cry and be upset. Kimberly's comment seemed to suggest that the teacher had done something wrong. Or was Kimberly's response a result of being annoyed about the combination of incidents she was dealing with: discipline issue with the student, crying noon supervisor, \$200 pizza party? Although Kimberly was not afraid to tackle important issues, this episode didn't seem to fit. After all, Kimberly was typically good natured and not one to look for confrontation. It seemed out of the ordinary that she had this type of conversation mid-day with a teacher in the middle of class. Her judgment seemed clouded - was it perhaps caused by the assortment of issues on her plate at the time?

The Staff Meeting:

The staff meeting began precisely on time at 1:15pm. The meeting took place in a second grade classroom. Susan walked into the classroom a couple minutes early carrying several items for the meeting, placed her things down on a desk, and leaned back against one of the desks, half sitting and half standing. Most of the teachers were already seated in students' desks by the time we arrived. The desks were arranged in groups of four or five. Some teachers pulled up an extra chair to join an existing group. Teachers chattered with the other teachers at their table groups as Susan walked in and continued

to chatter until Susan began the meeting. Just before beginning the meeting, Susan walked over to the assistant principal to discuss something. Susan shared a quick laugh about something with one of the groups. Most teachers sat with others who were in the same grade level. First grade was split, with two teachers at another table.

Susan started the meeting by saying, “I’m going to ask you to think about a couple of questions. What is 25, everyone?” Some quiet rumblings could be heard; then one teacher called out, “The number of days until STAR.” Susan smiled a sly smile and said, “You’re right. We have 25 days until STAR testing. What is 39?” More quiet rumbling among the teachers, but no calling out. Susan said, “39 is the number of days until the third trimester district summative assessments. We have a lot of work to do and today we’re going to be talking about some of that, but first let’s find out who Jill is going to give the trophy ball to.” (The trophy is a large ball on a trophy stand that is placed in front of a colleague by the last recipient of the trophy. The recipient is selected for doing something[s] that the colleague wants to show appreciation for.) Jill stood up and explained why she was presenting the trophy ball to a colleague, saying, “Our school just wouldn’t be the same without you; you do so much for me.” Then she placed it around her colleague’s neck and another teacher said, “Ditto!” Everyone clapped.

Susan said, “As we go through our work and work toward formal implementation of PLC (one teacher sighed loudly), we are going to focus on learning. That’s why the quote is there – (*“The work is more important than the label”* was projected on the screen.) The first time we gave the district summative assessment all of you talented people gave feedback. Today I have district-wide data to share with you. We have a new

timeline, a new adoption, a new test. It's the perfect storm. We're going to talk about what made it work or not. Look at that quote – The work is more important than the label. We need to look at the work we are doing. Is it targeted intervention that is moving kids forward? Now Julie (assistant principal) is going to talk about our problem of providing intervention. We need you to help solve this problem. Thank you for being a part of the data collection and this conversation. Next year it will be even more dire. We won't have an intervention specialist, and we will have even more kids.”

Susan passed out the compiled district results for the second trimester summative assessments. “We didn't do as well as we could have. Many of our students did not score proficient. We need to figure out what to do about those kids.” Susan then began talking about the need for intervention. “We can't afford to have these kids who don't master the standards.” (*The tone of her voice made her sound even more determined, as if championing for a cause.*) She was looking specifically at teachers as she was making this case. Then, without even a pause Susan looked at one of the first grade teachers and interjected, “Lisa, can I ask you to put that aside please?” Lisa had been grading papers with a felt tip marker as Susan was talking. Lisa quickly put the papers in a stack, closed the marker cap, and then crossed her arms and rested her elbows on the desk. A moment later Lisa put her right hand over her face, so as to cover up her face while she was looking down at the desk in front of her. Without hesitation, Susan continued talking to the whole group about the importance of identifying students by name - all eyes were on her, but Lisa continued to look down with her head pointed toward the desk. The staff meeting continued with conversation focused on figuring out who those kids were who

need help and then determining what to do about it. Teachers were directed to figure out which students did not master the identified standard by identifying the students below proficient by name. She said they needed to be thinking about how they can possibly regroup (rearrange students) so that kids are divided so teachers can teach them what they don't know. At that point, Lisa (the teacher who had been confronted about correcting papers) told the rest of the first grade teachers sitting at her group that she was going back to class because she didn't feel well. The meeting continued for approximately twenty more minutes, during which time teachers formed their lists, began discussing how to group students, and sharing their lists with the others. (FNH:3-25-09)

Follow Up to the Staff Meeting:

This staff meeting was still on Susan's mind the next day. As soon as I walked into Susan's office that morning she immediately began talking about it with me – it had obviously been distracting her. Her comments portrayed the conflicting dilemmas Susan felt as she took the risk to protect the purpose of the staff meeting and her authority as principal and “chief teacher” of the teaching staff. At the same time, she had already taken action to protect the relationship by having a conversation with the staff member in a private one-on-one meeting with the teacher first thing on the morning following the staff meeting. A synopsis of her interaction with me that morning follows.

When I arrived at 8:00am, Susan was walking down the hallway toward her office manager and told me that a kindergarten teacher was absent unexpectedly and she had just finished taking care of that. She said she had put a substitute that had arrived for someone else into the morning kindergarten class that was just about to begin. Then she

looked at me with sly, raised eye brows and facetiously said to me, “Do you want to teach fifth grade?” She walked back to her office and told me to, “Come on back.” She sat at her desk and immediately began to tell me about the conversation she had already had that morning with Lisa, the teacher she had asked the previous afternoon to ‘please put aside the papers’ she had been grading during the staff meeting. Susan seemed disturbed as she told me, “I called Lisa down for a one-on-one this morning about the staff meeting yesterday.”

Susan paused very briefly, nodded her head, signaling to me a quick aside in our conversation and said, “I go to their classroom with praise and celebration, but I call them to my office if it’s something not so good that I need to talk to them about.” Susan then continued to recap her conference with Lisa. According to Susan, Lisa apologized for what she had done and said she hadn’t been feeling well, after which Susan told me how she responded, “I asked Lisa - how would she feel if her students did coloring or something off task while she was instructing? I told her that I was instructing because that’s what I do during a staff meeting and that she (Lisa) did the same thing that she wouldn’t want her students to do.” (*Susan was referring to off task behavior while the “teacher” was instructing. Note who is the teacher in class and who is the teacher in a staff meeting.*) Susan continued describing what she told Lisa,

I told her that I felt very disrespected that she would grade papers during the staff meeting. She told me again that she wasn’t feeling well. I told her that I understood that, but I would rather that she not come to the staff meeting than grade papers during it. She said she was actually stacking the papers up and putting them away when I asked her to put them away. I told her that tells me that she knew she was wrong to be grading them during a staff meeting. It was disrespectful to not just her, but to her entire team. (FNH: 3-26-09)

Then Susan said she reminded Lisa about all of the stresses going on with different teachers on the staff. Susan explained to Lisa, “There are teachers on your team that got pink slipped and they’re looking for support and leadership during this time.” (I noted that Susan seemed to be teaching Lisa about what it means to be a good staff member - look out for others, show respect, listen and pay attention to the principal when she is “teaching” during a staff meeting.)

Then Susan looked at me and inserted her own commentary, expressing frustration over the incident, “We have one objective during a staff meeting – not thirty five. And we only have thirty minutes to accomplish our work. I’ve been there. I know how busy teachers are and I also know how important this staff meeting time is.” (Susan was referring to how many objectives there would be if every teacher brought in his/her own personal objective. I took note that Susan was acting as if “I am a teacher during staff meeting. I have walked in their shoes. I know what it’s like to be a teacher, and I also know that staff meeting time is important.”)

I asked Susan how Lisa left and she said, “She felt sorry and apologized.” Susan looked at me and said, “I *never* do that – call someone out like that. Did you see what my staff did when I said that during the meeting? (Susan opened her eyes wide and made an “*oh-oh*” face.) “They know I don’t ever call someone out like that in a meeting, but it’s important that they know that what we do in there is important. They need to be paying attention and participating.” (FNH: 3-26-09)

Just as the incident with Kimberly and Mrs. Jones, this incident with a teacher also seemed out of the ordinary. Even Susan herself said she “never calls a teacher out

like that.” Both principals were responding to the instrumental goals necessary to keep the school functioning. In both cases, the staff needed attending to in order to maintain the order necessary to operate. In both cases, the principal seemed to question her decision as was evidenced by their follow-up comments to me. Although it seemed out of character and perhaps a bit impulsive for Kimberly to call the third grade teacher in the middle of class regarding the behavior contract, the noon duty incident, and the PTO popsicle party, there were instrumental goals of staff expectations and procedures to which she believed she must attend. Susan didn’t seem to be simply reacting impulsively in the moment at a staff meeting, but rather attending to the instrumental goal of upholding expectations at staff meetings. Both principals were reflective after each of these incidents. In Susan’s case, she used this moment to send a clear expectation, to teach others, to reflect and learn herself.

The Principal’s Use of Authority

The local understandings of what a principal does and should do began to make sense through the comments and actions of the principals themselves, as well as in the remarks from teachers, parents, and other administrators. Their behaviors began to correspond with frames, which helped bring meaning to what being a principal meant to each of these individuals and, more explicitly, what the construct of “instructional leader” meant to these principals. By considering their behaviors with respect to the frames of authority, I began to illuminate “authority” as a construct, specifically, what it looked like in the practice of these two principals.

To understand the similarities and differences in the behaviors of these principals and their influence on others, I applied Parsons (1962) “voluntaristic theory of action” which transcended his old individualism-society dilemma, and Durkheim’s theory of goal-oriented behaviors (Collins, 1994). According to Parsons, social action can occur only if it is voluntaristic. By voluntaristic, Parsons means not that individuals are free of all social constraint to choose to contribute to group goals or not as they please, but, rather, that participants have to understand the significance of common values in order that they can commit themselves to them.

In order to engage in social practice, participants have to unify themselves around a collective understanding of what they are trying to achieve. Shared understandings become a coordinating point of reference for all the members of this group which allows them to go on. Participants understand their own and others’ acts by reference to these established understandings, and it is on the basis of the meaningfulness of an act in relation to these collective understandings that an act is described as rule-following or not. The collective understandings of the group which generate established patterns of practice render certain kinds of action meaningful and, therefore, definable as rule-following. Crucially, the spade is turned at the point of ‘conventions’ or shared understandings because these understandings are self-referential. The way participants define their collective practices is constitutive of them. (King, 2009, p. 278).

Parson’s voluntaristic theory of action and Durkheim’s theory of goal-oriented behaviors, helps to explain how the principals at these two schools worked through others, primarily the teachers and parents, to engage them in creating a new goal – save positions and programs – while preserving at least some focus on what was steadfastly proclaimed to be the school’s primary mission – ensuring student learning. The principals began to leverage their influence in ways that impacted their schools, but most of those actions were at best indirectly related to instruction. The principals still talked

about needing to be in classrooms, still carved out bits of time to plan and lead staff meetings, and still took action to move their schools forward with current initiatives, namely, the implementation of professional learning communities. But make no mistake, the primary mission shifted gears as a result of the economic downturn.

Parson's work also helps to explain why not all teachers were on board with the principals' mission to save the newest teachers' jobs. This was not a shared value among all teachers within the schools; therefore, the unit acts (those pieces of behavior from individual participants) did not necessarily fit within the stated goals of the principal or align with the principal's behaviors. This was particularly true at Sea Breeze where sentiment among some of the veteran teaching staff portrayed resentment toward the newer staff. Their comments shed light on the underlying dynamics that affected the principal in her quest to bring teachers together following the issuance of pink slips to ten new teachers at Sea Breeze.

These pieces of data became rich points that led me to frame the principals' behaviors into more meaningful authority structures for the purposes of understanding *why* principals were doing what they were doing and *how* they were influencing others. There seemed to be an effort on the part of the principal at each school to maintain some type of control over what goes on in the classrooms at the school via walking through classrooms during the school day while students and teachers were present. Both principals explained it was important to do so because they needed to know what kind of teaching was occurring and how well students were learning. Susan did this at High Bluff much more frequently than did Kimberly at Sea Breeze. During my time at Sea

Breeze, I saw Kimberly go into classrooms for that purpose only twice. On most occasions when she went into a classroom it was on some type of mission: retrieve a student, talk to a teacher about a parent complaint, discuss Open House night.

During one interview Susan said that she and the assistant principal try to do walk through observations in classrooms at least two times a week during the language arts time, but the recess schedule sometimes conflicts with her ability to do so. She explained that this is the same time that there are many children on the playground . “The supervision cycle starts at 10:15 and goes to 1:50, so we have a lot of time when we have a lot of people on the playground.” On a different occasion Susan stated, “I would love to say I’m in classes every day, but I’m not.” (FNH: 5-13-09) This sentiment was stated in one form or another by her repeatedly during my time at High Bluff. Similarly, Kimberly made several comments to that effect, “I know I should be in classrooms more” and “I haven’t been in a classroom in forever.” (FNS: 3-31-09)

This dilemma and the ensuing events I witnessed illustrated how the loose coupling described by Bidwell (2001) can actually be functional to the organization. The built-in autonomy granted to teachers via institutionalized school practices facilitated independence and self-sufficiency in teachers that proved positive for the organization in which the leader, in this case the principal, was inundated with tasks unrelated to the primary goal of educating students. At High Bluff and Sea Breeze, the broad discretionary jurisdiction that teachers were granted within the classroom was not necessarily a purposeful choice on the part of the principals, but rather an option by

default as a result of the principals' demanding schedules and multiple individuals' pleas for their time.

Power structures within the district and school influenced how the two principals enacted the role. On one hand, the principals were viewed as an integral part of the organization and held positional power in terms of getting tasks accomplished related to the goal. On the other hand, both teachers and parents held power by nature of their shared autonomy and activism, respectively. Both principals were directed to carry out mandates from the top administrators at the district office, finding themselves in the middle management position which required them to answer to the top without having absolute power to distribute resources and direction among teachers and staff at their schools. Their unique access to people and information about the internal workings of their school organizations gave both principals the power of selective communication, which they directed both upward and downward, to influence others within the organization.

The structure of the school district organization impacted the decision-making power of the principal. The principal was held in the middle man position – with direct access to the people at the school site, but answering to those above her. This presented a frustrating dilemma for principals when they needed to influence something at their school, but needed the approval or direction from their superiors at the district office.

The patterns in the principals' behaviors at both schools framed the meaning of their actions and helped explain how their behavior made sense to each of these individuals. At High Bluff, the principal's actions were more predictable, as they focused

around a common message about students and teaching. At Sea Breeze, the principal's actions were less predictable – they were reactive as would be expected in a crisis-type situation. Both principals exerted authority and both had differing levels of influence as a result. Important to point out is the difference in how much they influenced teachers and instruction.

Both principals dealt with multiple demands placed on them simultaneously. This quandary was evidenced in various ways in both principals' behaviors, but even more so at Sea Breeze than at High Bluff. Both school principals experienced competing demands for their time and energy. Both principals expressed on numerous occasions that they wished they could be spending more time on what they knew they *should* be doing or what they said they would *rather* be doing than on what they were *actually* doing. This was almost always in reference to the desire to be spending time working with teachers on teaching and learning or spending time in their classrooms. In contrast, they discussed frustration about the things that kept them from classrooms and would frequently mention it out loud.

A difference must be noted, however, in the perception of the teaching staff at both schools regarding this particular issue. At Sea Breeze, the majority of the teachers who were interviewed commented in some way about the way Kimberly spent her time – “always in meetings” was the most common comment. My observations showed that much of Kimberly's time was spent in her office, frequently working with small groups of teachers, participating in parent meetings about students, or working one-on-one with staff. Almost every day Kimberly spent a majority of her day in some type of meeting or

another: leadership team meetings, technology committee meetings, student study team meetings, grade level team meetings, IEP meetings, PTO leadership meetings, PTO board meetings, school site council meetings, meetings with a teacher about a need or parent concern. It seemed as if there was some type of leadership group arrangement for a broad assortment of reasons.

