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Principal Selection: Leveraging the Behaviors, Skills and Experiences that Inform the Work of Effective School Leaders

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Principal Selection: Leveraging the Behaviors, Skills and Experiences that Inform the Work of Effective School Leaders

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

by

Steven Patrick Richardson

2020

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Principal Selection: Leveraging the Behaviors, Skills and Experiences that Inform the Work of Effective School Leaders

by

Steven Patrick Richardson

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Robert Cooper, Chair

This study examined elementary school principals and the behaviors, skills and experiences that inform second order change responsibilities. These findings were then compared to the district principal selection processes of two case study districts in Southern California. Through individual interviews of 11 elementary principals, the investigator determined the value placed on specific responsibilities that are associated with effective school leadership and the essential factors that allow them to successfully negotiate these activities. Principal selection materials, including interview questions and job descriptions, were then analyzed to determine the extent to which the aforementioned key factors are aligned to the principal selection process. Finally, recommendations were made for the participating Districts to support a more intentional and effective principal selection processes.

The study revealed the following findings. First, prevalent themes emerged from the data in the form of leadership dispositions. Principals employed a variety of leadership dispositions in often synergistic ways to execute key responsibilities associated with second order change. Second, there were common behaviors, skills and traits and that were shared by a large percentage of principals and were used or needed across multiple responsibilities. In terms of the principal selection processes, participating Districts focused largely on first-order change responsibilities and demonstrated limited intention on matching school need to specific principal behaviors and practices. When focusing on second order change responsibilities, very few criteria were associated with the key responsibilities used at the school site, consequently using *fit* as a key determining factor in selecting principals.

The dissertation of Steven Patrick Richardson is approved.

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2020

DEDICATION

To my brilliant wife Florence for her never ending support, encouragement, formatting skills and belief in me. I could not have finished this degree without you. You make me a better father, researcher, principal and person. I love you deeply.

To my four children, Azonde, William, Marley and Kai. You are each amazing, unique and a gift to me. You motivate me to be better and make this world better.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

School leadership matters. An extensive body of literature suggests that the school principal has significant influence over the function, culture and ultimately academic outcomes of a school. Studies reveal that the building principal shapes school culture and climate (Anderson & Management, 1991; Cotton, 2003; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; K. Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Sergiovanni, 2000), orchestrates and aligns resources with a collective vision (Kochamba, 1996; Murphy, 1994; Schmoker, 1999), and positively affects academic achievement (J. Blase & Blase, 2001; Eberts & Stone, 1988; K. A. Leithwood, University of Minnesota. Center for Applied, Educational, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of, & Wallace, 2004). Despite differences in how and to what extent principals' actions affect schools, threaded through the findings of this research is the unequivocal notion that principals are critical to the success of schools and educational outcomes.

Further obscuring the key to effective school leadership is the dynamic nature of the educational landscape, and consequently, the ever-changing demands of the principalship. As the political pendulum swings, so does the focus of research on what effective school leadership looks like (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1994; Hallinger, 2003; Printy, 2003). For example, a dichotomy has emerged in the literature with regard to *instructional* versus *transformational leadership* (Hallinger, 2003). The instructional leadership research was borne out of the school effectiveness movement of the 1980s and early 1990s. This was followed by an interest in transformational leadership as a result of the school restructuring movement (Hallinger, 2003; Printy, 2003). The last 15 years have yielded numerous major studies directly examining instructional and transformational leadership side by side (Hallinger, 2003; Robinson 2008;

Leithwood, 2010; Day 2016; Marks & Printy, 2003). There is a growing consensus that powerful school principals "layer" both transformational and instructional leadership (Day, 2016). This body of research further suggests that increased accountability measures require more agile leaders, who can remain flexible, operate autonomously and lead change in cycles of continuous improvement (Day, 2016; Leithwood, 2017; Taylor & Cava, 2011). These heightened demands require principals to perform what many scholars deem *second order change* (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, 1992). Marzano, Waters and McNulty define second order change as "deep change that alters the system in fundamental ways, offering a dramatic shift in direction, and requiring new ways of thinking and acting" (2005, p. 66). This challenge is akin to Heifitz's notion of adaptive change, whereby systems are confronted with challenges with no known solution (2009). This highlights the complexity of the principalship. Our school leaders must know more than curriculum, instruction and management, they must have the ability to lead school communities through change when facing unprecedented challenges.

Despite the overwhelming evidence underscoring the importance of the principal and the extensive resources available to districts detailing critical principal practices, the selection process has largely been overlooked as an important lever to school improvement. Studies over the last 50 years show that the selection process for principals ranges from haphazard to uneven, at best(Baltzell, Dentler, Abt, & National Institute of, 1983; Baron, 1990; Hooker, 2000; Teitelbaum, Lee, New York. Board of Education. Board of, & United States. Bureau of, 1972; Palmer, 2017; Rammer, 2007). A 2017 national study of principal hiring revealed that only 50% of the districts represented assess research-based responsibilities of prospective principals. Of those that do, less than 10% do so with intention(Palmer, 2017).

Five decades of educational research on principal selection has proven to be largely ignored, or at the very least elusive, at the district level(Palmer, 2018; Rammer, 2007; Schlueter & Walker, 2008). Great variability exists across research-based instruments that examine effective principal leadership criteria. Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity regarding which criteria are valid predictors of principal success. This study examined the underlying skills, behaviors, and experiences that inform the key principal responsibilities impacting second order change. After interviewing 10 principals across two case-study districts to examine the daily principal experience, I analyzed how these two districts select principals and assessed the alignment of these processes with what principals do. From this research, I will provide two participating districts with guidance and data to assist in the identification of effective principals in their respective districts.

Background

How Exactly do Principals Impact Schools?

Years of research underscore the critical role of the principal (J. R. Blase & Blase, 2004; Bossert, 1982; Erickson, 1967; Philip Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Waters, Marzano, McNulty, & Mid-Continent Regional Educational Lab, 2003; Hallinger, 2010; Leithwood, 20017). While few would argue that principals play an insignificant role in schools, the way in which principals affect schools and student achievement has been a large topic of debate. Studies suggest principals affect school culture, marshal resources, champion collective vision and positively impact student achievement. An examination of the literature on principal effectiveness frames the issue of principal selection and sheds light upon the lack of clarity on identifying and hiring strong principals.

Do Principals Impact Student Learning Directly?

The prevailing question in the research on principal effectiveness is: *Do they positively and directly impact students' learning outcomes?* One body of research suggests that principals impact student achievement and learning outcomes in direct and significant ways. According to a seminal study drawing from over 800 teacher interviews, principals do indeed affect student achievement (J. R. Blase & Blase, 2004). These data yield effective practices of instructional leadership, including conducting interviews, providing staff development and developing teacher reflection. Moreover, Blasé and Blasé argue that through effective practices of instructional leadership, principals enhance student learning.

Additional research supports the conclusions of Blasé and Blasé, that effective instructional leadership impacts student learning. In a review of 81 studies on "effective schooling research" and "principal as instructional leader" from the mid-1970s forward, Kathleen Cotton found a positive relationship between principal leadership traits and behaviors and student achievement (Cotton, 2003). Cotton clearly states that principals positively impact student learning, albeit indirectly. She cites 26 principal behaviors associated with affecting student achievement, attitudes and behaviors. Cotton is not alone in her claim that principals indirectly impact student achievement. A 2004 Wallace Foundation study found that principals are second only to classroom teachers in their ability to affect student learning (K. A. Leithwood et al., 2004)

On the other side of this argument, scholars assert that limited empirical evidence demonstrates principals' influence on student learning. Multiple quantitative international researchers have questioned the causal relationships between principal leadership and student outcomes. (Braughton and Riley, 1991; Cantu, 1994; Cheng 1994Miskel, 1982; Rowan, Dwyer

and Bossert, 1982; van d Grift, 1987, 1989, 1990). These studies reveal the effects of principal behaviors on student learning ranging from "weak" to "insignificant". However, in a meta-analysis of quantitative research on principal effectiveness, Hallinger and Heck attribute this opposing view to limited and restricted methodological approaches focusing primarily on the *direct effects* of principal leadership on student outcomes (Hallinger and Heck, 1998). While this research mitigates some questions raised around the nature of principal efficacy, it also points to the complexity in determining to what extent principals affect student learning.

What Type of Principals do We Really Need?

The principal efficacy literature has been dominated by a focus on *instructional* versus *transformational leadership* (Hallinger, 2003; Printy, 2003;Robinson, 2008). Hallinger states that the definitions of these two leadership theories have evolved over the years, yet offers the following criteria to draw distinctions between the two. Instructional leadership can be described as top-down, first order in nature and managerial/transactional, while transformational leadership involves shared decision-making, second order change and relational leadership (2003). Instructional leadership was prevalent in the 1980s as a result of the *school effectiveness movement* (Printy, 2003) and peaked again in the 2000s with heightened school accountability in No Child Left Behind (Hallinger, 2003). Transformational leadership emerged heavily in the 1990s as momentum gathered toward *restructuring* schools in favor of a shared leadership model (Hallinger, 2003; Printy, 2003). Since the turn of the century, a number of researchers have brought forward multiple studies that suggest the integration of the two theories(Hallinger, 2003; Printy, 2003; Robinson, 2008; Leithwood, 2012; Day, 2016). In a 2012 meta-analysis by Leithwood and Sun, the authors discourage "the exclusive use of whole leadership models and test the more specific practices that have emerged as consequential from recent research and

reviews of research" (2012, p. 412). By removing leadership theory from this study and focusing on the principal experience, we can provide a true examination of how principals can creatively and gracefully lead organizations in continuous improvement or second order change.

Meta-analyses provide an opportunity to step outside of the leadership theory debate and take a closer look at what principals do. In Marzano, Waters, et al analysis of 69 studies, they find a significant leadership effect (.25), revealing 21 principal responsibilities that impact student learning (2003). These findings are not bound by leadership theory. Furthermore, the research reveals that 7 of the 21 responsibilities are associated with second order change (see Table 1.1)

The educational system's exposure to political trends of accountability and philosophy further obscures what really counts in a prospective principal. Hallinger suggests, "Leadership models in education are subject to the same faddism that is apparent in other areas of education" (2003, p. 330). At the same time, the perpetual ebbs and flows of the educational system underscore the need for principals to understand systems, managing change and lead in an adaptive context. These behaviors are central to second order change. While the business of supporting and monitoring instruction in the classroom are indeed important to the principalship, remaining poised for second order change is essential.

Table 1.1

Second Order Change Responsibility Definitions

Responsibility	Principal Action
Change Agent	Is willing to challenge and actively challenges the status quo
Flexibility	Adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent
Ideas/Beliefs	Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling
Intellectual Stimulation	Ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
Monitoring/Evaluating	Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning
Optimizer	Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations
Situational Awareness	Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses the information to address current potential problems

The Principal Selection Process

This variability across the literature on principal effectiveness complicates the selection process. According to Rammer, "although similarities exist in the research in terms of broad concepts related to effective principals, little agreement exists with respect to the descriptors used to identify these concepts." (Rammer 2007, p. 68) Over the past 50 years, scholars have clamored for reform on the principal selection process (PSP). The literature suggests that progress has been made in this important process, but "subjective measures still prevail" (Palmer, 2016, p. 15). Efforts have gained little traction, as principal selection continues to be an indiscriminate process running counter to the literature on principal efficacy and selection.

Scholars have long been aware of the ineffective and haphazard PSP pervasive in our educational system. Some of the first findings came out of a study of principal selection in New

York City Schools. The study's three-part objective was to assess past selection procedures, develop new selection criteria and develop new selection processes based on these criteria(Teitelbaum et al., 1972). This comprehensive, quantitative study used a questionnaire to survey: 100 university professors; 75 community planning and development professionals; 31 superintendents; 146 principals; 162 school secretaries; 1,406 teachers across the five boroughs; and, 279 school board members. The survey posed 20 questions using a Likert-scale and two open-ended questions regarding personal and professional characteristics(Teitelbaum et al., 1972). This study identified 33 criteria identified by respondents as critical to the elementary school principalship. Teitelbaum and Lee recommended that selection procedures should be developed and validated by performance indicators of principals. Finally, the authors hoped researchers would replicate the study in other urban districts.