Susan's time, too, was oftentimes dominated by things other than those directly related to the classrooms. The difference, though, was her response. Kimberly resigned herself to the notion that she just wasn't going to get into classrooms at this point and she didn't. Her days were spent primarily in her office, usually in meetings of some sort or responding to a sudden event. Even though her schedule was also very busy, Susan nevertheless made every attempt to go into classrooms when she had a free moment, and she spent time with teachers talking specifically about instruction whenever she could. As a result, Susan's schedule was usually fragmented throughout the entire day, but she managed to attend to multiple demands at once and continuously talked about her focus on teachers and students. The realization that the two principals did not respond alike to the competing demands for their time presented an interesting rich point in this study and a different way of looking at their actions.

Kimberly categorized how she divided her time according to which phase it was in the school calendar. In other words, at certain times of the school year she described her tasks a certain way and at other times of the school year she defined her tasks another way. Until March, she said she did much more work one-on-one with individual teachers who were on the evaluation cycle this year. Once those evaluations were due and she

was finished with the written documentation, she said she would focus more on the staff as a whole and working with groups of teachers to do so. (FNS: 4-29-09)

It was apparent that the pull to attend to the instrumental goals at each of the schools made a difference in the principals' ability to leverage their influence in ways that impacted their schools. The differences in those instrumental goals and how each principal used authority to balance the demands at each of the schools had a significant impact on the principals' ability to influence teachers through common collective understandings.

Leveraging Authority with Teachers

The significance of being in the "middle man position" had implications for these principals in the real life of principaling during such a turbulent climate of teacher layoffs and accountability. One such situation played out in the scenario at High Bluff as the principal struggled to help the union leader on site handle the pressures associated with teacher layoffs. As the principal, Susan was the designee of the superintendent who was given the responsibility of distributing the notices of public hearing to the pink-slipped teachers at High Bluff who had requested one. The day following the issuance of the pink slips to the district's new teachers, Susan's growing concern and preoccupation with this matter was at the forefront as she discussed it with me. As she was sitting at her desk going through some correspondence, Susan looked up at me and brought up the ongoing situation with the pink slips and the union. She said, "I'm really nervous about the undercurrents that are going on right now with the union things. We've worked so hard to establish relationships. The SEA (the local teachers' union) site rep came up to me

and asked if I was the one who told two parents who our SEA site rep is. I guess they had emailed him to request a meeting. He said to me, 'I don't want a bunch of parents contacting me about things.'"

It was clear that Susan found her role to be complicated in this situation. She had no choice but to deliver the bad news about layoffs and she thought it important that she help the union leadership at her school by providing guidance in how to work with the teachers and parents. She said, "I want my message to him (the union leader) to be that this is a leadership position he is in and he needs to be a leader. A leader needs to respond to all people and be ready to respond to the tough questions because a leader will be asked the tough questions. It's never been an issue before, but all of a sudden he doesn't want parents to know. He said he doesn't want a bunch of parents contacting him." Susan talked about the undercurrent that she knew was brewing because of the pink slips and that people were worried. She explained that she found it important to help everyone through this. (FNH: 3-24-09)

My approach to looking at the principals' actions borrows from Max Weber's (1968) description of "rational" or "legal" authority and the application of Philippe Aghion and Jean Tirole's (1997) subsequent theory of the allocation of "formal authority" and "real authority." According to Aghion and Tirole, formal authority refers to the right to decide and real authority refers to the effective control over decisions within organizations. Real authority is determined by the structure of information, which in turn depends on the allocation of formal authority.

Weber (1968) notes that officials, employees, and workers attached to the administrative staff of a bureaucracy do not themselves own the nonhuman means of production and administration, yet they may exert substantial control over the bureaucratic machinery (p. 217). In applying Aghion and Tirole's theory of formal and real authority to Weber's description, a principal who has formal authority over a decision can always reverse her subordinate's decision but will refrain from doing so if the subordinate is much better informed and if their objectives are not in opposition.

As I considered the impact that each principal had on moving staff forward in the implementation of professional learning communities, it was apparent that the staff as a whole at High Bluff seemed to be moving ahead more quickly. Both principals were met with some apprehension from teachers during the initial stages when the expectation of scheduling common collaboration time and instructional time was made clear. Although both principals exerted formal authority by nature of their title, Susan exerted much more real authority in moving her staff forward with implementing a collaborative way of doing business. This was illustrated in practice when some teachers on the second grade team at High Bluff exerted effort and showed initiative to suggest a plan of action to the principal regarding how to go about the conflict the second grade team was experiencing related to their professional learning community collaboration time. After receiving the request from the second grade teachers, Susan chose to spend time learning about the issue they had brought forward. Susan explained to me that the second grade teachers had said they needed her to meet with them about PLC. They were worried and upset about scheduling – finding time for EXCEL team time. EXCEL was the time designated

for intervention with students needing reteaching. Susan said the teachers were not sure how the professional learning community common instructional time would benefit them. The teachers wanted to do three classes grouped together rather than all nine classes. Prior to the meeting, Susan had given the second grade teachers several pages from the PLC book and asked them to read it. She told me she was intentionally five minutes late to their meeting and they had started the conversation already. She said some were talking so positively – saying how staying together would help. During the meeting, some of the teachers again expressed their concerns and why they believed they should divide up their grade level team during intervention time. Susan told the team, “No – that’s not negotiable,” after which they came up with twenty minutes before lunch. As she reflected on this results Susan said to me, “That’s a step for now.”

I asked Susan why she thinks teachers listen to her. She said, “Because I listen. I hope it’s not because I’m mean,” and she laughed. This example shows how, once informed, the principal realized that the teachers had recommended a proposal that was not optimal for the principal. From the point of view of the teachers, the plan the teachers had brought to the principal created a higher private benefit or required less effort to be implemented than the optimal plan. (These teachers wanted the grade level to split up so they shared common planning/instruction time with only half of the other grade level colleagues.) Formal authority prevailed because Susan was informed and involved, as she then chose her preferred plan of action (which in other cases may or may not coincide with the teachers’ proposal). In this case, it was different from the teachers’ proposal, as Susan met with the team and told the team they needed to figure out a plan

where all nine teachers on the second grade team could stay together for their common collaboration time. This same situation could have been the reverse had Susan not attended to the matter.

In contrast to what played out at High Bluff, a poorly (or less) informed principal optimally rubber-stamps the teacher's proposal due to lack of time and fear of picking a worse alternative. The teacher then has real, although no formal, authority. For instance, a principal who is overloaded with too many activities under her formal authority and therefore has little time to acquire the relevant information regarding an activity loses effective control and involuntarily endorses many suboptimal projects. At times this seemed to be occurring at Sea Breeze. Kimberly was routinely responding to the crisis of the moment from the confines of her office, making her inaccessible and out of touch with the classrooms, thus giving up real authority over teaching and learning to her teachers.

Kimberly exerted legal authority with her entire teaching staff, but among some of her most veteran teachers she had limited real authority. They were angry and even she knew some of them were talking behind her back and not following through with what she believed was best for the school, and ultimately best for the students. Part of Kimberly's lack of real authority was an apparent disconnect with teaching and learning much of the time, particularly with the more senior teachers. Even a new teacher said that, while she was in classrooms more frequently earlier in the year, that had changed as the year progressed.

A first-year teacher at Sea Breeze explained:

Before all of this end-of-the-year stuff she'd walk through and tell us what she saw. She really pays attention to her new staff and the way people are teaching. We all have professional development and Kimberly gives us feedback and then follows through and makes sure we're doing it. I really appreciate the feedback she gives me. She always gives me something to work on when she observes me and I really appreciate that. (TS:Elliot 6-04-09)

The authority that the two principals had at Sea Breeze and High Bluff was portrayed within the ranks of the teachers. The divisiveness of the Sea Breeze staff was expressed by veteran teachers as favoritism toward newer teachers and pressure to contribute to helping to save them. This was illustrated in two interviews: one with a veteran teacher and one with a new teacher.

Veteran Teacher:

This staff is young, inexperienced, and friendly. My feeling is that Kimberly wanted to get rid of the dead wood. People used to say, 'We're going to do whatever we want to do.' She *had* to move people out who were impeding progress.

When I asked this teacher if that had changed, this teacher responded:

I think some of the staff thinks she has favorites – when they do something wrong they don't get in trouble. If there is an undercurrent, that is it. There are the young teachers and the older teachers. There is pressure to take a pay cut to save your colleagues' jobs. It has divided us – the probationary teachers, temporary teachers, and experienced teachers. I was asked face-to-face by one of the new teachers, 'so you're going to take a pay cut to save my job? I can't believe you're not going to give up \$100 a month to save my job.' You've really got me on my soapbox now. (TS:Moore 5-13-09)

New teachers at Sea Breeze also felt a divisiveness and animosity within the staff and many said they knew it was aimed at them. As one put it, she knew from the very

first staff meeting that there was an undercurrent of some sort going on within the staff and a sadness because of the loss of teachers/friends who had retired.

First-Year Teacher at Sea Breeze:
(Discussing the First Teacher Work Days of the School Year)

On the first day of those staff meetings there were so many new people. I'll never forget at that first staff meeting a fifth grade teacher said to me (changed her voice to sound authoritative), 'I hope you know that we've lost a lot of people on this staff and we were a strong staff' or some comment that was really like an aggressive comment. But I think we didn't come in like you don't know anything. I think that's a fear that some who have been teaching a long time think we might be like that. But we haven't been like that. When you're defensive and closed off no one is going to be able to share. They're not going to have other people judging them – I think that's another fear. (TS:Everett 6-04-09)

While Kimberly struggled with the dynamics of her staff and her influence with the various teaching groups, Susan exerted not only legal, formal authority with her entire teaching staff, but also real authority. The teachers at High Bluff expressed loyalty to her, trust in her, and a desire to work together to be successful.

In my quest to understand the link between the principals' behaviors and their influence, I looked further to authority relations and power within organizations. Parsons (1956) points out that the use of power frequently represents a facility for the achievement of objectives which both sides in a power relation desire. According to Parsons, power does not necessarily entail the coercive subordination of the wishes or interests of one party to those of another. Authority refers to the legitimate position of an individual or group, and is therefore regarded as the basis of power, rather than a kind of power. A distinction is made by Parsons between the factors that produce "power inflation" – the process whereby confidence in a power system is developed and

expanded – and those that produce “power deflation” - a spiraling diminution of confidence in the agencies of power, so that those subordinate to them come increasingly to question their position. This provided one of the lenses from which to frame the principals’ behaviors unfolding throughout this project. Using these notions, I applied the types of authority each of the two principals employed (as observed in their behaviors) and analyzed them to determine which behaviors influenced power inflation and which behaviors influenced power deflation.

As described by Peabody (1962), authority is initially based on formal position, legitimacy, and the sanctions inherent in office. For the purpose of this project, three contributors to the study of authority relations in organizations – Max Weber, Herbert A. Simon, and Talcott Parsons – have been singled out for this study to illustrate the general consensus as to the importance of several bases of authority which condition its acceptance. While not all social scientists have placed emphasis on the same sources of authority and while they have frequently used different words to convey similar meanings, the essential points of agreement can be classified under four broad categories: (1) authority of legitimacy; (2) authority of position, including the sanctions inherent in position; (3) authority of competence, including both technical skills and experience, and (4) authority of person, including leadership and human relations skills (Peabody, 1962). Although each of these authority categories was represented at various times in the two principals’ actions, patterns of internal and external context and the effectiveness of the principals’ influence in the employment of each authority type began to emerge throughout my four months at the schools.

To add meaning and understanding, I framed the behaviors of the two principals further by categorizing them within each of those authority structures. In doing so, the principals' actions primarily corresponded with four primary authority constructs which became sub-categories of the original broader categories. What did authority look like in the practice of principaling a school for these two principals? Those four sub-categories I refer to as: *principal as teacher*, *principal as learner*, *principal as friend*, and *principal as political advocate*. The two principals leveraged instructional influence through these different authority structures, which are captured in abbreviated examples below. Although sometimes the principals borrowed from other authority structures, two different authority structures were dominant for each of the principals.

- 1) Principal as Teacher: "Listen to me. I know about the technology of teaching. I've been through this; therefore, you should listen to me and follow my lead. We're all in this together. I'm a teacher, too."
- 2) Principal as Learner. "I have a strong motivation to learn new teaching/leadership practices and a sense of urgency about improving learning for students and teachers."
- 3) Principal as Political Advocate: "I have access to this political information. My positioning as a principal allows me to organize you, influence group decisions, convey group input, communicate the information I want you to have. I have moral grounds for doing this."
- 4) Principal as Friend. "You can count on me to support you in your personal and professional life."

Authority of legitimacy assumes that those in authority have the right to demand obedience; those subject to authority have the duty to obey. *Authority of legitimacy* is often fused with *authority of position*, for which the power of control derives from an acknowledged status, inheres in the office and not in the particular person who performs the official role (Peabody, 1962). That is, the organization's formal organizational chart would predetermine an individual's acceptance of the authority relation that concedes one is to accept orders given to him by persons identified as his superiors by their position on the chart. In this study, these actions associated with authority of position and legitimacy were primarily captured when principals were advocating for a cause - *principal as advocate*. Positional power based on hierarchy was apparent when principals were exerting influence in hiring teachers, fighting to keep good teachers, and raising money for programs. It also occurred when principals made rules/guidelines for school procedures, established protocol for various meetings, handled student discipline, and fought for the rights of students and teachers.

This leads to the next broad category of authority – *authority of competence* – which is characterized by the possession of experience and appropriate technical skills by the superior that enhance the acceptance of the formal authority by the subordinates. In this case, knowledge of teaching and learning would enhance the ability of the principal to exert authority and influence others. In general, authority based on technical knowledge and authority based on experience are closely related, although important distinctions must be made between these two subtypes of authority of competence to understand the meaning of the actions of the two principals and their influence at Sea

Breeze Elementary and High Bluff Elementary. Technical knowledge, in contrast with experience, is more apt to come from professional training. Indeed, in this study seniority (the notion of veteran teachers possessing authority based on experience) frequently competed with technical proficiency (the notion of lesser experienced principals possessing authority based on knowledge and skill).

Principals leveraged their *authority of competence* in two distinct ways, or subcategories I refer to as *principal as teacher* and *principal as learner*. First, both principals referred to previous experience as a teacher to portray that they had technical expertise that teachers and parents could respect - *principal as teacher*. This was evidenced in the principals' behaviors during meetings and dialogue with teachers – getting input from them regarding instructional decisions, providing knowledge about the functioning of professional learning communities, and discussing assessment results. It was also observed when they planned trips to see other schools' programs, conducted staff meetings, led leadership team meetings, and conversed one-on-one or in small groups with teachers.

Susan exerted *principal as teacher* frequently with veteran and new teachers alike. One such occasion occurred when she recognized the precarious environment created by pink-slipped teachers and she called on the president of the teachers' union to provide leadership. She expressed frustration that his first reaction was to not want to be involved politically when the parents made contact with him regarding the union's position on the district budget and priorities. She said she believed it was important that she talk with him and tell him the importance of leadership during times like this. Susan

said she would teach him that this is when real leaders are made and to put himself in the position of a new teacher – what type of leadership he thought they would need.

A second way principals leveraged authority of competence was by portraying themselves as learners - *principal as learner*. In doing so, the principals' actions would indicate that they were doing a form of "show and tell" and not simply "telling" how/why teachers should follow suit. The two principals would model *how* they were thinking about an idea or how they wanted a plan followed through by demonstrating it themselves. This seemed to be sometimes intentional and deliberate on the part of the principal and at other times unintentional. The tension between positional and competence authority was often mediated by both principals using the fourth basis of authority, authority of person.

Authority of person suggests the knowledge of the human aspect of administration, the ability to mediate individual needs, and the possession of certain leadership traits by a superior enhance the frequency and extent of acceptance of formal authority on the part of subordinates. This was illustrated in friendly behaviors that I refer to as the subcategory *principal as friend*. They used this approach, along with *principal as teacher*, to show teachers that they cared about their personal needs and could relate to what they were going through because they "had been there before."

These principals were continuously responding to internal and external demands. A vital district-wide initiative had been agreed upon by the principals – create professional learning communities at every school. Principals had attended training on professional learning communities and were given direction from the superintendent and

assistant superintendent to use the model to increase student achievement at their school. Principals were held with the responsibility of carrying out the actions necessary to make this happen at their respective sites. At the same time as they were held with that responsibility, they were also faced with district budget cuts and layoffs. Principals were told that they needed to make plans for increased class sizes and less staff for the following school year. These two conflicting external demands caused a complex set of circumstances to emerge as a result.

In this situation regarding the issuance of layoff notices, Susan held no *legal* authority in whether or not the pink slips would be issued or how they would be issued, but she did hold *real* authority with her staff if she exerted her influence with the union leadership. Susan used her unique positioning as the principal and the authority as a principal to teach, explain, and model for the union site representative how she expected events to progress.

Kimberly, too, experienced the “middle man” position frequently as she tried to manage the mandates handed down from the district office. This carried importance not only in her response to layoffs of her treasured teachers, but also with the many special education issues that Kimberly dealt with at her school. She was frustrated over not having control of factors regarding special education and staffing at her school.

The Principal's Use of Authority Structures: Differing Consequences for Each School

The numerous local influences affected the principals' responses and created quite different results in both schools. Observing principals as they negotiated the cultural and political pressures, it became clear that they were both doing similar and yet different

things in the midst of the budget crisis. If success is measured by criteria outlined in the lists of what constitutes effective instructional leadership, specifically, actions associated with teaching and learning, it became apparent that these principals were using their positioning of the principal within the organization and structures of authority with varying degrees of success.

Weber's definitions of the three pure types of authority – legal-rational authority, traditional authority and charismatic authority illustrate the distinction between authority based on position/office and authority based on personal attributes. My line of inquiry did not examine specifically the list of skills possessed by the principal, but rather a fusion of actions related to instruction in the person (the principal) who occupies a position of authority. What was it that the principal was doing in action to possess authority and influence others within the context of the organizational structures, including internal and external forces? In this case both principals highly utilized the authority structures (principal as teacher, principal as learner, principal as friend, principal as advocate), but both principals were quite different in how they did so.

Kimberly primarily employed authority through "*principal as friend*" and "*principal as advocate*," attending to the human aspect and to the positional role of the principal to influence others. Susan primarily employed authority through "*principal as teacher*" and "*principal as learner*" to attend to professional and human aspects to influence others, which are associated with professional competence. Susan also employed "*principal as advocate*" to attend to the need to protect her staff and influence others. Both principals had quite different influence on teachers at their schools.

Most influential in terms of instructional leadership was the employment of the authority structures of “principal as teacher” and “principal as learner,” as was evidenced from the real authority these two constructs presented in the schools. When the principal applied these structures, behaviors among the teachers signaled a willingness to want to go along with the principals’ lead and follow through with group goals. The principal’s competence was at the forefront when employing these two authority structures as they were closely tied to the criteria of principal experience and expertise. Although these structures were used more frequently by Susan than by Kimberly, both principals employed them and, when compared with the influence on instruction, they were most influential. Both schools worked to design a schedule with ample time for collaboration and then committed that the schedule be used in a way that promoted shared understanding of the task. Susan continuously modeled her knowledge and skill, which impacted the task at hand. Both principals also enlisted a sense of agency about making the organization’s structures and processes support their PLC work.

Both principals were leaders who engaged people in shaping the content and conditions of their own learning in organizationally coherent ways. Both principals used teacher leadership and involved teachers in their attempts to improve the organization. Both principals were willing to make their own questioning – hence their own ignorance – visible to those they worked with, and Susan seemed to do this purposefully with the intent of empowering others, including veteran teachers, new teachers, and parents. She asked questions about why and how things worked or didn’t work and she worked hard to lead the kind of inquiry and conversation among teachers that would result in agreement

on the organization's work and its purposes. Susan's effectiveness as a principal was predominantly shown when she modeled for others what it meant to exercise control over the conditions of one's own learning and to make that learning powerful in the lives of others. Susan built capacity among her teachers and involved a variety of teachers in leadership ways.

Principals used and coped with the deeply institutionalized structures that constituted the role of principal. "I am the principal; therefore, I should be listened to." Both principals used their relationships with teachers to persuade and influence. Teacher autonomy versus principal positioning within the school was an institutionalized dilemma faced by these principals. The dynamics of veteran teachers on a staff versus new teachers on a staff presented complex situations for both principals. Veteran teachers had "earned autonomy" and the right to do certain things, say comments others might not say, and feel certain ways. New teachers had freshness and current knowledge that was valued by the principals.

The principal's ability to persuade new teachers was evidenced in the unique connection both principals had with the new teachers on their staff. New teachers needed the principal's advice and sought it not only in their professional life, but also for their personal life. New teachers needed the principal for job security and the guarantee of a teaching contract for the upcoming year. Often times, the principal was viewed as a "friend" in the system – since "the district" authorized layoffs with no guarantee for reemployment, the principal was seen by those new teachers as a "friend" within the larger organization. This unique relationship with new teachers contributed to the

resentment – and often competitiveness - expressed from veteran teachers toward the principal. This was interesting, for it was the more securely situated veteran teachers who were threatened by or disgruntled by the close relationship that principals had with the newest teachers.

This phenomenon was especially evident at Sea Breeze, as friction was evidenced between the large number of new teachers and a large number of veteran teachers. That principal's primary function as it was enacted in her day-to-day behavior became fighting for her new teachers. Veteran teachers expressed on many occasions that the principal "should be doing other things" when referencing those things that she *was* doing. On multiple occasions this was in reference to the principal's efforts in using her authority to persuade parent populations in saving the new teachers or her efforts to solicit district personnel, including the superintendent, in supporting her efforts to save her new teachers. In the principal's words, she wasn't only saving positions, she was saving people.

The conflicts between veteran staff and new staff were evidenced in multiple settings. The veteran staff seemed both sympathetic at times and also envious of the position that new teachers had in the eyes of the principal. Both principals developed close relationships with teachers on their staff. Kimberly developed very close bonds with her new teachers and others in key leadership roles such as the special education lead teacher and the school psychologist.

The principals' use of authority was linked to the patterns of behaviors that defined the message people were getting. The primary message at Kimberly's school

evolved into positions and programs. Although she, too, was concerned about the teacher layoffs, the message at Susan's school was more about the needs of her students in relation to the budget. Susan's use of authority and her subsequent message resulted in power inflation, with teachers following her lead, while Kimberly's use of authority and her subsequent message actually resulted in power deflation among some of her veteran staff members.

Employing a more balanced use of the authority structures, Susan's actions provided opportunities, challenges, and support for teachers – she made it a point to share what she knew and modeled being a learner herself. She involved a cross-section of teachers in leadership roles and participated with teachers on multiple levels in those roles. At High Bluff, this created an atmosphere that was conducive to a community of learning, where teachers shared responsibility for their own growth and the growth of others. A veteran teacher expressed appreciation for the support and challenges staff receives from Susan:

Susan does a great job of keeping us involved and informed about what is going on. We are doing a lot of work with PLC's and it's really exciting. We are all involved in decisions here. She emails us about things. For example, she just emailed us about the scheduling committee and how we're going about thinking about our schedules for next year so we have PLC time. And she supports me and my changes for next year. I am going to a new grade level. She's also very supportive of me and my career. You know, my desire to be an administrator. (TH:Lincoln 5-22-09)

By attending to multiple authority structures, Susan created an environment where the teachers I spoke to said they knew they were appreciated, they believed they belonged to the group, and they were granted some degree of autonomy as professionals. Yet, she

held firm on what she expected. The incident in which Susan confronted a veteran teacher who was grading papers in a staff meeting and then followed up with her afterward illustrates Susan's employment of legal/positional authority (using the hierarchical position of principal to advocate for what is right) and real/relational authority (attending to the relationships needed for productive collaborative efforts).

Susan effectively used the important aspect of *principal as learner* to facilitate teachers' growth by asking questions that led teachers to their own discoveries. Teachers at both schools didn't necessarily always look for answers from their "instructional leader," but they needed to know that their principal understood and appreciated their work and recognized their challenges and frustrations. Teachers at both schools expressed that they wanted to see their principals as partners in education, learning with and from them.

The principal at High Bluff School portrayed herself as a "learner and teacher" to parents and teachers at her school. Such an instance occurred when Susan spent almost an entire School Site Council meeting explaining and sharing information about the Professional Learning Communities initiative. She told the parents and teachers present that she thought it was important that they understand the priorities of the school and what the teachers and kids are doing. Susan shared "where she is at" in her own professional development. Susan explained the four questions of Professional Learning Communities. "We already do a lot of the same structures, but it's called something different. I did this kind of work as a teacher when I was at Longfellow Elementary. I

was a fourth grade teacher. We had all of the kids – not just the kiddos in our class.”

(FNH: 5-13-09)

The principals also took on a dual role as teacher. On one occasion, Susan was meeting with a small group of principal colleagues and brought up an issue that her first grade teachers had asked her about establishing their norms as they worked to create their professional learning communities. Susan explained that these teachers had asked her if they really needed norms. This group of teachers makes up the largest group on her staff and, according to her, has the greatest variation among them as teachers – both with personalities and teaching strategies. Susan discussed with her principal colleagues that she has realized the importance of planning for the different needs of her teachers, for they are all at different places and need different things from her. She explained, “Just like a class, there will be different levels and we’ll need to differentiate what we do for them” (referring to the teachers). At that point Susan had referred to prior experiences as a teacher and also connected to her belief that in her role as a principal she is still a teacher, needing to apply some of those same strategies she used with students in her work with her teachers.

Susan influenced her authority through personal contact and interaction. Even though she often found herself distracted with the daily activities she was involved in rather than being directly involved in classrooms or other instructionally related activities, Susan made personal contacts with individual people across the informal groups that existed within the school. It was this individual contact that seemed to allow her more forgiveness from her staff and less resentment when she was not in classrooms.

On one occasion, a parent did express frustration that she was not considered one of the parents in the inner circle who were favored. This parent described how parents who were in PTA were assured that their child would be placed in a certain teacher's classroom or that their concerns would be heard and addressed by the principal. This parent expressed that since she was not a PTA member in this inner circle, she was not afforded the principal's ear or granted power to influence the placement of her children in certain classes. Although I found this interesting, I did not see this type of comment replicated by other parents so did not deem it as representative of others.

Although, Kimberly also portrayed herself as a learner at times – “I'm going on a field trip tomorrow for my own learning” (referencing a trip to another school), this use of authority was not as common or as influential as it was with Susan (FN:S 3-31-09). The difference was in the behaviors that accompanied these statements. While also strapped with the pressure of dealing with the looming budget and teacher layoffs, Susan's behaviors on a day-to-day basis were more tightly focused on the implementation of professional learning communities and observing in classrooms. Kimberly's behaviors were more random and focused on the instrumental goals of the moment.

Kimberly used “principal as friend” and “principal as advocate” to exert her authority and influence others, which was most noticeable in her interactions with new teachers on her staff. This began to emerge from the very start of my observations. The time and attention given to new staff was often resented by veteran staff who spoke of this often. Kimberly's behaviors indicated that she situated herself both as friend and boss to teachers, especially as it related to influencing her many new teachers and

providing support to them in the midst of employee layoffs. This was viewed unfavorably by many on the Sea Breeze staff, for veteran teachers were resentful and saw her as favoring the new teachers and sometimes even acting somewhat improper to nurture those friendships to gain and possess authority. In an interview, one veteran teacher expressed the dismay felt by veteran teachers about the relationship Kimberly had with some of the new teachers, describing how she elevated their status to leadership committees and how she socialized with them, “Now the social committee, with the new teachers, planned something where they were going to go out on Friday night to a nightclub. It seemed like Kimberly wanted it. That didn’t work. She wants to reinvigorate with young, vivacious, spirited people.” (TS:Moore 5-13-09)

The veteran staff formed an informal “group” to combat the threats of the new staff who they viewed to have power. The new teachers’ perceived power came from their positions on leadership teams, their friendly relationship to principal, the amount of time spent with principal, their status as having been hired by principal, and that they were young and the quality of youth was idealized.

Susan used relationships primarily in a matriarchal way. Although she created a more ‘motherly’ relationship with new staff, the veteran staff was secure in their relationship with Susan, and they did not feel threatened. When discussing what the new teachers were experiencing, she often referred to her own daughter who was a young, new teacher in the district. Her relationship with veteran staff could be described as friendly and approachable. She portrayed herself as someone teachers could count on for advice and compassion. She rendered herself as someone who teachers should listen to

because she had experienced it before or because she “was one of them,” referring to the fact that she had been a teacher and still considers herself to be a teacher. Younger teachers looked to her as a motherly figure and seasoned teacher. Veteran teachers looked to Susan as a respected teacher colleague and professional friend.

By attending to relationships and the use of authority through the constructs of “principal as teacher” and “principal as learner,” Susan positioned herself as the principal to create the situations within the organization in which people around her followed her lead. The appreciation for her authority and leadership was expressed by one of her senior teachers when she stopped to talk with me one day after seeing me sitting in the conference room by myself near the front office. She popped her head in to tell me about Susan. All smiles, she said, “You are wise to choose to study the best principal for your research. We just love her.” (I noticed that she made that comment “We just love her” three times during her short conversation with me that day.) She looked me straight in the eye and said, “She is approachable – I can talk to her about anything. Talk about an open door policy.” A second teacher walked in because a meeting was going to begin within a couple of minutes. The first teacher continued, “I can even call her on the weekend.” The other teacher piped up to add, “Oh yes, me too.” The first teacher continued, “And even when she does close it I know I can open it.” (I realized that this was an “unspoken rule” within the school, but at the time I wondered if it was true for every teacher. For every parent? Could just anyone peak in and then open the principal’s closed door to discuss something with her or was there a set of rules that seemed to apply to some and not to others? I would realize throughout my time at High Bluff, that yes, it

did seem as if a variety of teachers and parents popped their head in to talk with Susan. There did not seem to be a pattern of who did this and who did not.) This senior teacher continued, “She is responsive. She really listens. And she cares. She has a sense of humor. Even when it’s really stressful I’ve seen her go ‘ugh’ and just laugh. She finds the humor in things. We just love her. She keeps us really focused on the school goals. She takes one thing at a time and has us work on that.” I thanked her for sharing with me and then realized that the meeting was going to begin so I exited the room and sat in the front office. After the meeting the teacher came back out and was obviously happy to see me because she had something else to tell me. “I want to add two more things to the list about Susan. She really knows the kids. And she’s in the classrooms. We’re so used to seeing her. She really knows the kids. I really wanted to add those two things.”

(TH:Hanks 3-24-09)

As I employed these assumptions about authority, I was mindful that it is possible for some control attempts to be authorized – that is, supported by superiors who wield positional power – but not endorsed (not supported by subordinates of the power wielder) – or vice versa. It is also possible for control attempts to be both authorized and endorsed. Authority that is both authorized and endorsed is expected to be more effective and more stable than that which receives support only from one source (Scott, 1975). This is what I continuously sought to uncover as I looked for the use of authority that resulted in either power inflation or power deflation.

The formal and instrumental goals at each of the schools and the principal’s use of authority to balance those demands at her school had a significant impact on the

principal's ability to influence teachers. So, too, was there an impact on the principal's ability to influence parents which was most noticeable in the push made by each principal to get parents to rally around common goals to save teachers and positions. There was a difference, though, in how the principals were doing this much of the time, for what began to unfold was something not always associated with the institutionalized notion of the school organization or the institutionalized notion of principal.

Chapter 9

The Principal and the Parents

Local sociocultural influences and pressure impacted both principals. Various stakeholders played into the continuous “pressure cooker” within which the principal functioned: parents demanded that their child’s education be comprised of certain pieces, the community called for schools to have reputations that attracted good families and generated home sales, the district pushed for improved test scores and lower spending. District office mandates and initiatives played an integral part in what the principals were confronted with at their schools. There was the clear district directive to plan for budget cuts, staff layoffs, and program reductions. And there was distinct pressure from parents to answer to them on a plethora of matters. During the four months I was at Sea Breeze and High Bluff, I saw the affect of these directives grow and intensify. I surmised two important points: 1) The principals’ responses to the local demands were quite different from one another, which had a significant impact on their influence at the school, including their influence in instruction. 2) The principals’ primary message to the parents and teachers was quite different at each school.