While Teitelbaum's research constructed a list of desirable traits, skills and behaviors, it shed little light on the actual PSP, itself. In 1983, Baltzell and Dentler conducted a seminal study investigating how districts actually chose principals on a national level. Qualitative data revealed that none of the hiring school districts had predetermined selection criteria for prospective principals(Baltzell et al., 1983). A critical finding to add to the literature on principal selection was that districts relied upon the notion of "fit" as the primary determinant for hiring principals. Baltzell and Dentler describe the selection process as a "buddy system" approach to choosing school leaders and underscore the fact that the brightest and ablest are often excluded from pursuing the principalship. Furthermore "fit" is seen as a projection of the status quo, thus inherently working against internal/external, minority and female candidates, as well as those who are not closely aligned with existing philosophies. The extensive research

from Teitelbaum apparently did not awaken districts to the importance of the PSP and research on principal effectiveness.

A decade later, scholars continued the call for principal selection criteria and inclusive screening processes of candidates. In an important study by Mark Anderson, the data revealed that detailed job announcements, geographically far-reaching recruitment, principal selection criteria and a broadly represented screening committee are necessary for identifying and hiring effective school principals(Anderson & Management, 1991). Anderson further argues that predetermined criteria for prospective principal candidates and carefully chosen screening committees composed of students, parents, teachers and administrators, curb the tendency toward a "good ol' boy" network and maintenance of the current system(Anderson & Management, 1991). The research of Anderson and others showed minimal district regard for the importance of principal selection through the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In the two past decades, research points to a heightened awareness of the need to be more strategic about how school principals are hired, yet districts fall short in seeking out principals best prepared to affect change. Three studies have built upon Marzano et al's 21 Responsibilities in their Balanced Leadership Framework as a potential tool for district administrators in the PSP.

In a 2008 statewide study of 73 school districts and 82 new principal hires in Iowa, 53% of districts used selection criteria during the hiring process. However, only 21% of these criteria were consistent with second-order change as determined by a MCREL meta-analysis of effective leadership practice (Schlueter & Walker, 2008; Waters et al., 2003). So despite a marked shift from "fit" toward more tangible selection criteria, school districts continue to under-invest in the PSP(Hooker, 2000). Furthermore, the overwhelming focus on qualities supporting first order

change, or maintenance and reproduction of our current system, will likely yield the same dismal results many of our schools currently experience.

Studies by examining the Balanced Leadership Framework by Rammer (2007) and Palmer (2017), reveal common trends in the PSP. The authors of these studies both found that superintendents value the 21 Responsibilities, however rarely use them with intention when hiring principals. In the absence of predetermined criteria, districts rely upon *fit* to select principals. Palmer concludes that subjectivity is prevalent in the literature, and fit embodies this arbitrary nature of the PSP, which has persisted for decades (2016). Fit, coupled with the focus on first order change criteria, perpetuates the status quo. Consequently, current principal selection practices are unlikely to select school leaders that challenge ineffective practices and disrupt inequitable systems.

The Study

Scholars continue to demand greater focus and intention on the hiring of effective principals. In Brandon Palmer's national study on principal selection, he concludes, "the mechanisms used by school districts to select principals may never have been more important than today, as school principals must navigate the shifting education tides while simultaneously focusing on student achievement within their schools**." (**2017, p.11) Research reveals that notions of effective principal leadership vary widely. This variability has been exacerbated by the ongoing polemics regarding research methods and leadership theory. If scholars cannot agree on what the high leverage skills and behaviors of principals are, then we need to refocus our analysis. Case studies, meta-analyses metrics and checklists are abundant in the literature on principal effectiveness, identifying principal duties and responsibilities associated with improved student learning. However, descriptive studies on the day-to-day experiences of principals are

lacking. Marzano, Waters and McNulty's identification of 21 Responsibilities have shed a great deal of light on the complexities of the principalship, yet still provides an incomplete picture. First, they are primarily based on stakeholder perceptions versus an examination of the principal experience. Secondly, the principal's challenges are complex and underlying each of these responsibilities and activities is behaviors, skills and experiences that inform the ways in which successful principals address these responsibilities. As this study's unit of analysis, I will examine the daily practices of principals that are associated with the 21 Responsibilities and more specifically, second order change. From these data, I will identify the behaviors, skills and experiences that inform principals' actions as they negotiate these activities. This study will answer the following research questions:

1. According to principals, what are the highest leverage second order change responsibilities in which they engage most frequently?
2. What behaviors, skills and experiences are drawn upon to effectively negotiate the critical principal responsibilities that are associated with second order change?

3. Are the participating districts' criteria and processes used in the selection and hiring of principals consistent with, or supportive of the behaviors, skills, traits and experiences revealed in this study?

Research Design

In order to answer these questions, I will use a qualitative approach drawing upon an inductive interview methodology. Based on interview data, I will then determine which of these activities and responsibilities are most important to the daily work of elementary school principals. Next, I will examine principal perceptions of the beliefs, skills and experiences to inform how they effectively tackle regular activities and overcome frequent obstacles. In the second phase, I will develop a comparative document analysis of principal selection materials of the interview questions and job descriptions used by the two case-study districts. These data will

then be examined against the interview findings. From this analysis, principal selection criteria and hiring protocols will be developed to inform future elementary principal recruitment, selection and hiring practices.

Participating Districts

Hamlet Elementary School District and Sunset Unified School District are two small to mid-sized districts in Los Angeles County. Both districts are interested in improving their PSPs. Hamlet and Sunset districts value site autonomy and are focused on closing the achievement gap.

Data Analysis

The principal interviews were analyzed based on transcribed recordings. The transcriptions were analyzed for patterns of principal practices and themes within and across principal responsibilities. The most important, nuanced and time-intensive responsibilities were identified and themes emerged in terms of various leadership dispositions employed to accomplish goals. The transcripts were also combed for specific formative experiences that supported principal efficacy in multiple responsibilities.

In an analysis of the principal selection data, themes emerged under predetermined categories. Principal job descriptors and interview questions were categorized by the MCREL Balanced Leadership Framework's 21 Responsibilities. They were then again categorized by first and second order change responsibilities. These data were aggregated and analyzed alongside the prevalent leadership approaches and responsibilities from Phase I.

Implications

This study had three primary goals. First, I examined the importance of the role of the principal, as it relates to continuous school improvement and second order change. Second, this study extracted the notion of principal effectiveness from the ongoing debate connected to

narrowly defined leadership theory, by focusing on the principal experience, as opposed to stakeholder perceptions, as the unit of analysis. In doing so, we gain deeper insight into the principal experience beyond descriptors traditionally associated with leadership theory. Moreover, this study reveals not only what principals do, but how they do it. Finally, this research will provide a framework for the participating districts connecting the critical behaviors, skills and experiences of prospective principals to the selection process. Having accomplished these objectives may help elevate the issue of what we want in our school leaders and how we can best select them.

CHAPTER 2

Introduction

This study examines the inconsistent practices of principal selection with the goal of clarifying desirable criteria and aligned interview protocols for prospective elementary school principals. Principals are considered by many to have a significant impact on school culture, operations and other mediating factors correlated with student learning (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). However, current and past PSPs are plagued with complacent recruitment; inconsistent hiring processes; and innocuous or unidentified leadership criteria. This uneven treatment has led to an overreliance on *fit* as the key determinant of principal selection (Baltzell & Dentler, 1983; Palmer, 2016). As mentioned in the previous chapter, the variance across the literature on principal effectiveness contributes toward the inconsistencies in principal selection practices.

In order to understand the evolution of principal selection, we must first take a closer look at the literature on principal effectiveness. In this chapter, I will first examine the qualitative research findings on the impact of principals on student learning outcomes. This literature is largely drawn from studies deriving from stakeholder perceptions. The research reveals a high principal impact on student learning through an indirect effect on cultural, operational and instructional aspects of schooling. Next, I will synthesize the quantitative research on principal effectiveness with a focus on the verification of effective practices. I then examine the principal effectiveness meta-analyses literature and situate these findings in the larger discussion of principal efficacy. Finally, I will look at the history of principal selection leading up to its current state. This literature depicts a trend toward increased awareness regarding the importance of principal selection, yet at the same time shows little progress toward

commonly agreed upon criteria for effective school leadership and processes for identifying effective school leaders.

Principal Effectiveness

Little debate exists on the issue of whether or not principals impact schools. However, identification of high leverage activities toward increased student- learning remains elusive in the research. Many studies have been conducted on the daily activities of principals. This research shows principals working largely on disparate functions "in small spurts" throughout the day (Berman, 1982; Kmetz & Willower, 1982; Manasse, 1985). Researchers and practitioners are challenged with identifying which of these activities leverage student learning in a significant way. In the discourse over this topic, two concurrent polemics have surfaced and have continued for decades between quantitative and qualitative researchers; and, instructional versus transformational leadership. Qualitative researchers make a strong and enduring case for principal impact on schools through affecting organizational culture or mediating factors (Leithwood, 2012; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005; Hallinger, 2010). While quantitative researchers have argued that empirical studies demonstrate a questionable link between principal behaviors and student learning outcomes (Witziers, 2003). This section will examine both the direct and indirect relationship between principal behaviors and student learning. I will first examine the qualitative research that suggests principals shape school cultures and consequently affect student achievement. I will then explore the quantitative studies on principal effectiveness and the findings that question the link between principal behaviors and student learning outcomes. Threaded through these findings, the debate between instructional versus transformational leadership emerged. Finally, I will focus on the findings of meta-analyses on this topic and discuss the potential value they bring to the principal selection discussion.

Qualitative Research

The research on school effectiveness broadly supports the argument that administrative leadership makes a difference in schools (Blasé and Blasé, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1995a; Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Hallinger and Heck, 2009; Murphy, 1990; Schlechty, 1990; Waters, 2003). These studies focus on how principals create conditions for affecting change and improved student achievement. The research reveals general functions in which principals engage, toward improving school performance. These leverage points include shaping school culture, unifying organizational vision, marshaling resources and setting instructional goals. Countless scholars have contributed to the literature, detailing behaviors, traits and characteristics that support these high leverage activities.

In addition to the scholarly contributions referenced above, a considerable number of case studies have taken a more detailed examination of how principals impact schools. According to a study drawing from over 800 teacher interviews, principals do indeed affect student achievement (J. R. Blase & Blase, 2004). These data yield effective practices of instructional leadership, including conducting interviews, providing staff development and developing teacher reflection. Moreover, Blasé and Blasé argue that through effective practices of instructional leadership, principals enhance student learning (2004).

Additional research by Blasé and Blasé (2001) concludes that principals who are instructional leaders profoundly impact teachers' classroom behavior, leading to powerful cognitive, affective and behavioral effects on teachers (J. Blase & Blase, 2001). The authors identify three overarching activities including talking with teachers, promoting teachers' professional growth and fostering teacher reflection. Further research suggests that internal

processes such as policies, norms and teaching practices, link to student learning (J. Blase & Blase, 2001).