The principals’ responses were influenced by numerous factors at the schools. The local pressures put on the two principals primarily stemmed from teachers, parents, and district office administration and fell into five main categories: needs of the teaching

staff, demands from parents, political agendas of parents, political agendas of teachers, and district office initiatives.

The parent group in both schools was an integral part of the organization. So too was there was an interesting dynamic with parents at both schools. Parents at both schools represented a major element to which the principals needed to attend and respond. The parents were considered to be, to some extent at least, a double-edged sword. They were advantageous and necessary, but also a force to be reckoned with. They provided much support with their children and with the fundraising efforts at the school. They were also quite demanding and insistent on principal face time. Even a discrete incident in the news could create an uprising among the parent ranks that greatly impacted the principal's time and attention. On one day at High Bluff Susan had five telephone calls in just one afternoon from parents regarding the Natasha Richardson incident; parents wanting to know what the school's policy was if a similar incident should happen at school.¹²

Both principals used their positioning as the principal to lead a variety of groups that included parents, community, and teachers. It was through these group processes that both principals exerted their position as principal to create a platform to have her views heard, give direction to constituents, and provide feedback to those involved. These meetings were also used by the principal to, as Susan stated, "keep the pulse on what was occurring out there."

¹² On March 16, 2009, Natasha Richardson, actress, died at the age of 45 of an epidural hematoma due to a blunt impact to the head in a skiing accident. She initially appeared fine and joked about the fall, but within a short amount of time she was rushed to the hospital. On March 18, 2009, she was removed from life support and died hours later.

Parents and School Politics

These two principals were savvy about tapping into the parent population – the stakeholders’ political will and ambition – to their benefit at this distinct period of time for these schools. It was very clear that the parents were involved; they wanted and expected a certain education for their children. Subsequently, the principals used this to their advantage in rallying action around the budget ramifications at their schools. This called for principals to attend to the delicate balance of strategically involving parents during this critical period while also maintaining some parental distance that allowed the classrooms to continue to function as teachers believed they should.

Both principals made overt efforts to not only involve parents, but give them information that would keep them informed of current political issues and causes. In turn, this generated much involvement from parents in the contemporary political issues affecting the schools. At the same time, both principals expressed that it was part of their responsibility to keep parents away from the classroom/teachers if it was negatively impacting instruction. This belief about the principal’s role was shared by teachers. There was definitely a sentiment expressed by teachers at both schools that they believed the principal’s job was to help them deal with the difficult task of working with parents. Teachers from both schools said that, although they highly valued their very involved parent population, they found it demanding and relied on the principal as a buffer so the teachers could focus their energies on the classroom and not simply respond to parent demands. As one teacher put it, “There are a lot of parent volunteers and at the same time there are some parents who can be a bit intense and that can, on certain days, can

make it a little difficult. If certain parents are coming in, that can change the mood of the day if they're intense and needing a lot." (TS:Everett 6-04-09) A sampling of teacher comments illustrates the important role parents played in the school organization and the need for the principal to negotiate and even mitigate that role when necessary.

Sea Breeze Teachers:

Parent involvement is a strength at this school and it's also a weakness. They become too involved. They question you about a lot of things. Again, there is a lot more support here from parents than in my previous school. It is nice to have students who are not all FBB (far below basic) – they have a good base on their academic achievement levels. (TS:Barnes 6-09-09)

It's an extremely well-supported community. Our parents are very involved here. They have strong opinions about what the education should look like. I remember my first year teaching I had parents come in and pretty much tell me what their child's grades should be. They discounted the classroom experience. (TS:Barry 5-28-09)

The parents keep us on our toes here. Parents are the ones we're trying to impress here. (TS:Terrell 6-09-09)

High Bluff Teachers:

I think because we are in a higher socioeconomic area we tend to have more high maintenance parents. I see that as a challenging thing but also as a resourceful, good thing. I think those parents are seeing that their children are getting an unparalleled education. Through time parents have trusted us. Watching us and seeing that their children are happy. We have a lot of volunteers here. More time needs to be spent communicating with parents. It can take away from teacher prep time. Putting in the relationship-building up front pays off. (TH:Hanks 5-28-09)

High maintenance parents. Knowing how to deal with them in a very diplomatic way with student progress. Last week I had third grade parents calling me wanting to know if their child is going to be designated as GATE. There is a unique challenge with knowing how to balance that and inform them, and not letting it become something that is all-consuming. (TH:Foyle 5-26-09)

With such a well-off financial area that we live in there can be challenges with parents, as well. Um, parents at this school are very vocal about what they want. They know what they want and they will do anything to get it. Sometimes it can be a very good thing because they advocate for their child. Sometimes it can be a dangerous thing like with our traffic pattern here parents feel entitled, and last year ran into one of our traffic guards on purpose because they didn't like the direction he was telling them to go. So it can be a good thing and it can be a bad thing. (TH:Burns 6-02-09)

With both of these schools situated within relatively affluent neighborhoods, parents routinely discussed the impact the economic downturn was having on “other parents” within the school community and the essential need to rally together to keep their schools strong. Parents in both schools demanded a “private school experience” in a public school setting for their children, with parents advocating to pay for the programs, services, and resources themselves and/or push for efforts to generate additional income. Parents also demanded the principals’ time and attention in response to their individual and collective concerns. Community pressure mounted as housing developers and sellers needed to tout the “excellent neighborhood schools” in their efforts to combat issues related to lagging home sales and new housing tracts that sat empty during the economic recession.

Leveraging Authority with Parents

In answering to these cultural and political influences, the principals responded in two ways – they used their organizational positioning of the principal within the school and they drew on authority constructs of principal as teacher, principal as learner, principal as advocate, and principal as friend – to justify why others should listen to them, respect their judgment, and follow their lead. The two principals leveraged

instructional influence through the different authority structures in distinct – and oftentimes indirect – ways, and one of those ways was keeping the parents in check.

The ability of the principal to work with and negotiate the involvement of parents was considered to be a strength of both principals. A teacher at Sea Breeze described what she believed made a former principal such a strong leader when she explained the previous principal's role with teachers and parents: "I loved her. She worked as hard as I did. She worked so hard. The old group here, they were fuddy duddies – she kept them in line. They respected her. She kept the parents out of our rooms." This teacher went on to say that Kimberly has also spends a lot of time working with parents at the school. (TS:Moore 5-03-09)

Parents were not shy about their expectations of the school and they were pointed in their descriptions to the principal about their desire to have a "private school within the public school setting." As the political pressures unfolded and the case was made to rally behind saving teaching positions, their desire for a "private school experience" was the driving force underpinning their motivation to produce ideas and exert effort for generating revenue. They wanted to keep the programs that were in jeopardy due to budget cuts. One parent at High Bluff told why parents were willing to contribute their time and money to the school and what they expected in return:

This is a fantastic school. It's a public school with a private school experience. People choose to put money into our school. The teachers are what make it so great and they're led by Susan and Carolyn. What more could you ask for? They're both excited and enthusiastic. My kids are so happy. And it's the involved parents that make a lot of these things happen....Our parents want science, technology, excellent readers and good math students, a science lab, a computer lab, playground time, Eagle play.

This school listens to the wants of parents. I would like to see the language and GATE programs expanded even more. (TH:Oswald 6-11-09)

Another parent at High Bluff shared a similar sentiment on a separate occasion when telling me about what parents want from the school, saying, “Parents want everything out of public school that they can get at private school. Expectations are high here. A lot of the education here is based on what parents prioritize. They want to maximize the potential. They want a broad experience for their kids.” (TH:Carrey 6-1-09)

Parent expectations at Sea Breeze were quite similar to those at High Bluff, with parents expressing their willingness to contribute financially toward the type of experience they wanted for their children. Some even went so far as to suggest that perhaps parents should pay for the programs their children get, saying, “If we want to be able to offer music to our kids, let’s have an opt-in option. A parent can pay for it and their child is opted in to music.” (TS:Nelson 4-30-09) Another parent expressed her concern and priorities in the midst of the budget crisis and local political influences, stating:

Class size is really important to me. I am so fixated on class size. This is an atypical year. There is a new rumor every week. This week it’s ‘no library.’ It muddies the message. PTO has to be better at communicating. The message is fundraising and that’s a fact. It’s a need. Parents could pay twenty dollars a month and get music and science education. They would have to pay, and if they can’t they would go face-to-face with Kimberly to explain it. Another parent researched it – at twenty dollars a month, if thirty percent of parents do it, it will cover the cost. There are parents who want their children in public school but want it privatized. (TS:Perkins 6-10-09)

Both principals spent a great deal of time addressing the parents’ concerns and requests, listening to voice mail, reading emails, and responding to both. Kimberly and Susan acknowledged the urgent need to respond to parents within a timely manner. To

Susan, this meant getting back to them the same day and I observed her on many occasions responding to parents' questions and requests in an immediate fashion. When asked to describe her day, Susan reported:

This community has high expectations that their emails will be responded to within a of couple hours. So I check my emails every hour-and-a-half and respond to them right away. Then is the walk through time (walk through observations in classrooms). I tell my office manager that I can't meet with parents during that time because it's walk through time.
(TH:Susan 3-23-09)

Both principals used her parent leaders to help keep them informed of community issues and sentiment. This meant regular meetings with various parent leaders and groups. Susan met with the PTO president every Friday from 2:15pm – 2:50pm. Two additional mothers who handle the communication with the community attended that meeting too. The primary purpose of those two parents was to help keep PTO members and parents in the community informed of “everything on the radar” and to help Susan get the word out about what was important. These community outreach parents would immediately respond after the meeting by placing important news and events on the school's extensive website (FN:H 5-08-09). Kimberly also met with parents routinely to communicate information and plan upcoming events, although the time and structure for these meetings at Sea Breeze weren't quite as regular and established as they were at High Bluff.

Susan expressed on multiple occasions that she was frustrated by the things that took her away from what they should be doing. The experience at High Bluff one Monday morning illustrates the frustration Susan uttered while sitting at her desk checking her emails for the second time that morning. She looked up and said, “I wish

my phone and emails were about instruction, but they're not. Because they are about enrichment. They (parents) assume that the regular instructional program is there and their kids will get that. We have many families from out of state where music and art were a part of the day. Then we had a bubbling up of active parents who were concerned about technology.” (FNH: 4-20-09)

And yet, these two principals did not give up on their efforts to answer to parents' demands and secure their support – and it was working. On my way out the front door of Sea Breeze School at the end of one day, I passed by the assistant principal's office, which is literally adjacent to the front door. One cannot walk through the front door without standing within earshot of the assistant principal's desk. The assistant principal was sitting at her desk, which is open to everyone who enters the front office on one side. She looked up and saw me leaving, and I asked her how her day was. I looked at what she was doing and noticed that she was sitting at her desk with a piece of paper in front of her and a pen in her hand. Without any other prompting, she commented on how this school is different from the other school she is assigned to, “It seems as if the parents here are more confrontational than at my other school. It seems as if Kimberly has to put out a lot of fires with parents. You should have seen the first year – that's all she did. They would be waiting for her, just ready to confront her about something. She was always needing to defend herself and what she was doing. With time they (the parents) have come to see that she believes in what she does and she has good reasons for the decisions she makes. And now they're actually much more supportive.”

Susan and Kimberly used the influence they had with parent groups to guide the direction of parents and garner support from them. And this indoctrination started early, as was the case with Kindergarten Orientation at High Bluff. One evening in late March, Susan capitalized on the opportunity to begin shaping parents' involvement and support from the beginning by taking advantage of the chance to interact with new group of kindergarten parents who had little ones who would be starting school in August. At the parent Kindergarten Orientation Meeting she told them, "At this school there is school-wide decision-making with School Site Council, the Leadership Team, Grade level release time, and PLC's." Susan shared the school's motto and she said, "It takes parents, students, staff, and administrators for students to fly." (FNH: 5-15-09)

Parents were very insistent that they be heard when they had concerns and that their concerns be responded to by the principal immediately. A transcription of Susan's account of details regarding the two parent meetings she attended in one evening at High Bluff paints a clear picture of just how responsive Susan was to parents at her school. There was also a feeling that however responsive she was, it was never enough to meet the demands or to satisfy all of the parents. This constant struggle was illustrated in one such situation when Susan was called on to help with a bullying situation. She explained to me that a parent of one boy had come into her office irate about what another boy was doing to her son and she was tired of it. The parent said she wanted to do something about it. The parent had emailed her requesting a meeting in the evening with the principal to discuss it with a group of parents who were also concerned. Susan told me she had given the parents a choice of two evenings that she could meet with them as a

group. One of the parents emailed back and said, ‘I hope one of those evenings will work for all of the other parents.’” When telling me the parent had said this in her email, Susan opened her eyes wide to express her disbelief that the parent had said this when she had given the parents two choices for times when she was able to meet with them after school hours in the evening. Susan looked at me and said, “What do they want? I gave them a choice of two evenings!” (FNH: 3-27-09)

It so happened that the same evening Susan was meeting with the group of parents about bullying, there was another meeting scheduled as well. The second meeting was a “think tank” meeting scheduled in response to requests from parents to have a platform to discuss budget concerns and possible solutions. Susan explained that the parents want to fundraise to save teachers – to keep the probationary teachers that have been pink slipped. She told how she opened the meeting by saying, “We all have the same priority. We want our kids to come to school and be safe, feel confident, and know that they’ve done their best.” She said she told them they could generate ideas while she was gone from the meeting (to go to the parent group concerned about bullying) and that upon her return she would tell them which things they could do and which things they would not be able to do because of Union issues or other legal reasons.

During my time at High Bluff, Susan expressed on multiple occasions that others did not fully understand all that she did in her role as a principal, which she said was clearly apparent in one of the comments that a parent made at the think tank meeting. Susan’s disbelief in what some parents actually thought about her job as a principal was apparent in her recollection of events from that meeting. She explained that she had left

the meeting to go to the parent meeting about bullying and upon returning parents were discussing how much money would need to be raised to save teaching positions at the school. According to Susan, one dad looked at Susan and asked, “If we raise \$1.5 million will they be able to keep the teachers?” Susan then expressed disbelief that at that point, “A parent suggested that either I or the assistant principal serve as substitute teachers if necessary to cut budget costs!” Susan looked at me and said she was “somewhat offended by that. Don’t they have any idea what I do?” Then she added, sarcastically, “I guess not! I told the parents, ‘Who would be your child’s instructional leader?’” Susan explained that she told these parents that “in addition to being principal of this school, we also have a very active PTO and it’s great, but I am also CEO of that organization as well.” Then Susan recalled that a dad seemed to shed some light on the principal role by saying, “Look at her. It’s 9:30 pm and she’s still here!” (referring to the long hours she puts in.) (FNH: 3-27-09)

I took note of Susan’s frustration over the lack of understanding on the part of parents regarding what the principal of the school does every day. I also took note that Susan seemed to be considering herself not only a leader, not only an instructional leader, but she was also comparing herself to one who runs a corporation – labeling herself as the CEO of the PTO. She would mention this role of CEO on three other occasions during my time at High Bluff. Her comments would continue to take shape in the following weeks as I saw the role of these two principals emerge.

The Principal as an Entrepreneur

Through the conundrum created by these multiple cultural and micropolitical demands, what began to emerge wasn't as simple as labeling the principal as a leader or labeling the principal as an instructional leader. No, what emerged was a hybrid role in which the principal wasn't only focused on work with teachers about the traditional notions of schooling (e.g., attending to academic goals, scheduling, curriculum, etc.), but she was actually doing much different work. She was energizing constituents and using the collective synergy to think creatively within this bleak set of circumstances. She was planning and attending think tank meetings. She was going out on a limb to motivate others to come up with solutions to problems presented by the economy. Although still aware of her need to attend to teachers and students, she was in fact functioning more as an entrepreneur in charge of a big business much of the time. One of the apparent goals of these principals was to keep the parent population happy, for the revenue stream to the district was greatly based on student enrollment at each school.¹³ Even Susan herself described her role as such when she told of how she works with her community to keep parents happy and keep student enrollment up. She explained:

Susan: I start with PTO. And School Site Council. Really positive, word-of-mouth people. (The conversation turned to the current atmosphere of the budget and cuts for next year. Susan joined me on the other side of her desk – took a chair at the table next to me and continued.)

Me: How do you include those people in your work?

¹³ Income for revenue limit districts such as the one in this study is based on: the average number of students attending school during the school year (average daily attendance); the general purpose (revenue limit) money the district receives based on ADA; and special support (categorical aid) from the state and federal governments, earmarked for particular purposes.

Susan: I had parents come and say they've visited the area private schools and they said they are concerned about what it will be like here next year. I asked them 'What are your priorities?' They said science. Honestly, if they (parents) could design a school they could design one like we have. Except fewer kids. If we were to lose a lot of "extras" we'd lose kids."

Susan stopped to think and then went on to say,

Susan: I asked the parent, 'So what's the word on the street (about the school)?' and the parent said it was so positive.

Me: And what did she say?

Susan: The parent's husband is a city councilman. (At this point Susan got up and walked over to her office door and closed the door. She sat back down at the table next to me and continued.) Sometimes I feel more like a CFO than a principal. It's all about the money and nurturing relationships. Today, the first order of business is sending emails to the chairpersons of the Country Fair, thanking them for all that they did to make it a success. Then I'll do a mass email to all of the families thanking them for the Country Fair. That's another big thing – thanking people. We'll put a thank you in the Cascade (the community newsletter).

Then Susan referred to the large amount of money handled by the school, making the connection between the large amount of money raised by the school and that of a large business, and she said,

Susan: There was \$14,000 in cash at the school on Saturday. That's a lot of money for a school to bring in on one day. It really is a business. (FNH: 4-27-09)

As they responded to the multiple demands for accountability, the components of both schools took on many of the characteristics typically seen in a business: officer positions, fundraising goals, the corporate leader. Interestingly, the leaders of these two

schools actually seemed to function much of the time much like a CEO, and that didn't necessarily fit neatly within the institutionalized notions about school principals. As a matter of fact, many of these functions seemed to take the principal away from the place where teaching and learning actually happened – the classrooms.

The PTO organizational structure and its officer positions at High Bluff Elementary suggested that arm of the school operated much like a business. The PTO had the principal (who, it should be noted, when talking to the think tank parent group, had also described herself to them as the CEO of the PTO), the PTO President, Treasurer, and then many vice presidents, including Vice President Fundraising Events, Vice President Fundraising Programs, Vice President Corporate Sponsorships, Secretary, Vice President School Spirit, Vice President Room Parent Coordinator, Vice President Activities, Vice President Communication, Vice President Volunteer Coordinator, and Teacher Representative.

Susan's responsibilities as the principal included using her authority to build productive relationships and garner community buy-in, which I saw come to life at the third annual High Bluff Country Fair. I arrived at the Country Fair at 2:00pm on a Saturday afternoon. I parked a distant three blocks away, as that was the closest parking spot available. As I walked up I couldn't help but notice the huge line of parents and their children waiting at the "ticket line" by the front gate, which was where the children could redeem their tickets for prizes.

I walked past the line toward the field area and saw Susan standing in a wetsuit by the dunk tank. A large schedule was displayed on a stand next to the dunk tank that

noted which staff member would be in the dunk tank each half hour. Susan's time for dunking was scheduled from 2:30pm – 3:00pm. A long line of about 60 people formed to dunk the principal. When Susan saw me she laughed and said, "Good, you're just in time to see the principal get dunked!" I introduced her to my husband, who was with me. In her friendly manner she said hello to him and told him it was nice to meet him. Susan told us that the Country Fair had a great turnout. She asked with enthusiasm if I had seen the baskets in the multi-purpose room. She explained that there were silent auction baskets that each class had made. I said we hadn't seen them yet, to which she responded, "Be sure to go in there and look at them. You won't believe it. And it's all donated by the parents and businesses." Then it was time for Susan to take her turn in the dunk tank. Susan climbed up the ladder on the side and sat at the top of the plank above the tank of water. She clapped three times lightly and then squeezed her eyes closed, anticipating the dunk. She let out a squeal with the first dunk and then got right out and back up onto the plank. The quicker she got up and out, the sooner another child could spend his/her ticket in an attempt to dunk the principal – which meant more money raised with each dunk. Children and their parents cheered as the principal got dunked over and over throughout the next thirty minutes.

I walked through the multi-purpose room to look at the baskets. There were rows and rows of baskets that were going for hundreds of dollars and more. The PTO parent who was in charge of the baskets appeared to be so proud when she came right over to me and told me that one parent had even made a special trip to come and bid on a basket early in the morning – that parent couldn't attend the Country Fair but wanted to support

it. She went on to say that the parent had seen the professional baseball basket and immediately wrote a check for \$1500 and left. The PTO parent continued to tell me how wonderful the baskets were. As I perused the large multi-purpose room filled with impressive baskets, I also noticed there was a giant cow on the wall – “Bessie” was her name. Every family who had donated to the Country Fair – any amount – got their name on Bessie the Cow. Susan had explained to me earlier that this was their way of encouraging everyone to make a monetary donation to the school and they thought perhaps more families would do so because there was no minimum amount and the money would go right to the school, the kids, the programs. Bessie was covered with hundreds of names of those who had donated. (FNH: 4-25-09)

An entrepreneur as described by Merriam-Webster’s dictionary is “one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise” and by dictionary.com as “a person who organizes and manages any enterprise, especially a business, usually with considerable initiative and risk.” One of the key ingredients in this definition is the emphasis on the individual – the individual typically starts the enterprise while acting alone. Although continuously surrounded by people and working with others toward some type of common purpose, it seemed as if each of these two principals was often alone in her adventure. Whether it was dealing with a parent or the superintendent or a group of new teachers, the principal was a leader who was basically alone in much of her decision-making and dealings.

The other piece of “entrepreneur” as it is defined in the dictionary is the willingness to take risks for the organization. Both principals were willing to take risks

on a multitude of levels. It was a combination of entrepreneurialism and business savvy that I saw in what these leaders were doing much of the time.

They were not afraid to charge ahead and do what was right. Of significance to note was their involvement at the district level and willingness to assert their voices when they believed it to be most important. This was evident when the superintendent called a mandatory meeting for all district management/administrators regarding the budget. The superintendent had explained the state of the district budget and proposed cuts. When referencing the layoff notices and possible staff reductions, he emphasized that he didn't want any person in the district to lose his or her job. He discussed various scenarios that would impact the budget. In the room of fifty administrators, Susan raised her hand and said, "I'm not willing to do anything that is divisive and I want to know that you will keep cuts as far away from the classroom as possible. As their principal, I would want to know that I am fighting for my kids." (FNH: 5-13-09)

Kimberly, too, activated an entrepreneurial spirit, but it was more in the way of rallying energy for a cause. She poured herself into efforts to generate community concern around the budget. At her School Site Council Meeting with parents and teachers present, Kimberly bluntly addressed the issue. Several teachers had been present during the first half of the meeting and helped explain the school's previous year's goals and their progress toward them. Then those teachers excused themselves and only the official members (including teachers and parents) of the School Site Council stayed for the second half of the meeting. It was at that time that the subject of the budget was brought up by Kimberly. Kimberly handed out a copy of the superintendent's budget that

had been recently presented to the public at a Board of Trustees meeting. The conversation is telling, as it emphasizes the urgency in Kimberly's delivery and her no-holds-barred approach to confronting the issue and delivering her message. Kimberly's comments suggested that she was committed to thinking creatively and rallying those around her who would support the message of saving teaching positions at the school.

She pointedly told the council:

With this budget (holding up the figures for next year), let me tell you what we won't have. No music, no ELD teacher, no science, reading aides, PE aide, reading intervention time is gone, professional development time is gone. If other things are being cut, is that the thing that I think should be cut? From the district, I have a list of what is on the list to be cut....We have four probationary teachers – we have ten temp classroom teachers (teachers with temporary contracts), one temp technology teacher, and a temp reading teacher – all of those were laid off last week. We gave back jobs to our four probationary teachers....Classified didn't have as many cuts. That's how it affects us. It makes it harder. What is the most important? If we say reading intervention, then it's not technology.

A dad asked Kimberly about the temporary teachers to which Kimberly responded,

The ten temps have the strongest character of any teachers I've met. Three of them were here presenting to you tonight....We'll be losing ten people, but those positions will still be here. We'll get ten new people from somewhere else. I hand-selected those ten teachers. (FNS: 4-28-09)

Kimberly took the opportunity to emphasize the point that she would not be hand-selecting any teachers that would be coming from elsewhere. Holding nothing back, Kimberly declared, "I want those temps!" Kimberly then went on to explain to the School Site Council members that the parent budget meeting that would be held later in the week and encouraged those present to attend and to tell others to attend so they could spread the word about the importance of saving these positions. Kimberly pleaded with

the members to try to understand the uncertainty this causes at the school. She said, “If you think you’re getting a certain teacher, you don’t know that because class size reduction is out the window.” (FNS: 4-2809)

At one point in the meeting a parent brought up that the teachers’ union was not working with the district. He expressed that other districts were taking furlough days. Kimberly pointed out that those items would need to be negotiated and that the parents could help think of other ways to solve the problem. Kimberly shared that not only did she get involved as an administrator, but that she also has two kids going through the schools. She explained that she did not know the answer to these budget problems, but she did know she couldn’t possibly fund raise anymore or “I’ll drop over!” (She was obviously referring to how much fund raising they had done already.) I found it interesting that to this she instinctively seemed to add a comment about one of the fundraising strategies they had embarked on, saying, “And I know we have the wellness policy and we’re supposed to have no donuts, but I’ll tell you what – if donuts and coffee on Friday for the coffee cart gets us \$1,800, I’ll sell donuts on Friday.” This was in sharp contrast to her steadfast affirmation earlier that student and adult wellness were important to model and promote, and to her expressed commitment as a member of the district’s wellness committee. It seemed as if the issue of protecting teachers’ positions turned out to be the trump card in every hand dealt in this game of local politics. She ended the meeting by telling the parents that if they would like to meet with her to discuss ideas, that would be fine. She responded, “You map out your ideas and give me three times you could meet. You know me – I’ll do anything.” (FNS: 4-28-09)

In the subsequent days, Kimberly spent much time preparing for the community budget meeting she organized at her school. She even called the superintendent's office and asked to meet with him two days prior to the meeting. She told me about the meeting she had with the superintendent after the fact, saying she had met with him at his office, during which time she asked for some information from him that she could share with her parents. The superintendent explained pieces of the budget to her and gave her some information that she said she was going to use in her power point presentation to the parents and community members.

The parent budget meeting was held on a Thursday evening at 6:00pm in the Sea Breeze multi-purpose room. When I arrived at about 5:30pm Kimberly was in her office. As the time neared for her to make her way from her office to the multi-purpose room, she looked up and commented to me, "I guess I could put on some lipstick, but I want to look ragged. It needs to be a doom and gloom meeting." We walked toward the multi-purpose room a few minutes later and once there she waited for the parents and two Governing Board Members who were going to help her with the presentation. The multi-purpose room had approximately 200 chairs set out, most of which were filled with parents and some children. Kimberly started the meeting by saying, "Thank you for coming for this bleak presentation." She looked toward the back of the room at those parents who had brought their kids with them and said, "I'm glad you're here. I'd rather you are here with kids than not here. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to go over how the state budget is impacting our district and how it impact Sea Breeze."

Kimberly went on to explain to the parents how serious the budget cuts were, contrary to what some in the community were saying. She made it a point to tell them how drastically it would affect the programs at staff at Sea Breeze, specifically, reporting out:

I heard a mom say, 'Oh, it's going to be okay,' but these cuts this year really hurt us. We felt it. This year all of our budgets were frozen at the district level. We came back in January – 'Welcome back. Happy New Year. We're cutting \$4.5 million.' So what does this mean for Sea Breeze? It's pretty sad. So what kinds of things will we be looking at next year? I will be eliminating the music program. (FNS: 4-30-09)

Kimberly somberly went through the rest of the district superintendent's list of potential items to be cut and explained the purpose of the meeting by pointing out the need to become politically active in letter writing and actively forming a political action committee that would regularly communicate with local legislators. She pointed out that their mission wasn't to do more local fundraising, because, in her opinion, this was beyond that. Although she said that, the issue of local involvement in fundraising continued to come up. Kimberly explained:

This is not a night to talk about fund raising. This is more than what a dunk tank can do...I issued fourteen pink slips – four were rescinded. We have ten teachers who will not have a job...They're looking for a grant writing position on the PTO. I recently attended a grant writing workshop so I know more about how to write them. Teachers help me, but they're – we're – very busy. We appreciate any help we can get. We have a parent who works for a major company. Every year she hands me a piece of paper that I sign and we get \$500. Teachers don't choose teaching to get rich. It's a passion. We love it... If you want to sign up to help with the letter writing, you can over here. Once again, this meeting is not for fund raising. We are beyond that. Thank you for coming. (FNS: 4-30-09)

Both principals conducted multiple meetings that specifically solicited help from parents in determining how to raise money to offset the budget shortfall and bring back

pink-slipped teachers. But it was the patterns of behaviors of both principals that defined the message that the individuals were getting within the organization. Through their actions, both principals were sending a strong message, although quite different from one another. Susan's direct focus on students was evident in lines of communication with every group – veteran teachers, new teachers, and parents. Kimberly's direct focus on staffing issues was evident in lines of communication with every group – veteran teachers, new teachers, and parents.

This developing picture of *principal as an entrepreneur* began to uncover the entrepreneurial strategies that the principals were using to make decisions and influence others, which shed light on their use of authority, specifically, what leveraging authority with constituencies looked like within the practice of principaling. The principals' authority and influence were dependent on both internal and external factors. The internal challenges were unique to their schools and organizational conditions. Multiple external accountability contexts included federal NCLB requirements, state standards, school district mandates, local board expectations, school council involvement, and parent association participation.

Much of what the principals focused on involved influencing those internal and external factors through their interactions with the public. They both considered these responsibilities as part of their job and paid attention to the public relations with their constituents. This was captured in Susan's portrayal of one particular day, which she specifically labeled as a "PR day" when she gave me a morning preview of the day to

come. Although this is Susan's description, I saw similar events at Kimberly's school as well. Susan said she would have:

Flag Salute first thing in the morning and it is Student of the Month. After that, it will be a PTO interest meeting in the multi-purpose room for parents who are interested in becoming involved in PTO next year. At 3:30 is the kindergarten lottery and many of those parents will be meeting me for the first time and I'm the face of the school for them. At 1:00 I have to be back here for a meeting. Then from 3:00-3:30 I have traffic. Then the kindergarten lottery will be at 3:30 for AM or PM kindergarten. (FNH: 5-01-09)

One of the key ways principals exerted their authority in creating a successful school enterprise was to use people to their best advantage – essentially, get the right people working on the right things. A critical component that both principals exerted was assembling and maintaining their desired teaching staff, which included the hiring and eliminating/firing of teachers. Both principals had worked hard to hire new teachers they believed would be the best fit for their schools. Both principals told of times when they had given feedback to teachers that was sometimes difficult for teachers to hear, and both principals told me about the many times they had had hard conversations with teachers.

A major driving force in their need to rally people together and work creatively at this time was the impending budget crisis. Both principals made overt pleas with teachers and parents to get involved in efforts to save programs and positions. Formal meeting arrangements had the budget and related issues as a focal point. Both principals made concerted efforts to let individuals in their school communities know how serious the budget crisis was and the impact it would have on their schools in terms of increased class size, loss of teaching staff, and elimination of programs. Both principals called for

individuals to become active in a variety of ways. They encouraged others to speak up about the issues and to come together to think of creative ways to tackle the problem. The ensuing result among parents at both schools was very similar. Parents unanimously agreed that it was important to save teaching positions, keep class sizes low, and maintain current programs. The ensuing result among teachers, however, was quite different at both schools. Parents at both schools began attending meetings, expressing concern, and generating ideas. Teachers at both schools were involved in these conversations, but much more was said by the principal on behalf of the teachers than by the teachers themselves at those meetings. Behind the scenes a markedly different scenario played out at each of the two schools. Although not necessarily heard from overtly at public meetings and events, veteran teachers at High Bluff expressed to me in interviews that they were supportive of their new teachers and didn't want to see their "family" broken up. At Sea Breeze, there were conflicting emotions expressed by veteran teachers, ranging from support and concern to bitterness and resentment.