While considerable evidence points to the influence of principals on schools and learning outcomes, there is disagreement over which leadership styles yield the greatest gains. Some scholars would argue that transformational leadership has the greatest impact on school culture and consequently, student outcomes (Burns, 1978; Sergiovanni, 2000). Others would suggest that this focus on culture and relationships have questionable links to student learning and its effect is largely mediated through teachers. Instructional leadership and organizational leadership have also been the subject of study as related to the principal effect on student learning. In a 2009 study of Miami-Dade principals, findings revealed that organizational leadership had a greater impact on student performance than those behaviors associated with instructional leadership (Horng, Klasik and Loeb, 2009). In this study, researchers used time-use observations and surveys to unpack the relationship between principal behaviors, stakeholder perceptions and student performance. The data show that time spent on *organizational management* activities such as budget, scheduling and school safety, are strongly correlated with student performance. Furthermore, principal behaviors focused on *day-to-day instruction* such as classroom observations, teacher evaluations and coaching have a negligible impact on student learning. When excessive amounts of time are spent on instructional leadership activities, this can even have a negative impact on teacher and parent perceptions. Moreover, time spent observing and supporting teachers can take away time otherwise spent on building a well-functioning school.

The bulk of qualitative research on successful schools and principals reveals a connection between instructional leadership and achievement. However, some studies find this correlation

to be tenuous at best (Buzek, 2004; Hallinger and Heck, 1996; Witziers, 2003). In *The Instructional Management Role of the Principal*, Bossert et al, argue that the literature on school and principal effectiveness fails to account for external influence on principal leadership and uses questionable causal links (Bossert, 1982). This synthesis on instructional leadership constructs a framework that accounts for external factors influencing principal behavior and how this impacts both school climate and instructional organization to affect student learning.

Bossert identifies several principal management behaviors connected to instructional organization or leadership. First, the research identifies the principal's support of time on task using pacing, sequencing and facilitating effective meetings focused on instruction. Secondly, principals demonstrate instructional leadership by effectively controlling class composition, which includes student assignment, learning style; age and gender balance, and behavioral considerations. Additionally, principals demonstrate instructional leadership by organizing teachers in groups or pods to maximize instructional effectiveness (Bossert, 1982). Additional research includes staff development; controlling innovation and experimentation; program monitoring and evaluation as effective forms of instructional leadership (Manasse, 1985). This research highlights the complex relationship between principal actions and student outcomes.

The qualitative research relies heavily upon case studies. These data offer much in terms of effective principal leadership techniques. However, this body of literature is problematic in two significant ways. First, little agreement exists on which principal behaviors yield the greatest results in schools. If scholars cannot agree on what makes an effective principal, it becomes impossible to effectively inform principal selection and training processes. Secondly, critics maintain that these case studies are limited in sample size, the ability to control variables and generalizability (Brewer, 1993; Bridge, 1992; (Eberts & Stone, 1988); Erickson, 1967). This

leads us to the empirical studies of principal effectiveness. Though limited in number, some quantitative studies have corroborated the enduring claim from the case study findings that principals play a large role in educational outcomes.

Quantitative Research

The qualitative research on principal effectiveness largely contends that effective leadership behaviors impact student achievement. Limited quantitative studies have yielded similar findings acknowledging a relationship between principal leadership and student learning outcomes. In a study examining a representative national sample of fourth-graders distributed across nearly 300 schools, researchers corroborated case study findings suggesting principals make a difference in student achievement (Eberts and Stone, 1988). Drawing upon the case studies on the principal effect on student learning, Eberts and Stone measured four variables against student achievement in math using a value-added model of an educational production function. These four variables were active principal leadership, instructional leadership, conflict management and the ability of principals to work well with teachers. The data revealed that conflict resolution and instructional leadership have a strong relationship with student achievement, yet active leadership and the ability to work well with teachers did not. An additional finding was that disagreement between teachers and principals on the principals' ability to manage conflict negatively impacted student achievement (Eberts & Stone, 1988). This research called for additional empirical studies to support the qualitative findings on principal effectiveness.

A second study by Demetri Brewer (1993) confirmed the findings of Eberts and Stone and bolstered the qualitative research on the principals' positive impact on student learning. As with the Eberts and Stone study, Brewer estimates educational production functions, yet uses a

multivariate regression test. In this study of 2,070 high school students, data suggested that principals' impact on student achievement comes through the teacher selection process and instructional goal setting (Brewer, 1993). The findings of both quantitative analyses suggest the need for further exploration in this area.

Some empirical research has examined the effect of the principal on student performance in specific content areas. In a study of Reading First Grants in Florida, researchers found a significant correlation between program implementation variables and increased oral reading fluency among first-grade students (Nettles & Petscher, 2007). This study used the Principal Implementation Questionnaire (PIQ), to examine the impact of 388 principals' reading program implementation on the reading fluency levels of 34,000 first graders. The study revealed that increased principal implementation of "effective reading intervention practices" resulted in a 5 word per minute gain for the overall population (Nettles and Petscher, 2006). Despite the limitations in the scope of this study, this research underscores the notion that principals indeed affect learning outcomes and calls for further empirical studies.

While a modest number of empirical studies support the widely accepted belief of scholars that principals impact student learning outcomes, considerable research questions the nature of these claims. Refuting the findings of Ebert & Stone and Brewer, Elenora Buzek (2004) found no statistically significant correlation between principal behaviors and student achievement in her quantitative study of Texas middle schools (Buzek, 2004). The author used a correlation research design describing the relationship between self-reported variables of middle school principals and the academic achievement of students in their respective schools. A self-administered survey was sent out to all 837 middle school principals in the state of Texas. From this population, 291 returned the survey and 161 met the requirements of the study. This

sample was heterogeneous in terms of race, ethnicity, geographic region and socioeconomic status. Researchers used the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) to provide a profile on how principals perform on ten effective leadership practices. These ten functions are: frame the school goals; communicate the school goals; supervise and evaluate instruction; coordinate the curriculum; monitor student progress; protect instructional time; maintain high visibility; provide incentives for teachers; promote professional development; and, provide incentives for learning (Buzek, 2004, p. 43). Using the Pearson product-moment correlation test, the relationship was described between the PIMRS data and results of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), the standardized achievement test administered to all students in Texas public schools, grades 3-11. From this statistical test, a correlation was produced to estimate the relationship between these two variables. In contrast to the previously cited studies, this research revealed no statistically significant relationship between principal instructional leadership behaviors and the student achievement of their students.

A Hallinger and Heck study disrupts the back and forth regarding the direct versus indirect debate in favor of a reciprocal impact between teachers and principals resulting in improved student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). The study measures the change in leadership versus change in teacher capacity over time. This focus strikes at the heart of second order change by examining the principal impact on teacher capacity and creating a culture of continuous improvement.

Later research further develops the notion that leadership should be examined outside of leadership models and focus on the dynamic aspect of leadership behaviors. Based on the assumption that leaders impact student learning indirectly and in mediated channels, Leithwood et al suggest that leaders influence “flows” along four pathways, including *rational, emotional,*

organizational and *family paths* (2017). The authors go as far as suggesting that these leadership pathways "have impacts on student learning that actually rival the effects of those classroom-level instructional variables that principal leaders are now admonished to focus on but typically feel only moderately able to improve (e.g., specific instructional strategies, teachers' questioning techniques)."(Leithwood, 2017, p. 6). He further argues that it is the charge of the principal to identify and develop conditions to improve pathways. Moreover, we need leaders who can develop cultures of "continuous improvement and to increase the organizational learning capacities of schools." (Leithwood, 2017, p. 4). This is another call for leaders who can affect second order change.

Additional quantitative studies have questioned the extent to which principals directly affect student outcomes. In a meta-analysis of quantitative studies, Hallinger and Heck suggested that principal impact on educational outcomes was largely based on mediated effects through impacting school culture, teacher quality and other contextual factors (1996). This was followed by a comprehensive published review of the research on the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement (1998). The authors synthesized the findings of the research on school effectiveness and improvement from 1980-1995. They concluded that principals have small and indirect effects on student achievement which is mediated through an impact classroom teachers (Hallinger & Heck, 1998).

In their review of 40 quantitative, direct effect studies, Witziers, Bosker and Kruger's found weak correlations between principal leadership and student learning with an effect size below .10 (Witziers, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003). Though lacking empirical data to support a causal relationship, they do support future research that conceptualizes a more "balanced and thoughtful picture of the effective school", considering metrics beyond student achievement

(2003, p.417). These studies highlight the methodological polemic that has obscured our understanding of how and to what extent principals affect student learning outcomes.

A later study by Hallinger and Heck sampled 195 elementary schools to examine both the unidirectional and reciprocal effects of leadership on student learning in the area of mathematics (Heck & Hallinger, 2010). The study found that leaders do indeed affect educational outcomes through reciprocal effects. For example, initial leadership affects teacher capacity, which in turn affects the principal's leadership approach, consequently deepening capacity once again. This cycle of adaptation results in improved student achievement. Though this provides a fertile space for further research, it does add more questions and confusion as to how and why leaders are effective.

Instructional Versus Transformational Leadership

In addition to the question of directionality in principal impact on student learning, the study of instructional and transformational leadership has been central to the literature on principal efficacy (Day, 2016; Hallinger, 2003). Such an immense volume of research in this area has led to a significant number of meta-analyses (Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood, 2012; Printy & Marks, 2003; Robinson, 2008; Day, 2016).. The scholars engaged in these syntheses have arrived at some similar conclusions and suggestions for future research. First, scholars have suggested a deeper examination of the integration of instructional and transformational leadership. Also, there has been a call for researchers to step away from narrowly defined leadership models tied to theory and focus on the identification of effective principal practices and behaviors.

Taking an Integrated Approach

While decades of research had dichotomized instructional and transformational leadership, more recent meta-analyses have suggested that the two models ought to "coexist in an integrated form of leadership" (Printy & Marks, 2003, p.;). This has been a consistent refrain from the literature on principal effectiveness. Hallinger's study suggests that in terms of these prevailing leadership models it is not an *either/or*, but rather dependent upon the confluence of external factors and the local school context (2003). Additionally, the definitions of these two theories are evolving in response to large scale education reform (Hallinger, 2003). Multiple scholars have identified an increasing convergence between transformational and instructional leadership research (Printy, 2003; Leithwood, 2012). Leithwood and Sun (2012) assert that the most widely accepted leadership models share common practices, and further suggest that "more attention by researchers and practitioners needs to be devoted to the impact of specific leadership practices and less to leadership models." (p. 389). A final study by Day reveals that effective principals contribute to student achievement growth, through layering instructional and transformational leadership in different ways, and at different phases of school development (2016). Despite years of debate over these two models, a growing consensus has emerged supporting a convergence of these theories and a calling for an increased focus on the work of the principal.

Looking at the Principal Experience

As scholars gained momentum on the notion that principal effectiveness is not tied to a single theory, the findings in the meta-analyses at hand suggest the integration of instructional and transformational models and also propose a deeper examination of effective principal practices and behaviors. Hallinger departs from the theoretical examination of the principalship

and hones in on promising practices that impact student learning (2010). The study breaks from the direct effects model research and argues that a "reciprocal" relationship between principal behaviors and the dynamic school environment exists. More specifically, it offers a new "empirical description of collaborative leadership and academic capacity building, as mutually reinforcing parallel change processes" (Hallinger, 2010, p. 245). This research provides a model for examining specific behaviors and practices as opposed to a limited examination of a specific leadership model.

Robinson conducted a two-part analysis of 27 studies (2008). It first examines the average effect size of instructional versus transformational leadership. Part two compares the effects of "five inductively derived sets of leadership practices on student outcomes" (Robinson, 2008, p. 635). They found significant effects for leadership *dimensions*, or behaviors, involving promoting and participating in teacher learning and development. Moderate effects were found for the dimensions concerned with goal setting and planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum (Robinson, 2008). Approaching principal efficacy through the lens of impactful behaviors or practices provides clarity to what matters in leadership and how we might select prospective principals.

In Leithwood and Sun's meta-analysis of 79 transformational leadership studies, they identify 11 leadership practices that positively impact school conditions (2012). They further suggest that many effective leadership models share common practices, prompting the call for a focus on practices over models. Moreover, Leithwood proposes "less complex designs that go deeper and focus on a narrower range of practices or associations." (2012, p. 412). This research trend points us toward the meta-analysis and mixed methods approaches.