The constant pressure to answer to the various constituencies and negotiate a delicate and complex relationship with parents was dominant in both schools. Although not a formal goal at either school, this became a primary instrumental goal for both principals. Susan bent over backwards to answer emails and accommodate meetings with parents. Kimberly was constantly answering to parents and in meetings with parents. Once again, the impact of the principal on instruction was indirect and her role was viewed differently by some staff than others. During an interview in response to a

question about what types of things she goes to her principal for, an experienced teacher said:

Not instruction – I go to the assistant principal for that. I go to the principal for parents. Whenever I need help with a parent situation I go to my principal. The last time I went to Susan for support was about me and my changes for next year. Supporting my career in moving to an assistant principal position. (TH:Rowe 5-22-09)

Nevertheless, Susan saw her primary job as helping teachers improve. She motivated them, supported them, and pushed them. Toward the end of the year in June when Susan was asked what she believed her biggest influence was this year, she reflectively responded:

Just as in a regular classroom, you see the angle, the diverse learners, students with these skills, students with these skills, students with these skills. We had a certain number of new programs and things to teach. We've been giving and teaching teachers some of the new skill sets they'll need in a learning community. SMART goals. What does it mean to really analyze and look at data? ...Carolyn and I were talking about this: As the third year, we're not reading the wave of newness and freshness anymore. We've had hard conversations this year with leadership, IS walk throughs, our own walk throughs. We've had the lens of the six steps (to ensuring standards based instruction). Some of them are angry (referring to some teachers). We tried to have hard conversations in a respectful way. We hope they'll embrace the conversations. Some might think, 'She (Susan) doesn't like me. She doesn't like me.' You've (principals) got to be careful to respect everybody. (TH:Susan 6-26-09)

Susan continued to express that she believed she had had great influence on the budget and that was where much of her time had been spent. She talked about some of the things she worked on to influence others regarding the budget and local influences, saying:

I think I influenced the entire community on how to support our kids through these hard times. I really worked at getting buy-in. With 24 students in grades one and two, we asked them to support instructional

aide time until the teachers get used to it (the larger class sizes). Staff shirts – I don't want my PTO paying for staff shirts right now. Resources are people and we've been very creative. We've tackled discipline by putting parents on the playground. We've been bringing resources in to take things off teachers' plates. If teachers know the science lab will do an experiment, then the teachers don't have to spend all that time preparing and getting ready for the experiment. (TH:Susan 6-26-09)

Rather than a tightly woven set of clearly defined mechanisms for doing the work and measuring the outcomes of these principals, there seemed to exist the “loose coupling” that was characterized more accurately by the conflicting dynamic between the bureaucratic authority structures existing in schools and the technical mechanisms operationalized by individuals. Principals oftentimes did not appear to possess much direct influence over what was occurring in classrooms, but did exert authority with teachers and parents that indirectly impacted teaching and learning.

Chapter 10

The Principal's Impression on Each School

At both schools, contemporary policy and public attention were twofold. Much ongoing emphasis was placed on test scores and public accountability, with the added dilemma of cutting school budgets during a severe economic recession. Nevertheless, principals were held with the responsibility of maintaining and enhancing programs, improving instruction, and increasing student achievement. The demands for increased achievement and improved programs within the context of decreasing resources gave rise to the principals' need for some bureaucratic control and compliance. They did so by using their influence within the complex political, social organization of each of these two schools.

Various informal influences within the school organization were placed on the principal that significantly impacted the individuals' behaviors in practice. Influencing the principal was pressure from the district to decrease the district (and therefore school) budgets, improve student test scores, implement the district-wide initiatives of professional learning communities, and effectively operate school-based programs such as special education. Pressure was also put on the principal from parents – both individually and groups – to respond to their demands and needs. Of great impact were the historical conditions that created the existing dynamics of the teaching staff and the

subsequent implications for principals' authority and influence in the current context of budget crisis and teacher layoffs.

In both schools studied, it was sometimes difficult to match the principals' actions with distinctly identifiable formal school goals. Even though the schools had specified written goals in their school plans, their actions seemed to support other movements and agendas. A different set of instrumental goals frequently took center stage. At times the position of the principal seemed well-defined by the actions consistent with what a principal "typically does/should do," but at other times there existed within both schools a loose coupling of hierarchically arranged roles representing an informal, rather than a formal definition of responsibilities and delegation of authority (Bidwell, 2001). This loose coupling meant that teachers had considerable autonomy to define their own goals and determine how to teach. Simply put, principals, although recognized as the formal bureaucratic authority, did not in practice command direct leverage over what went on in individual classrooms.

Authority over Instructional Practices

When looking at the authority that the principal exerts over instructional leadership, the notion of "doing instructional leadership" must be addressed. On multiple occasions, each of the principals studied used the expressions "doing instructional leadership" and "being an instructional leader," but what did each principal really mean when she said it? What was each principal's definition of "doing instructional leadership" as a principal?

Using Murphy's (1990) description of strong instructional leadership, the principals' behaviors with implications for instruction can be effectively demonstrated both directly and indirectly. Both case study principals emphasized activities associated with instruction as categorized by Murphy, but it is important to note that the categories – (a) developing the school mission and goals; (b) coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating curriculum, instruction, and assessment; (c) promoting climate for learning; and (d) creating a supportive work environment – were far from evenly attended to.

Additionally, how these categories were represented in the practice of principaling as seen through the behaviors of principals provided further insight into the effectiveness as measured by the influence the principal exerted with others. It is difficult, and perhaps not wise, to consider these instructional leadership activities presented by Murphy without also considering the principals' use of authority, as they are intertwined in two ways: 1) *what* the principal is trying to influence and 2) *how* the principal influences others in the organization.

Although much of their time was spent outside of classrooms, both principals used constructs of authority to indirectly affect instruction in many ways and for a variety of purposes. As Bidwell claimed, the principal's influence is often indirect, which was the primary way these two principals seemed to be influencing instruction at their schools. Among these indirect paths of influencing instruction were: 1) hiring teachers, 2) fighting to keep good teachers, 3) raising money for programs, 4) keeping parents from interfering with teachers' time spent teaching, 5) keeping other distractions from interfering with teachers' time spent teaching, 6) attending meetings with teachers –

getting input from them about decisions, 7) communicating with other schools/principals about their programs, 8) helping teachers with colleague conflicts and decision-making, 9) making “rules”/guidelines for professional learning communities, and 10) overseeing discipline issues.

Using Murphy’s description of instructional leadership within the context of authority and power, the behaviors of both principals as they relate to instruction can be seen as assertive and dependent on cooperative, collaborative interactions from the ranks of teachers. I organized the data concerning principal behaviors that involved teachers in activities related to instruction, specifically, how they encouraged and influenced teachers to assume leadership responsibilities, and how they used authority structures to influence teachers and parents in other ways. This narrowed the focus of my attention to the various ways in which instructional leadership was portrayed in practice and the influence exerted by principals as demonstrated by their actions. It is important to note that teachers were seen to demonstrate positive changes in their pedagogical practices when they interacted with their principal and engaged in activities jointly with them.

As was illustrated in the daily practice of these two principals, there was a constant conflict between the institutionalized organizational influences of what it means to be the principal and the local contemporary demands on what the principal must do. An interesting dilemma played out before my eyes as principals dealt with competing demands for their time, multiple mandates placed on them by others, and their quest to unify staff around common causes.

The principals of both schools participated within the larger system of the school district, which placed demands on them to increase student achievement/standardized test scores, plan for upcoming drastic budget cuts, prepare for increased class sizes, and reduce teaching staff that meant lay-offs of all of the district's newest teachers. They also participated within the local system of the school which included answering to the demands and needs of teachers and parents. Although the stated goals of the school district and of the principals themselves were to increase student achievement and improve teaching with an unmistakable direction from district administration to implement professional learning communities, the default goal developed into something quite different – deal with catastrophic budget cuts and struggle to save jobs of the school's newest teachers. The interesting dynamic portrayed in the behaviors of principals and teachers, though, was that this default goal, although a top priority of principals, was not necessarily agreed upon by everyone within the school organization. In contrast, some veteran teachers were quite offended by the pressure placed on them to sacrifice part of their own salaries to save the jobs of their less-senior colleagues.

Both principals were faced with situations to which they responded with strength in the face of adversity and were willing to take risks in accomplishing what they believed was right and best given the situation. The two principals did not do this the same way, though. They each used the constructs of authority differently to influence others with the stated intent of saving programs and people, while also moving their school organization forward as would be measured by increased student achievement scores on standardized tests. While principals made great efforts to keep instruction at

the forefront through a focus on implementing structures to support professional learning communities and providing information to teachers regarding best practices involved in that work, there was constant conflict between those efforts and the demands placed on principals to address the urgent issues of the district's budget and the emotional turmoil caused by teacher layoffs.

Susan and Kimberly's determination to work with teachers was apparent as they discussed tough conversations they had experienced with teachers. At the close of the school year, Susan's and Kimberly's dedication to working with teachers on improving instruction was clear as they each described a difficult conversations they had had recently had with teachers.

Susan told me:

I just recently had a difficult conversation with a fourth grade teacher. Her objectives, standards, rigor didn't match the makeup of her class. We (the assistant principal and I) went in at different time of the day, different subjects to see if there was a pattern. We tackled it through student work – what the students were asked to do. She challenged it and defended it. (TH:Susan 5-26-09)

Susan went on to describe how she worked with the assistant principal to help this teacher develop a plan to improve reading instruction in her classroom, specifying non-negotiable terms she had presented this teacher with:

We told her we would like to see kids reading and responding, you modeling, you pulling groups. We weren't seeing any of that. We gave her two non-negotiables. We didn't want to get to a place where we had to demand lesson plans. She's not on cycle this year. We didn't see a lot of change with her...I didn't want her to have a negative influence on any of her colleagues. I sold her on going to fourth grade. I talked her into it.... I gave her the 'what' – timelines, texts, schedules – now I'll work on the 'how' with her. I'll now do third and fourth grade walk throughs with her; then ask her who she would like to observe on her grade level. That

way she won't be jumping right to 'now look at other people on your grade level.' I'll also give her non-negotiables, like 'you can't be at your desk all day on the computer.'

Susan continued on to tell me that another thing she would be working on with this teacher was the problem she was having with colleagues, describing in detail why this teacher was not held in high regard by her colleagues.

She's not popular with the staff. She never shuts up, knows it all. I figured that fourth grade would be better because there are more of them – it's a larger grade level – more teachers. One of my quotes that I did this year was from Larry King, 'I never learned anything while I was talking.' I want her to be a learner. She needs to be a better listener. I'm going to try to help her with that next year. (TH: Susan 6-26-09)

Similarly, Kimberly explained how she "pushed people out of their comfort zone this year – and they did it." "We had the technology, reading, instruction – and we did it. We had new people and a new science garden. The collaboration time meetings we had every Wednesday – they didn't do that before. We've moved a lot of people in a positive direction." Then she added, "No wonder I'm so tired!" When asked to talk about what happens next, Kimberly explained that she hoped next year would be more about instruction in relation to the changes she was hoping to accomplish. "Well, we have the PLC work with our leadership team – that will be different. It was a gripe session when I got here. Next year it will be more about instruction. More about assessments next year." She went on to describe the story that she hopes becomes the story of the Sea Breeze staff. She said the teachers at Sea Breeze still function like a traditional school in many ways, but was looking forward when she put into words the top three things she believes teachers at the school need to do for their work with professional learning communities, "They need to share best practices, meet and collaborate, and work in

vertical teams.” She told me that she had shared this with the superintendent at her end-of-year principal evaluation meeting with him recently. She recapped what she had told him about the difference in her leadership team meeting:

They (leadership team meetings) were business things before. We’ve moved from policy to implementation of programs now. The leadership team meetings used to be things like where they would say, ‘Don’t change my computer lab schedule time’ and now we’re talking more about instruction. (TS: Kimberly 6-09-09)

As she reflected back on the year, Kimberly also seemed to acknowledge the issues that had been going on with veteran teachers on the staff. Relief seemed to be in her voice when she recounted what a seasoned teacher had recently told her:

One of my teachers who’s been around awhile just told me, ‘I’m starting to trust you now.’ Kimberly went on to explain why she thought this was the case. “They’ve seen me react to situations and they know more what I’m about now. It’s about kids, their learning, (paused, then added) and it’s about teachers. What do I need to do next? I need to do more building of staff. More team building activities. Out of this (pointed to chart done by leadership team), I know there’s a feeling of some doing more than others. There’s a perception that we can’t always rely on each other. I need to do more team building and support things. (TS:Kimberly 6-09-09)

Susan’s clear focus, expectation, and follow through presented an indication of why the teachers at High Bluff were making significant gains as a whole toward implementing practices of professional learning communities. At Sea Breeze, Kimberly had approached the implementation strategically, but a bit differently. Rather than have all grade levels begin together as did Susan, Kimberly selected two grade levels that she believed would be the most receptive to the changes and would talk positively about professional learning communities. The two grade levels that she selected to “pilot” the PLC concept were comprised to a great extent of new teachers who Kimberly had hired

that year or the year previous and those two grade levels had worked toward the goal of establishing structures for professional learning communities. Those two grade levels had shown progress with implementing structure to support collaboration and actually work together as teacher teams to discuss how to teach particular standards and lessons. In addition, these two grade levels were excited and eager to share their progress with other grade level teams.

When I asked her what was the most important thing she had done this year as a principal, she mentioned the observation cycle she completed with twenty-nine teachers on cycle, the support she gave to new people, the work she did with the technology committee, the pilot programs with reading, increasing the effectiveness of the Wednesday teacher planning time, and improvement in determining who should be tested for special education assessments. Kimberly expressed pride that now Sea Breeze School has a nice feeling tone toward special education children. She made it a point to tell me that more positive letters came in at the end of the year from parents.

You should have seen it when I got here my first year. I got all sorts of letters that were so negative – rude – about teachers. Now I can count on one hand how many negative letters I got this year. See my folder with the request letters for teachers? They're all really nice – say nice things about the teachers. Now parents say great things like, 'This is a great school.' (TS:Kimberly 6-09-09)

Perhaps most telling was Kimberly's final thought on the year. I went back to see her two weeks after school was finished. As it turned out, the lay-off notices were rescinded by the district just before school let out. Teachers and students were gone, but principals were finishing their year's work and still under contract to be there. When asked if she had anything else she would like to tell me about her role as a principal or

about the school year, she laughed and then sighed, as if tired. At this point she did not seem to want to think too much. This was the first time I actually saw Kimberly pause and not have something to immediately say. She did finally report, “Well, let me tell you, there were days!” I took this as a reference to the harder days. There was a noticeable sarcasm in her voice, but also a twinkle in her eyes. She went on:

But that’s the good thing about summer. I really reflect on what teachers say to me – I really listen to that. You know, a couple of my most vocal teachers during the last week of school were coming up to me about things. Worried about this or that. I told one of them, ‘Everyone needs a vacation. Everyone needs a vacation.’ Then the teachers got their jobs back and people felt a little better. Then it was the last day of school and the year was over. That teacher came in last week looking better already, much happier and in a better mood (school had already been out for teachers for two weeks) and I said to her, ‘See, Sandra, everyone needs a vacation. I told you it would all get better.’ (TS: Kimberly 6-29-09)

I couldn’t help but think she was acknowledging her exhaustion due to the many demands, and thus, the many formal and instrumental goals she had been laboriously working toward throughout the year. And yet, despite the trials of the year, this principal seemed to express a sense of renewed optimism and commitment above all.

Section V: Discussion and Conclusion

Chapter 11

Conclusion

Guiding Conceptual Framework

The Application of Authority Constructs on Instructional Practices

The constant conflict between the institutionalized organizational influences of what it means to be the principal of a school and the local contemporary demands on both principals impacted their behaviors and, specifically, their role in instruction. Findings revealed that internal local sociocultural and micropolitical influences in the two schools carried importance even though the schools appeared to be similar to one another in demographic and socioeconomic factors. Despite the school district's attempts to formally structure the district's schools via goals and directives, distinctions in the ways the two principals responded and behaved were influenced by the informal processes that shaped ideologies and structures within the two different schools. There was not only the need to attend to the formal goals associated with teaching and learning, but also the need to attend to the instrumental goals for the sake of keeping the organization functioning. Principals were continuously responding to multiple constituencies and constantly juggling these competing demands. This dilemma is especially critical given the environment of high stakes testing and accountability.

The contextual time period within which this study occurred took on significance, for this project was situated in the midst of a local and global economic recession. The mood of the local community was agitated and energized by the national and regional

economic downturn, and local socio-cultural influences placed pressure on principals to act and respond to the budget woes facing the school district. While district mandates continued to place importance on test scores increasing at both schools, district mandates also directed principals to drastically decrease spending and to make plans for less teaching staff, fewer support staff, and increased class sizes in the subsequent school year.

In answering to the cultural and political influences, the principals responded in two ways – they used their organizational positioning of the principal within the school and they drew on constructs of authority. The positioning of the principal within the organization and the ways in which the principals operationalized their authority within the school produced *real* as well as *formal* authority, thus impacting their capacity to influence others.

A number of factors affected principals' use of authority and their subsequent influence on others. One such factor was the wide span of control within which the principals operated and the responsibilities each of the two principals oversaw. The many details for which principals were responsible and the many constituencies to whom they had to answer resulted in a wide span of control over which they were forced to oversee. Although many of the duties the principals were involved in were only indirectly related to instruction and attended to instrumental goals that were managerial in nature, the findings indicated that the managerial behaviors of principals and their use of authority structures were important to their effectiveness in influencing others, maintaining order within the organization, and thus indirectly influencing instruction.

The principals' behaviors related to instructional practices between the principal and teachers were both strategic and spontaneous, and they depended greatly on the authority relationship. Sometimes the formal goals were clearly defined, as was the evidence related to implementing strategies for functioning as professional learning communities at each school. Susan's focus on classroom walk through observations and providing subsequent written and oral feedback to teachers also attended to formal goals related to teaching and learning.

Another factor was the sense of urgency in decision-making caused by the many directions each of the principals was pulled in. As a result, there were occasions that principals said they did not have adequate time to be completely involved in activities they expressed to be important. Data in this study illustrates that the principals' time was often spent on tasks aligned with instrumental organizational goals that could be compared those associated with running a large business, rather than in classrooms where teaching and learning were occurring. Planning for and leading meetings for a variety of purposes in response to myriad external and internal demands comprised much of both principals' schedules.

Thus, principals frequently transferred formal authority over instructional decisions to teachers, specifically, those instructional decisions that were primarily related to what happens on a day-to-day basis within the classroom walls. With few exceptions, principals were not called on by teachers themselves to assist them with issues or questions teachers brought forward to them related to their teaching or their students' learning. This dilemma did bring about the positive effect of increasing the

teachers' initiative and incentive to act and to acquire information on their own. As a result of the teachers taking greater initiative and *taking care of business* related to the classroom, the principals' sense of overload was reduced, allowing both principals to focus on the task of responding to the impending budget deficit. The negative impact of the principal relinquishing formal authority over instruction to teachers was the principal's loss of control over and involvement in one of the very things each of the principals said mattered most – their role in instruction. Both principals repeatedly expressed that teachers at their schools needed their help with issues related to pedagogy – that all of their students were not being challenged, that some of their learning needs were not being met – yet the principals' time was not allocated primarily for that purpose. The preoccupation on issues that were only indirectly related to the classroom impacted the outcomes of decisions made at the school, the choice of issues/projects taken on, and the subsequent priorities that emerged by the various sub-groups of teachers. Both principals found themselves repeatedly involved in activities and conversations with teachers that were described by the principals as being relatively inconsequential to the principal and to their primary role of instructional leader.

As the behaviors of the principals unfolded, patterns in their uses of authority emerged. For the purpose of understanding those patterns, the behaviors were categorized into four authority constructs: principal as teacher, principal as learner, principal as advocate, and principal as friend. The two principals leveraged instructional influence by uniquely employing the authority structures which resulted in differing levels of real and formal authority afforded each principal. Each principal employed

these constructs differently, but both used authority to justify why others should listen to them, why others should respect their judgment, and why others should follow their lead. The constructs employed had differing impacts on their influence over others and, more specifically, their influence over instruction.

Susan exerted a combination of legal and real authority, as she used a variety of the four authority structures which resulted in power inflation. Her use of “principal as learner” and “principal as teacher” were most closely tied to issues and situations related to teaching and learning at the school. This particular application of authority kept the focus on formal goals and on her message – students and the staff used that rationale to move forward with their structures and teamwork in professional learning communities.

In describing her principal, one teacher at High Bluff commented:

I keep going back to the hide of an instructional leader. I’ve worked with a few different principals. The people that really love being in the classroom – that’s their passion – I certainly see that in Susan. They’ll come in and do a lesson. I know she has come into different classrooms and done lessons. When the administrators are visible and they come in the classroom and you see them come in the classroom and interact with them. Our first year she knew every student on a first-name basis. She knew every student – they were all hers. I would say even with the larger population we have now she knows almost every student by name.
(TH:Foyle 5-26-09)

Kimberly, on the other hand, predominantly employed “principal as advocate” and “principal as friend,” which did not have the same effect on power inflation as was experienced by Susan. Although she had legal authority and was able to move the organization forward with some of her efforts, she had much less real authority and less influence on instruction. As a whole, her staff remained divided and demonstrated less forward movement on formal goals, namely, the actual implementation of professional

learning communities thus suggesting the principal's deflation of power among at least some of the staff.

Three primary considerations were of utmost importance to the two principals as they influenced instruction – their experience, their expertise, and their ability to work with people. In this study, those three factors were most closely linked with the principal portraying herself as a teacher and a learner, and not as closely linked to the principal portraying herself as an advocate or a friend. Hence, the positive correlation with Susan's role in instruction can be made with the employment of *principal as teacher* and *principal as learner* in instruction. Her experience, expertise, and ability to work with people helped define her role as *principal as teacher* and *principal as learner*.

Simultaneously, goal attainment as it related to the implementation of professional learning communities school-wide can be linked to Susan's ability to work with others.

The continuous dynamic of veteran teachers versus new teachers presented a definite challenge to the principals, and one principal experienced much greater friction with this dynamic than the other. The need to attend to the instrumental goal of managing the unique qualities of the teaching staff at both schools took much of the principals' time and attention. Both schools were comprised of staffs made up of significant numbers of veteran teachers as well as new teachers, but that dichotomy played out very differently in the two schools. The principals responded in distinct ways, which presented significant implications. The variations between the schools could be understood by looking to each school's history, coupled with how the principals used

their authority and influence with the teaching staff. Another even more specific instrumental goal emerged – attending to the schools’ newest teachers.

Kimberly’s top priority was clearly to save the positions of the newest teachers on her staff. According to her, she had placed them in leadership positions and groomed them to be invaluable to the teaching staff and to the school as a whole. As a result, Kimberly was looking out for her students in her estimation by making sure she had hired the very best teachers, placed them in the right positions, and given them the support and training they needed to be successful. She was determined to do anything she had to do to save those positions, and, more specifically, the people attached to those positions. *The message* that people heard was about *the positions and programs*, which in turn impacted students.

Although Susan, too, was concerned about saving her newest teachers’ positions and salvaging programs, when she spoke of the top priorities of the school, she typically tied the focus directly back to the students. Whether it was about student safety or academic success and whether the audience was parents, teachers, or me, Susan continuously spoke through the lens of what she/they needed to do for the students. This included saving programs and keeping the best teachers, but *the message* people consistently heard was about *the students, rather than positions*.

This difference in the principals’ messages to teachers unlocks some understanding about why one staff’s veteran teachers seemed much more threatened by the new teachers and how those dynamics created the ensuing loss of unity and dedication to working together. The High Bluff teachers worked more closely together to

solve the problem of budget cuts, which I argue is a direct result of the principal's primary message and how that message came to life through her use of authority. Susan primarily portrayed herself as *principal as teacher* and *principal as learner*, which sent a strong message that focused on the importance of what students need to be taught and how they learn. Secondly, she also used principal as advocate to push ideas forward and rally parents to generate solutions for budget woes. Very rarely did Susan use principal as friend, and when she did, it was more characteristic of motherly friendliness than a peer friendship.

Kimberly relied primarily on *principal as advocate* and *principal as friend* to rally supporters of her message to save the valuable teachers who had had such a significant impact on the progress they'd made during the past year since she'd hired them. Kimberly's role as advocate started long before I arrived, as was evidenced by the influence she exerted when hiring this group of ten new teachers at her school. She talked about all she went through during the hiring process to make sure she got the teachers she wanted to move this school forward. She talked about the need to bring them (new teachers) on to change the culture of the school – make it more rigorous for students by improving the way teachers were teaching. Kimberly was committed to staying the course, referring to the tremendous effort she had already put in to acquire these new teachers and then train and support them as much as she had. Kimberly used *principal as friend* primarily with these newest teachers for two purposes: to support them during the difficulty of potential job loss and to get them on her side in moving the school forward. This contributed to the dynamic of “two sides” at this school – the side

that was “in with Kimberly” (new teachers) and the side that was “out with Kimberly” (old guard, veteran teachers).

Kimberly also used *principal as advocate* to rally support from the community to think outside the box to raise money and publicly speak up about the cause. Kimberly met frequently with smaller groups of teachers and/or parents. During those meetings, the primary focus was “for the cause,” but she also utilized *principal as teacher* to teach them about factors related to the cause, which frequently included discussions about what they needed to do to increase student achievement. Rarely did Kimberly use *principal as learner*; to her perhaps that could have compromised her role in making sure there was unwavering focus on the mission of saving teachers and the steadfast determination to do so.

Seniority (the notion of veteran teachers possessing authority based on experience) frequently competed with technical proficiency (the notion of lesser experienced principals possessing authority based on knowledge and skill). This presented a challenge for Kimberly among veteran teachers at her school who felt resentful or threatened by those teachers from the newer group, creating a boundary between these two groups. In addition, Kimberly’s relative youth was mentioned by veteran teachers as a factor in her inability to understand the relevance of the history of the school’s teachers and the value that veteran teachers (both existing and retired) added to the school. Comparable factors were mediated by Susan in how she formally and informally included teachers from multiple groups as leaders in the school, as well as by Susan’s relative likeness in age and experience to many of the veteran teachers.

The Organizational Positioning of the Principal and the Significance of the Characteristics of the School Organization

The school as an organization provides the setting in which the myriad demands placed on the principal are illuminated. This phenomenon became a central consideration in my line of inquiry. How the principals responded to the demands coming from both outside and inside influences became of utmost importance. In looking at the school and the hierarchal roles and responsibilities of individuals within, several factors of significance were portrayed. First, the power structures within the school and who possessed power and had influence over others was a significant ingredient. Second, the makeup of the teaching staff was critical, especially their tenure in the district. Third, facts related to the circumstances around the hiring process and who was involved had relevance. Fourth, the leadership possessed not only of the principal, but of those within the teaching ranks was important. Fifth, the role that parents played within the school was considerable. And finally, the history of each of the schools played a considerable part. All of these factors impacted not only the formal goals, but also the instrumental organizational goals at play in the schools.

Personal and organizational experiences and conditions influenced both principals' role conceptions and behaviors. The principals' authority and influence were dependent on both internal and external factors. Internal challenges unique to their schools and organizational conditions impacted how they performed in the role. The positioning of the principal within the school had different affects in both schools. Both principals used their situational positioning within the school to influence relationships

and thus exert authority. This was most noticeable in the principals' relationships with teachers.

This study attempted to show the complexity of the words “instructional leadership” by describing the threads that run through the multiple layers of theory and real-world behaviors, bringing meaning to those two words – instructional leadership. In designing the study I had assumed that the local interaction between particular individuals in a school organization would lead to a unique set of meanings used to guide the behaviors of principals, specifically, as those behaviors relate to instruction. The linkages between school contexts, principals, and educational outcomes at both schools were complex and interdependent, but the behaviors of principals at two different schools were markedly different in distinct ways. Although both principals shared a remarkably similar belief that their primary role was to be an instructional leader, their behaviors showed that how they perceived that role to be enacted was quite different from one another.

Employing the components of my conceptual framework that considered the external and internal influences of the Sea Breeze School and High Bluff School, the features of organizations helped provide understanding to how each of the principals operationalized the role of principal and how their actions were meaningful to them given the context within which they were constructed. Contemplating the institutional aspects of schools and principals helped bring understanding to the similarities in the ways both principals embodied their positions.

The hierarchical structure of the positioning of the principal within the school granted formal authority to principals based on the institutionalized beliefs about the principal. That is, the principal is typically seen as: 1) super-ordinate to teachers, and 2) the holder of power via information the principal possesses and access the principal has to others in power (e.g., district office personnel).

In reality, however, the role of principal is much more complex than its ranking on an organizational chart might suggest. This study demonstrated that complexity in quite profound ways. In each school, the principals were faced with continuously responding to the questions, requests, and needs of teachers, parents, and district office administration. As a result, a set of instrumental goals emerged and those goals drove much of the principals' behaviors. The principal had to respond to the local demands from teachers to treat them a certain way, which depended greatly on whether the teachers were part of the old guard veteran teacher group or the newer teachers who were petrified of losing their contracts and having no employment. The principals also had to respond to the district's budget cuts, specifically, the district administration's direction to principals to plan for a drastic slash in the following year's school site budgets, which was a direct result of the state's economic crisis and less funding to schools.

As a result of the myriad demands placed on the principal from a variety of constituents, the principal's role became somewhat of a hybrid, best described in the situations presented in these two schools as an entrepreneur. One of the key ingredients in the definition of *entrepreneur* is an emphasis on the individual, for the individual "typically starts the enterprise while acting alone." Although continuously surrounded by

people and working with others toward some type of common purpose, it seemed as if the principal in each of these schools was often alone in her adventures.

Both principals were seen as having authority based on their positioning within the hierarchy of the school organization, but their responsibilities were much different than how the role of principal is described in terms of instructional leadership or traditional bureaucratic schooling. As a result of the local internal and external influences, both principals took on the entrepreneurial role. They had to work as leaders to generate enthusiasm for new ideas/new ways to run the school business to save teachers' positions, keep class sizes low, and maintain valued programs.

The principal's ability to influence many decisions was constrained by factors such as teachers' union contracts and district policy in the areas of personnel and budgeting. Much time was spent by both principals on how to influence the teaching staff they would have the following year in the midst of layoffs and drastic budget reductions. Principals were held somewhat powerless in their efforts to retain newer, talented teachers they viewed as valuable. Budget reductions meant larger class sizes were planned for the following year and as a result, fewer teachers would be needed. The teachers' contract afforded bumping rights to more veteran teachers in the district into positions currently occupied by newer teachers at both schools. Principals had no influence or power regarding the teachers who would retain positions and those who would be laid off.

Practical Applications of Theoretical Insights

To sort through and make sense of the influences that affected the role of principal, specifically, the behaviors of individuals who had assumed the role, this study applied sociological theories of organizations and culture theory. This study sought to understand if there are institutionalized indicators of school quality that underpin goals and serve as criteria by which principals are judged and which influence their behavior. I maintain that the internal local influences within the school organization were relevant even within schools that appeared similar to one another.

While Weber's and Parson's views of authority served as an important foundation for the development of my conceptual framework, as I applied my data collection and analysis, I adapted these models in significant ways. First, my unit of analysis was the school principal's actions specifically related to instruction, so I further unfolded the findings according to the leadership functions described as directly related to teaching and learning (Murphy, 1988). Second, I applied the constructs of authority structures as they were used within the context of defined instructional leadership practices, resulting in the following set of authority structures: principal as friend, principal as learner, principal as teacher, and principal as advocate.