A Call for Second Order Change

Multiple studies have supported the need for principals to lead change, navigate complex school contexts and buffer the system from external pressures. Leithwood's research has endorsed the notion that "administrators are called on to shed the role of instructional leader, and define new roles, more like those of entrepreneurs" (1992, p. 10). In the context of political pressures exerted upon schools, he identifies the breadth of the principalship. Principals must be "strategic in making their efforts to meet the learning needs of students, develop school conditions or cultures defined as continuous improvement, and to increase the organizational learning capacities of schools." (Leithwood, 2017, p. 4).

From the meta-studies on these leadership models comes a broader definition of "success". Day et al. argue that students' academic progress is necessary, but "insufficient" in defining successful schools (Day, et al. 2016). School success is an aggregate of academic and social outcomes. This requires leadership that can be adaptive and second order in nature (2016).

A Focus on Principal Practices and Behaviors

In a review of 81 studies on "effective schooling research" and "principal as instructional leader" from the mid 1970's forward, Kathleen Cotton (2003) found a positive relationship between instructional leadership behaviors and student achievement. Cotton clearly states that principals positively impact student learning, albeit indirectly. She cites 26 principal behaviors associated with affecting student achievement, attitudes and behaviors. (Cotton, 2003). These behaviors can be grouped into five categories, including establishing a clear focus on student learning; interactions and relationships; school culture; instruction; and, accountability. This study identifies the common principal responsibilities across the literature that impact student

outcomes, providing a general framework to inform principal selection. While providing a more tangible resource for identifying effective principal behaviors, Cotton's study is limited in that it focuses only on instructional leadership coming out of the *effective schooling* research. Another meta-analysis from this period provides an examination of school leadership extracted from the leadership model debate.

This study by Robert Marzano and the Mid-Continental Research for Education and Learning Lab (MCREL) corroborated Cotton's findings, identifying 21 principal responsibilities significantly correlated with student achievement, yet took a broader view of leadership (Marzano, Waters, McNulty, 2005). Additionally, the meta-analysis is untied to leadership theory and is not confined to an examination of the principalship within the narrow construct of instructional versus transformational leadership. Leithwood suggests that Marzano's study "is likely the best known of the recent theory-free approaches."(K. Leithwood & Sun, 2012). The purpose of the study was to identify specific principal behaviors that contribute to student outcomes. Marzano examined 69 studies from 1978-2001. The sample included 2,802 schools including elementary, middle and high schools. The study revealed 21 principal responsibilities related to student learning with a .25 effect size. In addition to finding a significant impact of principals on student learning, this study also provided two useful distinctions. The first is the extraction of principal practices from leadership models and the question of the directional impact mentioned previously in this study. Doing so provides an opportunity to look more broadly at the complexity of the principalship.

The second important distinction is with regard to degrees of change. In addition to identifying 21 responsibilities that impact student learning, Marzano categorizes responsibilities based on their statistical correlation with first and second order change. This area has been

examined within the context of instructional versus transformational leadership. Marzano builds upon Heifetz's notion of adaptive learning and Argyris's work on single and double-loop learning in differentiating the nature and endurance of change, as related to specific leadership behaviors (Argyris, 1976; Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009; Leithwood, 2012). See Figure 2.1 for the distinguishing characteristics of first versus second order change.

Table 2.1

Orders of Change

First order change	**Second order change**
An extension of the past	A break with the past
Within existing paradigms	Outside of existing paradigms
Consistent with prevailing values and norms	Conflicted with prevailing values and norms
Focused	Emergent
Bounded	Unbounded
Incremental	Complex
Linear	Nonlinear
Marginal=	A disturbance to every element of a system
Implemented with existing knowledge & skills	Requires new knowledge and skills to implement
Problem- and solution-oriented	Neither problem- nor solution-oriented
Implemented by experts	Implemented by stakeholders

Marzano's findings reveal that seven (7) of the 21 responsibilities are associated with second order change or deeply transformative change. See Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

Responsibilities and Orders of Change

Responsibilities Associated with Second Order Change	**Definition**
Change Agent	Is willing to and actively challenges the status quo
Flexibility	Adapts leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation & is comfortable with dissent
Optimizer	Inspires and leads new changes and innovations
Intellectual Stimulation	Ensures that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices; and, makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture
Monitoring and Evaluating	Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning
Knowledge of Curriculum and Instruction	Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation
Ideals and Beliefs	Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling

Marzano, et. al., provide some clarity outside the decades' old debates over leadership theory and directionality of principal impact. School districts attempting to devise and implement an effective PSP could use this meta-analysis as a point of departure for identifying recruiting and selecting effective school leaders.

These findings on principal efficacy speak to the variability across the literature on how to what extent principals impact student learning. Moreover, this unwieldy body of literature has

been inconsistently used to determine the types of principals we want and how we select them. A large body of qualitative research points to a relationship between principal behaviors and student learning outcomes. Yet, based on quantitative studies it is unclear which behaviors and functions yield the most leverage, directly or indirectly, toward student learning outcomes. Despite the growing consensus on integrating or layering instructional and transformational leadership, researchers have yet to provide a roadmap for districts as they seek to hire effective principals. This lack of clarity obscures notions of effective leadership however, Marzano's Balanced Leadership Framework does offer more concrete guidance for principal selection.

A History of Principal Selection

The PSP (PSP) is closely linked to the literature on principal effectiveness, wherein volumes of effective school leadership research have brought increased attention to the principalship and the importance of principal selection. Each of the past five decades has produced comprehensive studies or analyses of the principal selection practices (Anderson & Management, 1991; Baltzell et al., 1983; Schlueter & Walker, 2008; Teitelbaum et al., 1972). Beginning with Teitelbaum's exploratory research in New York City Public Schools in the early 1970's, scholars have emphasized the importance of the principal role in schools and moreover, the selection process. However, study after study has painted a portrait of a slow to respond educational system, aware of the principal's significance, yet unwilling or unable to respond effectively to the need for thoughtful selection criteria and processes in hiring principals.

Teitelbaum's study marked the first large-scale effort toward crystallizing an effective PSP. This comprehensive quantitative study used a questionnaire to survey: 100 university professors; 75 community planning and development professionals; 31 superintendents; 92 principals; 146 principals; 162 school secretaries; 1,406 teachers across the five boroughs; and,

279 school board members. The survey posed 20 questions using a Likert-scale and two open-ended questions regarding personal and professional characteristics. This latter method asked participants to list in order the five most important personal and then professional characteristics of a principal (Teitelbaum et al., 1972).

As mentioned in Chapter One, Teitelbaum distilled her data down to 33 characteristics shared by effective principals. Unable to analyze the 20-question survey, the findings were based solely on the two open-ended questions. Teitelbaum's study, while broad in stakeholder perceptions, boiled principal selection down to desired personal and professional characteristics. Though the questionnaire delved into the perceived value of daily activities of a principal, these data were not considered in the report. The unit of analysis was consequently reduced to stakeholder perceptions.

Despite the limitations of the study's findings, these data provided a point of departure for principal selection in New York City Schools and across the country. First, the enormous effort and resources poured into this study spoke to the importance of principal selection, drawing attention to a previously neglected aspect of research and practice. Secondly, the study provided a framework for identifying principal selection criteria. Finally, Teitelbaum was able to offer five recommendations that would ultimately reverberate throughout the principal selection literature for the next forty years. Teitelbaum and Lee's recommend (1) The thirty-three criteria be analyzed and translated into operational definitions; (2) A careful job analysis of the position of elementary principal be conducted; (3) The criteria and the resultant job analysis be utilized for the development of selection procedures; (4) The resulting selection procedures be validated against performance criteria.; (5) The study be replicated in other than large urban centers, in order to evaluate its general application (Teitelbaum et al., 1972).

These recommendations provided a framework for deeper research into this realm. Teitelbaum's impact on the field would be tested a decade later in the research on principal selection by Baltzell and Dentler. This seminal study of principal selection practices revealed selection processes that were neither "merit-based or equity-centered"(Baltzell et al., 1983). The research clearly demonstrated that little had changed since Teitelbaum's study. Based on a qualitative study of 15 districts and 30 schools, none had predetermined principal selection criteria. Consequently, "this lack of criteria specificity opened the way for widespread reliance on localistic notions of 'fit' or 'image'' (Baltzell et al., 1983). A deeper examination of this study clearly points to the pervasive tenets of principal selection through the early 1980s and provides powerful recommendations for future research.

Baltzell and Dentler used a case study approach, providing a descriptive analysis of 15 randomly sampled districts with geographic diversity and a minimum of 10,000 students. The authors focused on four central issues in the PSP, examining to what extent districts considered merit, equity, legitimacy and efficiency. The study did not produce independent criteria for assessing merit; rather they evaluated the extent to which districts "considered" merit as it related to an applicant's ability to increase educational effectiveness. With regard to equity, this pertained to how districts concerned themselves with equalizing access to racial minorities and women. Legitimacy refers to fidelity to protocols and the credibility of selection processes. And finally, the research examined to what extent the selection process was "subordinated to efficiency." For the purpose of this literature review, I will focus on the findings related to merit, legitimacy and efficiency. While issues of equity and access are paramount to leadership selection, this topic goes beyond the scope of this study.

In the presentation of their data, Baltzell and Dentler put forth 5 case studies that embodied their general findings. The research revealed that of the 30 principals examined, principal selection followed no prescribed reasoning or processes and are often conducted in a ”chance-ridden” manner. District decisions to hire principals included merit, “fit”, familiarity and similarity to predecessors and political decisions among others. The overarching theme through the early 1980s is incoherence and reliance on fit. In a study by Tooms, Lugg and Bogotch, the authors argue that “fit is used to perpetuate hegemony and the social construction of what a school leader is (Tooms, Lugg, & Bogotch, 2010). For example, in our Anglo-centric culture, principals have been predominantly white, protestant, heterosexual and male. And those who do not fall within these parameters often find themselves on the outside looking in. The authors further maintain that fit is not solely about adhering to norms, but possessing the capacity to reproduce them.

These data yielded multiple recommendations for the PSP (PSP). The authors do not argue for improved PSPs, rather they highlight opportunities for improvement of PSPs as a means of increasing school effectiveness (Baltzell et al., 1983). Furthermore, they view PSP’s not as a singular best approach, but as a menu of effective practices. Some of these recommendations included 1)Internal assessments of the status quo by districts and school boards determining the degree to which the PSP should be revised; 2)Define clear district objectives to which principal selection criteria can be aligned. 3)PSP should fit locale policies and priorities. 4)Clearly defined prerequisites should create an openness to the selection process for a wide range of candidates. 5)Selection criteria should be clearly defined with predetermined types of evidence. 6)Creation of a legitimate screening process with a broad stakeholder group.(Baltzell et al., 1983).

This research impacted the scholarship on school effectiveness in multiple ways. First, it juxtaposed the critical role of the principal in school effectiveness with the incoherent, haphazard and veiled characteristics of PSPs across the country. Secondly, this study highlighted the PSP default mode of reliance upon "fit". Finally, this research offers not a neatly packaged best practice, but an array of effective approaches tied to school effectiveness. Baltzell and Dentler brought increased attention to the largely ignored PSP realm. Despite this development in scholarship, districts were slow to embrace these findings in the following decade.

In the highly regarded book, *Principals: How to Train, Recruit, Select, Induct and Evaluate Leaders for America's Schoo*ls, Mark Anderson offers a synthesis of the literature on the state of the principalship. Anderson's scope is much broader than the study at hand, yet it offers a current examination of the PSP through 1990 and subsequent recommendations. Anderson is not alone in echoing Baltzell and Dentler's call for predetermined selection criteria and a shift away from over-reliance on "localistic notions of fit"(Anderson & Management, 1991). He suggests that exemplary districts looking to hire for merit, predetermined selection criteria. Anderson offers an example of possible. This list provides a framework, albeit a general one, for screening and selection committees to guide their search.