Interpretive research is always partial and because the researcher has biases, the researcher is partial to certain views and values. Thus, one can never know another human being. Knowing this, the researcher must have modesty about the research which is important for me to assert at this juncture. Although I speak with authority as to the belief that I have to great extent captured the meaning through the eyes of those I studied,

I also must present these findings with modesty and a cautious nature. Because ethnography is collaborative, there were other people in the community who helped to “co-author” the study by virtue of their participation. I have attempted to identify those people and acknowledge the roles those people - along with me - played in this project.

The qualitative methods used in this interpretive research relied on participant observation, interviews, and document collection as means for gathering data. Each of these was a dilemma-filled activity. The contexts that held meanings and patterns in place and the conflict that occurred as participants accepted or struggled against the patterns (Agar, 1996) were important, yet often difficult to understand. While I could not possibly eliminate the effects I had on the research completely, I have tried to understand them and account for them.

Although my intimate and extensive knowledge of the culture of principals was advantageous having been a principal in the past myself, I was mindful that it could have potentially been a significant obstacle for my research. To quote Agar (1996), “A problem with studying in one’s own society is that the researcher may not be allowed to take on a ‘stranger’ role.” As a former teacher and principal in a different district and, during the time of the study, a director at the district central office in the same district, I took into account that the participants, themselves principals, may have been concerned with who I was and how much I could be trusted. I, too, shared that concern and have attempted to account for it in my analysis and presentation of findings. In the end, I believe I was afforded much access to many situations based on those identity factors.

With that in mind, I have been careful to conceal the identities of all involved in this study.

Faced with the task of acquiring the ability to build trust and acquiring the ability to act competently, it was necessary that I attempted to suspend, for analytic purposes, the assumptions that I might typically take for granted in relations with participants. As a former experienced principal with ideals and values of my own, I was mindful not to go in looking for what I expected to find or not find. One strategy was to maintain a more or less marginal position, which provided access to participant perspectives while also avoiding the dangers of over-rapport. In a sense, I was poised between familiarity and strangeness (Agar, 1996). This involved living simultaneously in two worlds, that of participation and that of research. As researcher, I continuously accounted for the impact I may have had on the research. I looked for the conflict and the taken-for-granted consensus and assumed it existed. For that reason, it was important for me to make the familiar seem strange (Spindler, G. & Spindler, L. 1982). My goal was to get the meaning of the data based on the perspective of the participants, not from my perspective.

Implications:

As the call for principal accountability increases, principals' roles as instructional leaders are affected. If local school districts have the responsibility for demonstrating student progress and subsequently transfer that responsibility to school sites, the authority that principals are afforded is of primary importance. As a result of reform initiatives aimed to hold school personnel more accountable and the added impact of decreasing funding, principals must now assume a much more expanded and perhaps even

“entrepreneurial role.” Not only must principals respond to a set of formal goals related to teaching and learning, but they must also respond to a different, and yet important, set of instrumental organizational goals. This research uncovers keys to this important phenomenon that have not been studied in practice. The external demand for accountability calls for the attempt to systematize efforts in the area of principal evaluation. It also calls on principals to draw on a wide variety of skills, including business skills that could be characterized as entrepreneurial. With the two case studies’ principals, a primary role involved rallying the troops to think creatively; get on the bandwagon and produce ideas to generate revenue.

I have attempted to understand the meanings of the behaviors of principals from their perspective, specifically, what they said their role was and how they performed in their role. Also, I have tried to capture how principals defined their role in instruction and how they were influenced by various contexts of policy and accountability. Prior research suggests principals seem to have an intellectual understanding of the right things to do, yet they appear to lack the fundamental ability to act on this knowledge (Marks & Nance, 2007). This research has attempted to capture why this is so. And in some cases, what was causing the disconnect between what the principal knew to do and what the principal actually did. We know that effective principals are often at the center of curricular and instructional improvements within their schools. What has often been unclear is why and how the principal behaviors vary dramatically from school to school. Although many prior studies have focused on the effectiveness of principals, this study

has examined the beliefs and behaviors of principals within the context of today's situational influences.

Although the principal is faced with the dilemma of being many things to many people, Susan's final sentiments to me at the end of our last conversation together summed up her sentiments when she referred to her "wishful thinking" about what it means to do the job of principal when she said, "What do I always wish it to be? It's about instructional leadership because I'm their teacher. That's what an instructional leader is. When I read that article from the district principals' meeting today about assessment, I read it through the lens of *teacher* (referring to her/the principal being the teacher of teachers). I'm their teacher. My walk-through observations are my formative assessments. Then I give them descriptive feedback. That's my job, to be their teacher." (TH:Susan 6-12-09)

As societal pressures transform the organizational structure of public schools, a more precise language for communicating the meaning of instructional leadership must emerge. Defining roles and responsibilities were consistent with a former organizational model – the bureaucracy. The language and underlying conceptions of new notions of leadership are essential to meet the combined demands of increased accountability and increased teacher and parent participation. Distributed leadership requires people to operate in networks of shared and complementary expertise rather than in hierarchies that have a clearly defined division of labor (Elmore, 2000). Further study will contribute to the understanding of how instructional leadership can be stretched across roles rather than being inherent in one role or another. In addition, more needs to be known about the

structures that schools need to have in place to develop the capacity of individuals and, more specifically, how expertise is stretched among teachers and administrators.

To date, few empirical studies have focused on what influences shape principals' practices. Relatively little research has been done to identify these influences, specifically, the impact of the multiple influences on the principal's role in instruction. This research has illustrated the critical link of principal decision making and the behaviors of principals to improved school performance. This study presented an initial inquiry into the convergence of authority structures and instructional leadership. Additional empirical research will support the efficacy of the use of authority structures by principals to influence teachers and cultivate attainment of formal goals and thus improvement in pedagogical practice.

References

- Agar, M. (1996). *The professional stranger: An informal introduction to ethnography* (2nd ed.). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Agar, M. (1994). *Language shock*. New York, NY: Rowe Collins.
- Aghion, P. & Tirole, J. (1997). Formal and real authority in organizations. *The Journal of Political Economy*, 105(1), 1-29.
- Apple, M. (1996). *Cultural politics and education*. New York: Teacher College Press.
- Bamburg, J. & Andrews, R. (1991). School goals, principals, and achievement. *School effectiveness and school improvement*, 2(3), 175-191.
- Becker, N. (2005). *The organizational anatomy of family-school relationships from the school's perspective: An interpretive study of two urban elementary schools*. Dissertation from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- Biddle, B. (1986). Recent development in role theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 12, 67-92.
- Bidwell, C. (2001). Analyzing schools as organizations: Long-term permanence and short term-change. *Sociology of Education*, 74(Extra Issue), 100-114.
- Bidwell, C. (1965). The school as a formal organization. In J.G. March (Ed.) *Handbook of Organizations* (pp. 972-1022). Chicago: Rand McNally & Company.
- Bidwell, C. (1957). A study in role theory. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 2(2), 163-181.
- Bidwell, C. (1956). Administration and teacher satisfaction. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 37(7), 285-288.
- Blase, J. & Blase, J. (1999). Principals' instructional leadership and teacher development: Teachers' perspectives. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35(3), 349-380.
- Bossert, S., Dwyer, D., & Rowan, B. (1982). The instructional management role of the principal. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 18(3), 34-53.

- Browne-Ferrigno, T. & Muth, R. (2004). Leadership mentoring in clinical practice: Role socialization, professional development, and capacity building. *Education Quarterly*, 40 (4), 468-494.
- Browne-Ferrigno, T. (2003). Becoming a principal: Role conception, initial socialization, role-identity transformation, purposeful engagement. *Education Administration Quarterly*. 39(4), 468-503.
- Collins, R. (1994). *Four sociological traditions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Cotton, K. (2004). Principals and student achievement: What the research says. *Educational Researcher*, 33(9), 33-37.
- Cotton, K. (2003). *The schooling practices that matter most*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Daresh, J. & Male, T. (2000). Crossing the border into leadership: experiences of newly appointed British headteachers and American principals. *Educational Management Leadership*, 28(1), 89-101.
- Drake, T. & Roe, W. (2003). *The principalship*. New York, NY: Macmillan College Publishing Company
- DuFour, R. & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work*. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.
- Edelman, M. (1985). Political language and political reality. *American Political Science Association*, 18(1), 10-19.
- Erickson, F. (2004). *Talk and social theory*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Erickson, F. (1989). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of research on teaching*. 3rd ed. pp. 119-161. NY: Macmillan.
- Erickson, F. (1986). *Qualitative methods in research on teaching*. East Lansing, MI: Institute for Research on Teaching.
- Firestone, W. & Wilson, B. (1989). *Administrative behavior, school SES, and student achievement: A preliminary investigation*. Philadelphia, PA: Research for Better Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 374563).
- Foote, M. (2007) Keeping accountability systems accountable. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 88(5), 359-363.

- Florio-Ruane, S. (2001). *Teacher education and the cultural imagination: Autobiography, conversation, and narrative*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. New York: Basic Books.
- Giddens, A. (1968). Power in the recent writings of Talcott Parsons. *Sociology*, 2(3), 257-272.
- Glasman, N. & Heck, R. (1992). The changing leadership role of the principal: Implications for principal assessment. *Peabody Journal of Education, Part 1*. 68(1), 5-24.
- Glasman, N. (1984). Student achievement and the principal. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 6(3), 283-297.
- Glickman, C. Gordon, S. & Ross-Gordon, J. (1995). *Supervision of instruction: A developmental approach* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Grant, G. (1986). *The world we created at Hamilton High*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gurr, D. (1997). *Principal leadership: What does it do, what does it look like?* Melbourne: Australia: Department of Education Policy and Management, University of Melbourne. <http://www.apcentre.edu.au/respapers/gurrd.html>.
- Hallinger, P., & Murphy, J. (1986). The social context of effective schools. *American Journal of Education*, 94(3), 329-355.
- Hallinger, P., Murphy, M., Weil, M. Mesa, R. & Mitman, A. (1983). Identifying the specific practices, behaviors for principals. *NAASP Bulletin*, 67(463), 83-91.
- Hammersly, M. & Atkinson, P. (1995). Chapter 1. In *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Hausman, C., Crow, G., and Sperry, D. (2000). Portrait of the "ideal principal": Context and self, *National Association of Secondary School Principals*, 84 (617), 5-24.
- Heck, R. (1992). Principals' instructional leadership and school achievement: Implications for the development of policies to improve schools. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 14(1), 21-34.

- Heck, R. & Glasman, N. (1993). Merging evaluation and administration. *Peabody Journal of Education*. 68(2), 132-142.
- Heck, R., Larsen, T., & Marcoulides, G. (1990). Principal leadership and school achievement: Validation of a causal model. *Educational Administration quarterly*, 26(2), 94-125.
- King, A. (2009). Overcoming structure and agency: Talcott Parsons, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the theory of social action. *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 9(2), 260-288.
- Lane, J.J. (Ed.). (1984). *The making of a principal*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Leithwood, K. & Jantzen, D. (2006). Transformational school leadership for large-scale reform: Effects on students, teachers, and their classroom practices. *School Effectiveness and Improvement*. 17(2), 201-227.
- Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D. & Steinbach, R. (1999). *Changing leadership for changing times*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Leithwood, K., Steinbach, R., & Begley, P. (1992). The nature and contribution of socialization experiences to becoming a principal in Canada. In F. W. Parkay & G.E. Hall (Eds.), *Becoming a principal: The challenges of beginning leadership*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Leithwood, K. & Montgomery, D. (1982). The role of the elementary school principal in program improvement. *Review of Educational Research*. 52(3), 309-339.
- Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Marks, H. & Nance, J. (2007). Contexts of accountability under systemic reform: Implications for principal influence on instruction and supervision. *Educational Administration Quarterly*. 43(1), 3-37.
- Marzano, R., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. (2005). *School leadership that works*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Marzano, R., Pickering, D. & Pollock, J. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Metz, M. (2005). *The symbolic uses of the No Child Left Behind Act*. Paper presented at University of California Graduate School of Education. 1-22. University of Madison-Wisconsin.

- Metz, M. (2003, 1986). *Different by Design: The context and character of three magnet schools (3rd ed.)*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Metz, M. (1978). *Classrooms and corridors: The crisis of authority in desegregated secondary schools*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press.
- Meyer, J. (1977). The effects of education as an institution. *The American Journal of Psychology*, 83(1), 55-77.
- Meyer, J. & Rowan, B. (1977). Institutional organizations: Formal structure as myth and ceremony. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(2), 340-363.
- Murphy, J. (1988). Methodological, measurement, and conceptual problems in the study of instructional leadership. In R.S. Lott & P.W. Thurston (Ed.), *Advances in educational administration: Changing perspectives on the school* (Vol. 1, Pt. B, pp. 163-200). Greenwich, CT: JAL.
- Odden, A. (1995). Discovering educational productivity: an organizational approach. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 14(4), 303-305.
- Ortner, S. (1999). *The fate of culture*. Berkley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Packer, J. (2007). *The NEA supports substantial overhaul, not repeal, of NCLB*. Phi Delta Kappan, 89(4), 265-269).
- Page, R. (1991). *Lower track classrooms*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Page, R. & Valli, L. (Eds.) (1990). *Curriculum differentiation: Interpretive studies in U.S. secondary schools*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Page, R. (1987). *Lower-track classes at a college-preparatory high school: A caricature of educational encounters*. In G. & L. Spindler (Eds.), *Interpretive Ethnography of Education: At Home and Abroad*. 447-472. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlborn Associates.
- Parkay, F., Currie, G., & Rhodes, J. (1992), Professional socialization: A longitudinal study of first-time high school principals. *Educational Administration Quarterly*. 23(1), 43 – 75.
- Parkay, F. W. & Hall, G.E., (Eds.). (1992). *Becoming a principal: The challenges of beginning leadership*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

- Parsons, T. (1956). Suggestions for a sociological approach to the theory of organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1(1), 63-85.
- Peabody, R. Perceptions of organizational authority: a comparative analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 6(4), 463-482.
- Percell, C., & Cookson, P. (1982). *The effect of principals in action. The effective principal: A research summary*. Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.
- Perrow, C. (2000). An organizational analysis of organizational theory. *Contemporary Sociology*, 29(3), 469-476.
- Powell, W. & DiMaggio, P. (1991). *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Purkey, S. & Smith, M. (1985). School reform: The district policy implications of the effective schools literature. *The Elementary School Journal*, 85(3), 353-389.
- Purkey, S. & Smith (1982). Ends not means: the policy implications of effective schools research. WI: Wisconsin Center for Educational Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- Rallis, Sharon & Goldring, E. (1993). Beyond the individual assessment of principals: School-based accountability in dynamic schools. New ways to assess the performance of school principals, part 2. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 68(2), 3-23.
- Schmoker, M. (2004, February). Tipping point: From feckless reform to substantive instructional improvement. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 85(6), 424-432.
- Scott, W.R. (2003). *Organizations: Rational, natural, open systems*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Scott, W.R. (1998). The subject is organizations. In *Organizations: Rational, natural, and open systems*, (pp. 3-29). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Smith, W. & Andrews, R. (1989). *Instructional leadership: How principals make a difference*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Spindler, G. & Spindler, L. (1982). *Doing the ethnography of schooling*. NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

- Tyack, D. & Cuban., L. (1995). *Tinkering toward utopia*. Cambridge: Harvard.
- Tyack, D. and Hansot, E. (1982). *Managers of virtue: Public school leadership in America, 1820-1980*. NY: Basic Books
- U.S. Department of Education, National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk*. Washington, DC.
- Waller, W. (1932). *The sociology of teaching*. NY: Wiley.
- Weick, K. (1976). Educational organizations as loosely coupled systems. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 21(1), 1-19.
- Wehlage, G. (1981). The purpose of generalization in field-study research. In T. Popkewitz & Tabachnick (eds.), *A study of schooling*. (pp. 211-225). NY: Praeger.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1973). *The man in the principal's office: An ethnography*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.