This relationship between notions of principal effectiveness and the PSP is critically important to, and at the same time problematic for, identifying and hiring effective principals. Districts must know who they define as an effective principal. Moreover, they must agree upon desired characteristics, traits, skills and experiences possessed by prospective principals that will support the ability to effectively do the job. The problem lies in the variance in definitions of principal effectiveness. It would be reasonable to think that the literature on principal

effectiveness would clarify and inform the PSP. However, the variance in the research on principal effectiveness has actually clouded the issues around principal selection.

From Anderson's research, we find overlap with preceding literature on principal selection. The author suggests to school districts that: (1)School boards should develop written policies that explicitly state district goals, the types of schools they would like to foster and the type of principals that should lead them; (2)Create a pool or pipeline of qualified candidates. (3)Develop specific selection criteria. (4)Identify the specific opening in a vacancy announcement. (5)Recruit widely reaching beyond the district's talent pool. (6)Involve a broad base of people in screening and selection processes. (7)Train those on the principal selection committee. (8)Use multiple means of assessment in the interview process. (9)Consider varied sources of information about candidates.

One of the most significant contributions to the literature made by Anderson is the suggestion for the increased role of the school board. Documenting goals intuitively makes sense and perhaps may be the norm for school boards across the country. Yet thinking about "the type" of schools that board members desire and connecting these goals to PSPes further underscores the importance of principal selection. Moreover, this research calls for increased investment and democratization in the PSP including everyone from parents all the way to the school board. The research of Teitelbaum; Baltzell and Dentler; Anderson; and others have contributed to a more thoughtful approach to PSP's in the present day. However, our current state of the PSP can still be largely characterized as rudderless efforts, afterthoughts and a system built to maintain the status quo.

Using the 21 Responsibilities to Build Intention

Two statewide and one national study have been conducted using the Balanced Leadership Framework as a lens through which researchers examined principal selection (Palmer, 2017; Rammer, 2007; Schlueter and Walker, 2008). Each study reveals stakeholder consensus regarding the importance of the 21 Responsibilities while also underscoring the prevalence of subjectivity of the PSP nationally. Schlueter and Walker's study used a content analysis of principal selection materials against the dependent variable (2008). The other two studies were based on stakeholder perceptions of the principalship. These participants included superintendents and human resources administrators. Principal perceptions of the Balanced Leadership Framework were notably absent from these studies. In his 2007 study, Rammer examined the PSP in Wisconsin through a quantitative study using the Balanced Leadership Framework as a guideline. Using a mixed-methods approach, Rammer examined the perceptions of 200 superintendents on the 21 Responsibilities and how they consider these practices when hiring principals. The data reveal that 92% of superintendents agreed or strongly agreed that these research-based responsibilities were important to consider when hiring principals. However, 56% of principals indicated that they did not have specific means of identifying any of the 21 Responsibilities. Even more alarming is the fact that only 1.2% of superintendents had an intentional means for assessing just one (1) of the 21 responsibilities.

In 2008, Schlueter and Walker conducted a statewide study of 73 school districts and 82 new principal hires in Iowa. The purpose of the study was to analyze the hiring criteria for principals in Iowa and determine whether districts sought out leaders likely to affect change. The research design used a content analysis based on MCREL's Balanced Leadership Framework (Schlueter & Walker, 2008; Waters et al., 2003). Of the 82 schools, 33 had written

criteria for hiring principals, 11 had criteria but could not include them in the study and 38 had no criteria at all. The 33 sampling units of criteria were analyzed and coded into three categories. The three categories were experience level, first order change and second order change.

The data yielded several findings relevant to this study. First, the recording units for second-order change were broken down into seven categories based on MCREL's Balanced Leadership Framework's identification of the seven second-order change responsibilities previously identified. Of those categories, the most heavily represented were knowledge of curriculum, instruction and assessment (23%); and, monitoring/ evaluation (23%). These categories were followed up in rank order by ideals/beliefs, intellectual stimulation, optimizer, change agent and flexibility (Schlueter and Walker, 2008). These data would suggest a high degree of value placed on instructional leadership by the sample districts including second-order change. Finally, of the 603 recording units (criterion), 21% were recorded as second-order change (Schlueter). Only 40% of participating districts had written criteria and a low percentage of criteria were associated with second-order change. A lack of criteria increases the likelihood of fit being the prime determinant of principal selection. First order change is critical to school leadership, but it must be combined with the ability to engage in second order change responsibilities as well.

A 2017 national study by Palmer further added to the PSP literature in terms of the 21 Responsibilities (Palmer, 2017). Palmer's mixed-method study surveyed 83 district administrators on their perceptions and use of the 21 Responsibilities. His finding aligned with Rammers (2007), concluding that nearly all administrators found the responsibilities important to the work of the principal, however their intentional, or even passive, use in the PSP was minimal.

Study data reveal that the responsibilities were assessed passively (unintentionally) only 50% of the time and intentionally less than 10% of the time. These studies show promise in the utilization of the 21 Responsibilities as a PSP tool while underscoring the unintentional nature of principal selection.

The relationship between districts' criteria and behaviors that affect significant change is statistically small. These data show a marked increase in districts using written criteria for principal selection. However, the reliance upon fit continues to steer the PSP. Moreover, when only four out of ten districts are intentional about this critical district responsibility, we will most likely experience similar gains to the last forty years.

Summary

Variability of findings and extensive volume in the literature on principal effectiveness has created an obstacle in the PSP. Extensive literature supports the notion that principals are key to school success and improvement. However, the current body of literature is insufficient in supporting the principal selection. First, it is largely reliant on stakeholder perceptions. Secondly, the literature largely examines leadership models rather than providing a descriptive study of what principals do. Finally, those studies that focus on principal responsibilities do not adequately attend to the dynamic role of the principal and the nuanced role of leading change. More specifically, they examine principal behaviors and skills that may be less important and impactful.

While principal selection protocols have emerged, these instruments range, and often contradict one another in identifying desirable principal selection criteria. Furthermore, they are seldom used by superintendents and school boards in their quests to hire school leaders. Consequently, districts have been inconsistent on a national scale in their efforts to identify and

hire effective principals. Those districts that engage in more strategic and thoughtful approaches to this critical process, primarily focus on identifying prospective principals capable or experienced in first order change. Those without clearly identified criteria depend on finding the right fit (Palmer, Kelly, & Mullooly, 2016). This has led to a reliance on fit by principal selection committees. Fit is a socially reproductive quality(Tooms, Lugg, & Bogotch, 2010). Coupled with a focus on first order change criteria, schools are relegated to the same results they have produced over the past several decades.

While a large body of research has identified responsibilities (Marzano, Waters, McNulty, Association for, & Curriculum) and practices (K. Leithwood & Sun, 2012) positively associated with student learning outcomes, there is a gap in the literature on second order change. More specifically, it is unclear how principals navigate the efforts that challenge the status quo and lead to sustainable systemic change. Kenneth Leithwood argues that post No Child Left Behind, schools require school leaders that embrace autonomy and can institutionalize a culture of continuous improvement (K. A. Leithwood et al., 2017). Based on his findings in this meta-analysis, he further suggests that researchers should shift their focus from broad and complex quantitative studies toward deeper examinations of more narrow bands of principal impacts on student learning.

This study moves beyond this body of literature on principal efficacy and leadership theory and focuses on the principal experience. Moreover, it provides a descriptive study that reveals the behaviors, skills, and experiences that inform the high leverage principal responsibilities that support second order change and continuous improvement. In taking an inductive approach, it is possible to develop criteria tied to a unit of analysis positioned closely to principal effectiveness, which is the daily experience of our elementary school principals.

This will then allow a closer look at the high leverage activities in which principals engage contributing to improved student learning. Finally, these findings will build a framework of behaviors, skills, traits and experiences that will inform a coherent and comprehensive PSP.

CHAPTER 3

Overview

As demonstrated in previous chapters, principals positively impact school culture, teacher capacity, collective vision and ultimately, student learning. Despite significant evidence demonstrating principal impact, superintendents and human resources administrators inconsistently align their hiring processes and target leadership criteria to the research. In the cases when hiring criteria for principals are predetermined, there is a disproportionate focus on instructional leadership and first order change responsibilities. When no leadership criteria are identified, districts over-rely upon the highly subjective notion of fit. Both first order change and fit are reproductive factors, perpetuating systems and practices that work for some students and not for others.

Why is such a critical process, the selection and hiring of school principals, proven to be elusive despite volumes of research on principal effectiveness and selection? One reason is that the variability across the principal effectiveness research has made it difficult for districts to identify the leadership behaviors and skills that yield positive results. Also, the majority of this research has been rooted in superintendent, human resource administrator and teacher perceptions. Finally, limited research has delved deeply into the principal experience to examine their perceptions of the work that they do. More specifically, based on the literature, it is unclear what is needed to navigate the complexities of school leadership associated with second order change.

This study answered the following research questions:

1. According to principals, what are the highest leverage second order change responsibilities in which they engage most frequently?

2. What behaviors, skills and experiences are drawn upon to effectively negotiate the critical principal responsibilities that impact learning outcomes?

3. Are the participating districts' criteria and processes used in the selection and hiring of principals consistent with, or supportive of the behaviors, skills, traits and experiences revealed in this study?

In this chapter, I will discuss my study's research design, site, participants and the methods of data collection and analysis.

Research Design and Rationale

The goal of this study was to identify underlying factors that inform effective principal leadership with regard to second order change. Because I sought to gain a deeper understanding of second order change behaviors, which is absent from the literature, I used a qualitative study designed to reveal principals' behaviors behind the critical responsibilities in which they engage. Research strongly suggests that a qualitative study is "richly descriptive" in nature allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of principal behaviors (Merriam, 1998). While this study focused on second order change responsibilities, one of the central questions was with regard to "how" principals negotiate these roles. Beneath each second order change responsibility lies a bank of behaviors and skills that utilized. Patton suggests that qualitative research provides "depth and detail" (Patton, 1980). Supporting the notion of depth, Maxwell explains that qualitative research methodology provides an opportunity for a deeper understanding of the meaning and the context in which participants derive these beliefs and perceptions (Maxwell, 2005).

I conducted in-depth interviews to closely examine how principals effectively tackle these second-order change activities and overcome frequent obstacles. This approach collected each principal's unique experience and perspective. The research is grounded in the principal

experience allowing for themes and trends to emerge from the data. When looking at beliefs, intentions and perceptions, qualitative methods provide a more comprehensive picture of trends and themes (Creswell, 2009). This deep dive into the principal experience yielded themes which captured the nuances and complexities of school leadership. I used a semi-structured, inductive protocol to focus on the behaviors, skills and experiences principals draw upon when engaging in high leverage activities geared toward improved student learning (see Appendix A). This method allowed for flexibility and provided an opportunity to dig deeper into specific behaviors, skills and themes.

Qualitative research is a preferred methodology for explorative studies that require a more inductive approach (Creswell, 2009; Griffee, 2005; Maxwell, 2005). This research does not set out to test an existing theory on principal effectiveness, but rather, to uncover the critical factors that support the work of school leaders. While a quantitative approach, such as a survey, could certainly shed light upon the daily activities of principals, a survey would be limited in its ability to explain the importance of the underlying behaviors, traits, skills and experiences that support the effective engagement of such activities (Cresswell, 2009).

Site and Participants

My target population was elementary principals in two small to mid-sized districts in Los Angeles County. The site, Hamlet Elementary School District and Sunset Unified School District, was selected for three central reasons. 1. Both districts demonstrated an interest in refining their PSP. 2. The size and decentralized structure of these districts afford the principals more control over programmatic and strategic decision-making. 3. While both Districts have made consistent gains in performance on standardized State testing, (California Standards Test

and California Assessment for School Performance and Progress), an achievement gap exists based on race, ethnicity and socio-economic class.

Eleven elementary Principals participated in this study. The experience levels range from two to thirty years of experience. These educators brought a century of experiences and a variety of school contexts ranging from economically disadvantaged to exceptionally wealthy. All principals spent most of their careers in smaller, entrepreneurial districts. Five of the ten principals worked in Title I schools. Figure 3.1 provides a profile of each principal.

Table 3.1

Participant Profiles

Principal Identifier	Years of Experience	Number of Different Schools Worked at as a Principal	TITLE I Designation
TR	32	2	Non Title I
TG	19	1	Non Title I
RW	21	1	Non Title I
NC	2	1	Title I
NA	14	3	Title I
HS	7	1	Non Title I
RM	4	2	Title I
YM	6	1	Title I
OC	11	2	Non Title I
NG	12	2	Title I

Hamlet Elementary School District is a small elementary district composed of seven Title I elementary schools and two middle schools serving approximately 6,000 students. The seven elementary schools provide a public education for transitional kindergarten through fifth-grade students. Hamlet offers a principal sample with a broad range of experience, ranging from two to twenty years. Hamlet was also chosen for its entrepreneurial leadership approach, affording each principal unfettered autonomy in school site decisions. Based on this decentralized

approach, principals are able to draw upon uniquely individualized behaviors, skills, traits and experiences when negotiating the daily activities that principals face.

Sunset Unified School District is a mid-sized district composed of 11 elementary schools, four of which are designated Title I. Sunset serves 11,900 students beginning at pre-kindergarten through adult education. The district resides in a beach community that is diverse in terms of race, ethnicity and socio-economic class. The principals' levels of experience range from five to thirty years of experience. Like Hamlet, Sunset is also characterized by a high degree of collaboration, autonomy, innovative pedagogy and entrepreneurial leadership.

Data Collection

Following IRB approval, I began my recruitment in the spring of 2011. In both Hamlet and Sunset I met with the elementary Principal groups to provide an overview of my study at a bimonthly principal meeting (see Appendix B). After discussing the purpose of the study and the degree of participation involved for participants, I made myself available to answer questions. I then circulated an interest form to which all principals replied. Ten (10) of the 11 principals volunteered to participate in the study.

Interviews were conducted in person in my office, the office of the participating principal or a neutral location. As a point of departure, all participants were asked to define a culture of success at an elementary school. This was followed by participants identifying the most important of the 21 responsibilities and the most important second order change responsibility. Using the interview protocol (Appendix A), I then interviewed the principals using a semi-structured approach. This allowed for flexibility to delve deeper into specific areas while maintaining consistency. The questions were predetermined, but I was not be restricted to this protocol. This semi-structured approach allows the interviewer to delve deeper into responses or

seek clarification (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). Furthermore, Patton suggests that interview guidelines benefit the researcher by creating topic parameters for the interview, developing a common sequence and determining those areas where the researcher will go into the greatest depth (Patton, 1980). This format strengthened the validity of the study while providing enough flexibility to comprehensively address the research questions. Each interview focused on the following topics:

1. Knowledge of Curriculum and Instruction
2. Ideals and Beliefs
3. Monitoring and Evaluation
4. Flexibility
5. Optimizer
6. Change Agent
7. Intellectual Stimulation

The goal of the interviews was to identify the underlying behaviors, skills and experiences that allow principals to successfully execute second order change responsibilities.

The second phase of the study was an interview with a veteran principal. The purpose of this phase was to determine if the findings from the Phase I interviews resonated with this principal, revealed any surprising data or ran contrary to their experience. Prior to the interview, the participant completed a Ranking Survey of the seven second order change responsibilities (Appendix B). At the start, we reviewed the Ranking Survey and engaged in a reflective conversation. Using the interview protocol, we then explored the responsibility of Change Agent, discussing the behaviors, skills and experiences that informed that role. Following this portion of the interview, we took a break allowing the participant to review the a summary of the findings of Phase I (Appendix C). The remainder of the interview was an open discussion, inclusive of resonating ideas, surprises and expansion of the findings.

Phase III of the study involved collecting artifacts that support, inform and comprise the PSPs in both Sunset and Hamlet. Document analysis was used to examine the current PSP for my research site. Merriam defines documents as "a wide range of written, visual and physical material relevant to the study at hand (Merriam, 1998). To examine the selection and hiring process, the study analyzed a range of documents and artifacts that support the identification, interviewing and hiring of prospective elementary principals. This "paper trail" is a significant source of knowledge that can illuminate current programs and practices (Patton, 1980). These resources included job descriptions, interview questions and writing prompts.

Data Analysis Methods

All interviews were recorded using Garage Band on my laptop and a recording device as a back-up. During the interviews I took notes to detail specifics that might not be truly captured in the recording such as body language, facial expressions and emotions. Following the interview, I uploaded the audio file to a transcription service. I then listened to the audio recordings and expanded upon my notes. Following the transcription of the principal interviews, I read each interview transcript twice. During this process, I took additional notes and began noting emerging themes regarding the ways in which principals approached specific behaviors and skills. I referred to these themes as leadership dispositions. I then provided each participant with a copy of their transcript for review. This allowed principals to clarify any comments, add omitted details or include subsequent reflections following the interviews. Knowing this process decreased participant anxiety during the interview, it established a safe culture with goal of yielding deeper, more authentic introspection of the behaviors, skills, traits and experiences that inform their daily work.

Interview Transcript Analysis

I used an open ended coding method with no predetermined themes. Addressing research questions one and two, I started by identifying behaviors, skills and experiences associated with each second order change responsibility. I highlighted each behavior or skill provided by each participant and for each responsibility. After several reviews of the transcripts I began to see emerging themes associated with various leadership dispositions. I color-coded each theme based on nine leadership dispositions and then each theme became a "bucket" in which I sorted behaviors and skills. Finally, I analyzed trends based on behaviors, responsibilities, leadership dispositions and the relationships between all of these factors.

This study was driven by a qualitative interview methodology to add depth to the literature on principal efficacy. While qualitative in nature, I did quantify the incidence of behaviors, skills for each responsibility and the frequency of leadership dispositions used. This allowed me to explore prevalent trends and then connect them to the anecdotal data from the interviews.

Document Analysis

To examine documents, Merriam suggests a form of content analysis, where the investigator is reflexive with the data and at the center of the study (1998). Based on the Phase I and II findings, I analyzed the PSP materials for alignment with what principals do and how they go about it. I first compared job descriptions from various principal openings. I looked for variance in the description across schools based on specific needs. Next, I coded interview questions based on first or second order change. I then assessed the extent to which the interview questions were aligned to the prevalent leadership dispositions, responsibilities and high leverage second order change responsibilities that were revealed in the interviews.

Role Management

My interviewees were limited to principals within the Hamlet and Sunset Districts. Being transparent and maintaining neutrality was critical in this role. For example, if I had approached the study with a clear hypothesis, I might have run into ideological battles with participants or influenced their responses based on my own biases. Furthermore, the inductive interview process put forth a neutral tone, and engendered trust and cooperation among participants.

Two factors helped protect the research design against reactivity. Since I have worked with all participants in a collegial capacity, it was important that I use standard protocols, asking all participants the same questions. Secondly, my interview design and subsequent co-editing of transcripts further reduce potential reactivity by framing the project as an inductive study and using the principal experience as the unit of analysis. This cast the participants as the experts, with the intent of diminishing anxiety over potential responses.

Credibility

A detailed description of the data collection methods and sample selection will be critical to building credibility with the reader. With regard to data collection, providing a list of questions and documents subject to content analysis shed light on the quality of the research design. This transparency engendered trust and credibility for the research design and the findings. A description of steps taken to reduce bias was also important. For example, a discussion on inductive research presupposes an initially neutral stance. This helped establish credibility in the study.

Ethical Considerations

Interviews present ethical considerations in providing both benefits and risks to participants (Merriam, 1998). In terms of risks, interviewees may say something they later regret, reflect upon things in a negative light, feel their privacy has been invaded or experience embarrassment. To mitigate these risks, I provided a detailed overview so principals could determine whether or not they wanted to participate. The co-editing process also protected participants from possible negative feelings or regrets. Finally, this study focused on the principal behaviors that positively impacted student learning. This positive focus reduced risk compared to a study focusing on deficits or failure.

CHAPTER 4

Purpose of the Study

School leadership is both highly complex and contextual. Beneath the critical responsibilities of the principal, lie a broad bank of behaviors, skills and experiences that inform the work. Despite an increased intentionality by school districts in the selection and hiring of principals, it is still a deeply subjective process. In this chapter, I answer my research questions by sharing major findings. The research questions that guided this study are:

1. According to principals, what are the highest leverage second order change responsibilities in which they engage most frequently?
2. Based on principal perceptions and research-based principal responsibilities, what behaviors, skills or experiences are drawn upon to effectively negotiate these high leverage activities related to second-order change?

3. Are the participating districts' current criteria and processes used in the selection and hiring of principals consistent with, or supportive of the behaviors, skills, traits and experiences revealed in this study?

Through in-depth interviews, this qualitative study investigated the daily experience of 11 principals and the often intangible practices and dispositions that enable the successful negotiation of second order change responsibilities. The following findings detailed what I learned.

Finding # 1

The principal interviews focused on the behaviors, skills and experiences used to successfully negotiate the second order change responsibilities of the principal. According to the qualitative interviews conducted, 365 behaviors and 108 skills inform the critical second order change responsibilities of the principals participating in the study, totaling 473 distinct responses.

Marzano's meta-analysis identifies the impactful responsibilities of the principal through a broadly defined lens. However, it does not provide a glimpse into the nature and negotiation of

these principal duties. As Rammer argued, the research provides a broader concept of leadership (2007). Based on the aforementioned meta-analysis, we largely understand the "what" of the work. What Marzano's research does not detail, is the "how". In my analysis of the qualitative interview data, nine *leadership dispositions* emerged revealing the way or style in which these educators operate in their professional capacity. Principal responses were categorized under a single disposition. Listed below are criteria that define each disposition and the frequency of each (see Figure 4.1).

Based on the incidence of themed responses, *open/reflective, strategic, supportive* and *interpersonal dispositions* surfaced with the greatest frequency. Figure 4.2 provides the distribution of each leadership disposition by second order change responsibility.

This table shows that the most highly represented leadership dispositions were used across all seven second order change responsibilities. While the open/reflective disposition was represented to a greater degree for the responsibilities with the highest number of responses, it was proportionately represented across all seven responsibilities. The same can be said for the strategic, supportive and interpersonal dispositions.

In order to assess to what extent these four dispositions were representative across the principal sample, I analyzed the frequency of each disposition by participant (see Figure 4.3).

Table 4.1

Leadership Disposition Definitions

Leadership Disposition	Definition	Distinct Responses
Open/Reflective	Adaptable, flexible and willingness to consider multiple perspectives.	88
Strategic	Strategic, data-driven or research based.	76
Supportive	Provides resources, coaches and performs any task needed.	71
Interpersonal	Active listening, relationship based, empathetic understanding of others' motivations.	70
Pragmatic	Judicious, focused and systematic.	42
Collaborative	Inclusive, invitational and has a focus on building and aligning teams.	40
Moral/Inspirational	Focused on values, equity and motivating others.	38
Communicative	Disseminates information proactively.	26
Risk Taking	Comfortable with conflict and making controversial decisions.	22

Table 4.2

Total of Leadership Dispositions for Each Second Order Change Responsibility

	Optimizer	Knowledge of Curriculum and Instruction	Ideals and Beliefs	Change Agent	Intellectual Stimulation	Monitoring and Evaluation	Flexibility	Total
Collaboration	12	3	4	13	2	2	4	40
Communication	3	0	1	16	1	3	2	26
Strategic	23	4	8	22	10	6	3	76
Interpersonal	25	5	5	16	3	6	10	70
Moral/Inspirational	9	2	11	10	1	3	2	38
Open/Reflective	21	8	8	19	12	7	13	88
Pragmatic	1	5	2	3	7	7	17	42
Risk Taking	10	1	2	6	2	0	1	22
Supportive	17	4	4	26	2	6	12	71
Total	121	32	45	131	40	40	64	473

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Table 4.3

Leadership Disposition Distribution by Participant

	Collab.	Interper.	Support.	Risk Taking	Commun.	Moral Insp.	Open Reflective	Strategic	Pragmatic
TR	6	6	11	2	4	2	5	9	4
TG	6	12	7	2	2	9	12	7	1
RW	2	8	3	1	2	4	11	7	4
HS	2	5	7	1	3	4	8	5	4
YM	2	6	10	2	2	3	8	12	5
RM	2	4	4	2	5	3	5	3	8
OC	10	11	9	3	2	3	9	8	2
NA	3	8	6	1	2	4	11	10	3
NG	5	4	2	6	2	3	12	8	6
NC	2	6	12	2	2	3	7	7	5
Total	40	70	71	22	26	38	88	76	42

In the case of the four most numerically significant leadership dispositions (open/reflective, interpersonal, strategic and supportive), a proportionate distribution existed across the ten participants. Figure 4.3 illustrates that a significant majority of principals heavily relied upon these four dispositions. These data are consistent with the aggregate data suggesting the importance and prevalence of the open/reflective, interpersonal, supportive and strategic dispositions. Below are the specific findings for each of these four leadership dispositions.

Open/Reflective

Leading With Humility Toward a Collective Vision

This disposition emerged in the interviews to a greater extent than any of the others. When looking at the prevalence of this disposition across second order responsibilities, it figured largely in all seven. Examples of the open/reflective disposition included: continuously improving thinking and practice; developing awareness with regard to vision; demonstrating vulnerability; and deferring to the group. One participant captures the embodiment of these behaviors in expressing humility and trust in his staff.

> When people have ideas that are better than your ideas as a leader, to be flexible. You have to be willing to go in the direction that's best for your organization and your vision.

According to the principal responses, an open/reflective dispostion figured prominently in creating conditions for collaboration and clarifying leadership vision. No principals described change efforts as working in isolation or imposing their will upon a staff. According to the data, change is brokered through coalition building and inclusive decision making. Modeling awareness, openness and fallibility positioned the principal as a lead learner versus a top down director of change. Principals spoke often of transparency balanced with "hearing people out", being an "open book with my staff" and "being a better listener".

Understanding your own leadership vision was also connected to an open and reflective leadership disposition. The data reveal that knowing yourself as a leader is critical to support. It provides parameters on how far and in which directions you are willing to extend support. For example, one principal identified *capacity building* as a core value of her leadership. So when a group of teachers asked for an assembly to support pro-social behaviors of kids, she said no.

> This showed me that our staff lacked some of the capacity necessary to support kids emotional growth. So instead of bringing in someone to "fix" a problem, we as a staff found some professional development to support all staff to support kids in this way.

Supporting kids social and emotional learning is critical. The principal felt that the teachers' idea was great in spirit, but needed to connect this important issue to a core value and broadly expanded the school's capacity to support kids in a meaningful and sustainable way.

Strategic Thinking

Six of the seven second order change responsibilities relied heavily upon strategic thinking skills for successful execution of that responsibility. Some of these skills included: Identifying opportunities for new thinking; gauging and understanding constituent positions, tendencies and motivations; problem solving; connecting evidence to research and achievement data; understanding the culture of your school; and synthesizing information based on multiple data sources.

Hiring

Many principals discussed the importance of hiring strong teachers as a lever to change of time. Participants indicated that this is not as simple as finding the candidate with the most experience and most thoughtful interview responses.

> I surveyed the scene and I realized it's sort of a chess game. I was looking at some moves three and four years down the line of what I thought would probably happen.

A second principal took this notion a bit further and detailed the "gray" nature of the principalship with regard to selecting the best possible candidate.

> You look at tendencies, how you look at patterns, is what we do, we should be doing. And to look at the obvious, like a good answer in an interview, is not necessarily getting the right person.
>
> Anyone could sound good. I'm looking underneath and seeing, is there passion, is there intelligence, is there a sense of is this a linear teacher, is this a more worldly type teacher, do I need a certain type in that grade level, do I need flexibility, do I need strength, do I need experience, do I need young enthusiasm? And those are in my unofficial computer brain clicking all the time in an interview.

This type of analysis is predicated on the ability to understand the core values of a school's culture and identify both its strengths and needs.

Getting the Lay of the Land

All ten principals referenced the importance of assessing school culture and building upon its strengths. This can mean adjusting your own tendencies as a leader.

> I work with a staff now that's very independent. They've had five principals in the last seven years. Five different principals in the last seven years or for the last nine years, something like that. So as a group they've learned to not be dependent on that kind of leadership, but to be able to make their school move forward as a teacher core. So to walk in with a leadership style that is principal-centric, really is not utilizing or building on the strengths of that staff.
>
> So my challenge is to walk in with a style of leadership that will lead us to our organization's goal, but will build on the teacher-centric orientation of the staff.

Some of our principals worked in one place for a long time. For those who had held multiple positions, they indicated that this ability to analyze and assess organization needs quickly was identified as an essential practice.

The Chess Game

Principals reported engaging in strategic plans as a lever for change. The descriptors ranged from "supportive" to "Machiavellian". Key to making these leadership moves was the ability to see change in phases of acceptance.

> I think at times it's a chess game, but it's without the manipulation. I'm not attempting to get my way in some sneaky way where someone feels like they've had participation. I have to decide if it's something I really want. But I have to be prepared that the no may come before a yes. And so I've learned that "no's" are okay if they can lead to a yes down the line. And sometimes if you take it the wrong tack, your "no" is gonna be a final. And you don't want to paint yourself in a corner where the "no" is final. You want to be able to have an out.

This type of strategic thinking doesn't rely just upon a collective vision and what's best for kids. According to principals, implementing change on the fly in schools is often met with "blow back". So developing an implementation strategy is key. Knowing what motivates your teacher constituency is helpful.

> I know what people like and how they'll move forward. But I have this ability to see what you like, what stirs you, in a way. I know it's manipulative and I know that I'm noting that data of what you like so I can use it later. But you're putting it out there. Why shouldn't I use it? And if it gets you to move, 'cause moving and changing is always scary.

Sometimes this "manipulation" is a give and take.

> So you want them to believe that you're on their side. That's why enabling initially is so important. 'Of course you can extend your leave', 'Go to the doctor appointment. Taking care of yourself is the most important.' This helps when you need support on the big things.

These data reveal that in an effort to achieve transformational change, principals sometimes engage in transactional behaviors. However, building trusting relationships through an interpersonal disposition was mentioned repeatedly as the primary vehicle for change.

Interpersonal

Seventy of the 473 total responses can be characterized as interpersonal. Some examples of prevalent interpersonal behaviors include: being a strong listener; building coalitions; navigating the often political landscape of the school; and the ability to finesse difficult situations.

Go Slow to Go Fast

All 10 principals described the importance of listening. One principal offered an early lesson she learned after a stalled implementation of a writers' workshop model. "I need to do much better at listening and letting those kinds of things happen instead of trying to jump in." Another principal shared a lesson she had learned early on. "Listen longer than you'd like to", she said. She clarified that this was not a platitude, but a measure of restraint. These principals put forth a caution for leaders, expressing that the risk of moving too fast without truly understanding possible concerns and barriers to change can ultimately damage an initiative.

In another example a principal clarified that listening is not a reactive process, but rather a connecting of principal leadership values to organizational values and culture.

> You have to go in as a listener, as an observer, as a person that is inclusive, but still rooted in what you know good practice to be. When you're going into a new culture you have to honor the history of that culture. 'Cause those people have been at that school. They have a relationship with the school. They have a relationship with the families. They have a relationship with the rituals of that school. And honor those relationships.

Principals argued that failing to invest in the practice of listening can have significant consequences relative to moving the organization forward. This underscores the importance of actively creating space for stakeholders to be heard. Eight (8) of the 10 participants held regular "coffee with the principal" or some variation of an informal town hall meeting. A small school principal described her process.

> I started doing these coffees with the principal, where I actually would tell parents, you invite me to your living room, invite some neighbors, and I'll come over, feed me some coffee cake and coffee, and we'll talk.And in the course of a year I did 10 of them. And I probably got about 100 people. And the school wasn't that big to start with, so maybe there were 300 in the school. So I saw about a third of the people, which is much greater than the surveys that came back. And I got a better feel of what people were thinking. So I guess it's sort of like the politicians that go out on the stump and just start having these town hall meetings and all.

According to principal anecdotes, interpersonal experiences develop a foundation upon which change is built and brokered. Additionally, through authentic relationships principals were able to identify proper forms of support for their constituents.

Supportive

The Push, Pull and Pause of Principal Support

Supportive behaviors, skills and traits were also highly represented in the high leverage activities of principals. Seventy-one of the total 473 behaviors and skills were classified as supportive. Some of these behaviors included, but are not limited to, buffering teachers from external pressures; practicing empathy; providing meaningful professional development; and supporting risk taking. Sometimes these behaviors were combined to create a network of support for teachers.

> But there may be, for instance, just in our district this last few weeks, there was a memo that came out about these grade level meetings. And they wanted to start them immediately. And progress reports and parent conferences are coming up. And it just didn't feel right to say to a grade level, we're gonna stress you a little more. So I guess the time not to do things is to look at the big picture of what's out there. And you gotta have a read of where your troops are. And in this case I think our troops would have been – they wouldn't have gotten as much out of the workshop by forcing it early.

> I still think even right before Christmas is gonna be a stress for some teachers who think of the holidays as a hard time 'cause you have so much to do with your kids. So that may be a little tough too. But there's never a good time. But I would say that there are times that aren't great to do certain things and may not be the place to bring something up. But you have to be able to read your staff or your different people.

This example shows empathy and a humanization of their staff. Knowing that a professional development function was abruptly implemented and near the holidays triggered a protective instinct by the principal. In this case, rescheduling a professional development implementation illustrates support through a buffering strategy. Another principal promoted work life balance.

> I support people. I tell them family is important. I tell them balance is important. Sense of humor. And take time for yourself. Literally I would run some people or try to run them out of a school at night because they want to work there every night 'til 9 and 10:00 at night.

In other situations, support comes through pushing teachers to stretch themselves, often outside of their comfort zones.

> That is not at all part of our school culture. My second year there I got 'em to the point where we were around writing workshop and there was some really good conversations with a majority of the faculty and we paired with another school. It was going places and people felt good about it. But that is not part of our school culture.
>
> And writing workshop and building a coalition of teachers that are interested in that. Enough so that when we came to the collegial study teams, they wanted to use that as their area of focus. I helped to push them towards this.
>
> Well we had a couple leader teachers that would never ever and told me flat out they would never lead our faculty in this work. But that they were living it and working it and leading every day in their classroom. So I took that energy and that desire from those people that they told me that they were invigorated by, and then brought them as part of the team.
>
> And they knew that they were doing it. And some were even curious to go visit them. And the teacher said, yes that's fine, open the door. But they weren't willing to stand in front of the other 40 percent of the faculty that's like this. That kind of thing I think they were shut down early on at our school. Because that is also part of the non-practice at our school for teachers to stand up and talk about their successes in the classroom. I'm trying to push this to a more asset based model of thinking about our kids, about our practice, and about what we do, including myself.

This example demonstrated the principal building on teacher strengths and pushing them beyond their comfort zone. The principal not only pushed growth in teachers, but stretching the limitations of school culture and building organizational capacity. Expanding on this notion, all

principals tied their support to vision. This was not indiscriminate support on teacher passion projects, rather a process of getting the "lay of the land" and connecting the strengths of the school to a larger vision.

> I feel an obligation to anyone that I work with to make sure that whatever I'm doing is linked to the vision and purpose for kids. Because that way we're getting along and we're linked within the context of that purpose.

According to principal anecdotes, being anchored to a collective vision helps to determine when to push, when to pull and when to protect the school from external pressures.

Finding #2

This study centrally focused on seven of Marzano's responsibilities that were associated with second-order change. Based on the number of responses, the principals emphasized the importance of two specific responsibilities, which include *change agent,* and *optimizer*. These two responsibilities accounted for nearly 60% of all responses. It is also notable that four (4) of the 10 principals named change agent as the most important role overall and six (6) of the 10 identified it as the most important second order change when asked at the onset of the interview process (see Appendix B). Based on the frequency of responses and importance principals assigned to the role of change agent, I will present findings on this responsibility and how leadership dispositions are used synergistically to negotiate this responsibility.

Change Agent

Change agent is associated with challenging, often disrupting current systems and practices. Three leadership dispositions figured prominently in the role of change agent. The findings reveal the convergence of communication, support and interpersonal dispositions. Moreover, these dispositions were not used in isolation but rather in concert. Based on these data, change is best brokered through supportive and communicative modalities; connected to a

strategic vision or relevant data; yet is built upon relationships. This would suggest that principals do not rely upon a moral platform or purely intellectual rationalizations, but rather support and articulate clear expectations through change. The principal experiences below underscore this notion.

Taking a moral high ground is not enough. The first experience illustrates a change effort using an appeal to the moral compass of the school.

> The way that the system of the school, the way that it was set up, was that if you did something wrong, had a cell phone, you get minutes of detention. And what I was noticing was that there were consistently kids who were always up in the 500 minute range. And if you hit 500 minutes, or whatever the threshold was, you couldn't go on field trips, you couldn't do this, you couldn't do that, blah blah blah. And I really had a fundamental belief issue with that because there was no way that if you messed up, you could dig yourself out of that hole.
>
> And I just thought that went against what my belief about education and our job with kids. It's not to punish. It is to teach them how to behave better. Teach them that if they behave better, they will have better results. And you couldn't reset the detention minutes until the semester. And you've lost 'em for four months. And I still, it just gets me. Just that system. But that just really passionate about it, and so I was able to start that, it was the conversation about starting over every six weeks. And it was only at the sixth grade. The seventh and eighth grade could not hear it, would not hear it. But that was really my goal. I don't know where they are now. I can't –
> Every day that they have an amazing day in the three classes where there's the biggest issue, they can earn back five minutes. Let's try it. And so it wasn't entirely successful, but it definitely opened the conversation for people to see.
>
> And I had a teacher flat out tell me that. That this is not what I want to do. I need to be in a private school, I need to be where there's high expectations, I'm expected to lower my expectations all the time.

This experience represented an appeal to moral compass and the intellectualization of the problem. Change occurred neither through the identification of flawed logic in the management system nor in its obvious inequities. This approach gathered limited initial support and did not sustain change over time.

Realizing change through shared leadership. In a second anecdote, a principal attempted to change or eliminate a long-standing practice. Similar to the example above, she assumed that grade level staff would arrive at the same conclusion she did with regard to the value of the practice. Frustrated with a longstanding "waste of time" practiced by a particular teacher, she decided to end the activity through collegial pressure. So rather than articulate her dissatisfaction and give a directive, she allowed it to continue only if the entire grade level agreed to take part in it.

> They decided that they would do it. And so then I thought, oh God, just exactly what I didn't want them to choose. Why did I leave it in their hands? [LAUGHTER] Damn it. Or darn it…So you might not have got your – you had to balance it with, gosh I'd just like to chop the head off of it, but I'm gonna see if they'll chop the head off it. They didn't, but they improved it.
>
> But I also think that they saw what a waste of time it was after they did it once. So I think that there'll be stronger opposition next time.

While distributing leadership and decision-making led to modification of the entrenched tradition, it fell short of second order change. In this example, the teachers default mode of supporting their colleagues was revealed. The principal did not frame her desired outcome with compelling and relevant data. Teachers focused their efforts on supporting a trusted colleague as opposed to examining and evaluating a current instructional practice.

Leading change with communication and support. A third example shows an approach that was implemented through communication and support. After identifying historical achievement discrepancies between students based on teacher assignment, this principal sought to implement aligned practice in reading and writing instruction.

> And I said to my staff at the end of last year, I have not given any of you a *thou shalt*, but I'm going to. And it was that we were all going to be using the same philosophy and the same structure for teaching reading and writing. And I was going to support them. I was going to make sure that they had the PD. But we were all going to be doing that. So as

> difficult as that is for me, that's what I did because I knew that that's what needed to be done.

In this instance, the principal used a rare mandate to affect change, but only when wrapped in support and clearly communicated. Despite being top down, the detailing of supportive measures and clear communication pushed the principals efforts to align instruction forward.

It is also important to know that this principal had long standing relationships with many teachers on staff. He had taught alongside them for years and then supported all of them when working at the district office.

In a final example, another principal framed a problem with relevant data and stressed support and clear communication. Following a significant dip in Academic Performance Index (API) score, this principal included the staff in the examination of the problem and development of the solution.

> When our API dropped two years ago, it dropped about 40 points, down to like 820. And that was alarming to me because that was like my third year there and I thought, oh my God, this is serious, what happened? So we worked on it as a staff. We looked at the data, we poured over it, we involved Ed Services, we did everything we possibly could. And what it came down to was that the teachers had to make some changes. The changes I supported were through our professional developments that we came up with. And our API rebounded...

Employing an inclusive decision making strategy did not deemphasize the urgency of the work. The principal felt that it galvanized the staff and harnessed collective energy, which led to changes in practice and subsequent academic gains.

The first two failed examples of change above demonstrate how an overreliance on this type of intellectualism can have limited to no effect on a school change efforts. Both principals took a reasonable course of direction, however they failed to employ a complete strategy for initiating change. According to principals, the intellectual skills relied upon in the latter two

cases were characterized by knowing which data to use, how to frame it and selecting a protocol staff would use to analyze such data. Furthermore, in the final two successful cases, both principals were clear about two critical ideas. First, a problem existed that would necessitate change. And secondly, teachers would receive whatever support necessary in making these changes. All of these principals were able to determine where changes needed to be made. However, those who intellectually strategized the process and followed up with clear communication and support were successful in their efforts. Additionally, principal actions show that these three dispositions are not only important, but used in tandem they provide a possible recipe for challenging old systems that no longer serve their communities well.

Finding #3

The data further reveal high leverage practices that were referenced by a majority of principals across four or more responsibilities. Six out of ten principals mentioned all five of the following practices: nurturing relationships and creating teams; building upon teacher strengths and expertise; engaging in courageous conversations; tying decisions to core values; and modeling continuous improvement. Some of these behaviors have been mentioned earlier in my presentation of the findings. For example, tying decisions to core values was illustrated in the presentation of findings on the role of change agent. In this section I will reveal the findings related to how principals build high performing teams, model continuous improvement, engage in courageous conversations and build upon teacher strengths and expertise.

Building High Performing Teams

A majority of principals (6 of 10) reported that building teams was essential to leading sustainable initiatives. In these responses, participants mentioned the need for putting ego aside and positioning staff "in the right seat on the bus". When asked about how she pushes through

impasse when adopting new initiatives, one principal responded, "You have to put ego aside. As long as the job gets done. It's more of just letting the credit go where it needs to go in order for things to happen." In fact no participating principals voiced the need to be right or the one with all of the answers. One site leader remarked that "if this group, with 80 years or more experience can't solve this problem, then no one can." These examples emphasized the collective expertise of teacher groups over the individual "superstar". Every principal interview identified an example of a team leading through change.

An additional nuance of building high performing teams was having staff in the right position or role. When asked about how she makes teacher grade level assignments, one principal said,

> So I think a big piece was looking at how teams were created. Do we have the right people in the right team, looking at strengths and weaknesses with teams. And also giving them specific processes to use, to learn how to work together.

More than one principal identified a scenario where they moved an individual from one team to another, resulting in better performance by both newly constituted teams.

Modeling Continuous Improvement

Other school leaders described their supportive behaviors in more active ways. The following anecdote reveals a principal's involvement in a new instructional program in her kindergarten.

> So for example when we had the Catching Readers, my K teachers asked "why are you here?" I want to learn with you. It's very important because I know again going back to working with a team, if I don't know what the weaknesses of the program are, I know where the complaints are gonna be. But if I was there first hand with them to hear about the program, to learn with them, then I can hopefully address them more.

This is another example of employing multiple dispositions to accomplish a responsibility. In this case, the principal used a combination of three dispositions. He was supportive,

interpersonal and collaborative. He certainly could have gained an academic understanding of the curriculum by studying on his own. But this was not an intellectual exercise. Had he just become fluent in this initiative independently, he then would have missed an opportunity to build relationships and provide direct support for his teachers proactively. This behavior modeled the importance of the collaboration that would be critical to a coherent implementation of this initiative. This once again speaks to the importance of converging dispositions.

A third principal detailed an experience where upper grade students adopted a middle school structure, rotating students from one teacher to another for each subject. This involved significant involvement on the principal's part.

> Part of the plan, and I sat down and I was part of the planning, 'cause I wanted to see what this was gonna look like. And I spent hours with the teachers as well, listening and putting in an opinion, but allowing them to take ownership.
>
> So for the first five weeks of school, I opened a classroom and I was part of the rotation. I taught for five hours a day. And I was giving my marching orders 'cause I went to the planning meetings. And I'd be doing language arts or I'd be doing whatever to support them. So I had first hand knowledge to see how it went. I saw the kids every day because I was with each of those groups from 8:30 in the morning 'til 2:00 in the afternoon. And I still am on call, at least maybe two or three times since I stopped about a month ago. I have to drop everything and go into my classroom because one of the teachers is not there. So I have to be ready to go at any time.
>
> So I had my lesson plans, I just grab it and go. I think that that gives me additional – what's the right word, credibility, with the teachers that I am willing to do their job right along with them and that I have not forgotten my roots.

Support can come in a variety of ways. It this situation, it was modeled through humility and a willingness to do whatever job is needed.

Courageous Conversations

For this study, I define a *courageous conversation* as a discussion that a leader must have, but would rather not due to possible conflicting beliefs or dispositions. This could be a disciplinary

issue; a request or directive for someone to do something additional on top of their current responsibilities; or a request for someone to change a behavior. It could also be associated with trying something new. Principals (10/10) indicated that they engage in these difficult conversations regularly when engaging in all seven second order change responsibilities. Participants discussed a variety of strategies and dispositions for framing and conducting these conversations. A principal discussed a three tiered approach to difficult conversations, beginning with an assumption of positive intention and an appeal to common values.

> I know all of you want to do the best for our kids, I know you're all invested in our community. What are your thoughts about this? What are your hopes for our kids? It is really just trying to get some common ground first. What do we want for our kids?

According to all principal participants, tying initiatives to shared core values was important to contextualizing the work. This behavior set an "inclusive" and invitational" tone. This step was followed by a connection to relevant data, evidence or sometimes research.

> And once we got to the point, we were able to kind of say, yes we want our kids to succeed. We want our kids to be prepared. Then we looked at the data more closely. Okay, so how can we use this to help us make some changes here. So it was a lot of, again, finesse, a lot of conversations but around evidence.

All principals discussed the importance of being data-driven. Another participant echoed this sentiment when stating that she, "reference(s) what's grounding that conviction not just for me personally, but from other places and other evidence." Five participants discussed proactive support through change as well.

> It wasn't just, oh, you need to work on this. It was kind of getting them there, knowing where I wanted to go, knowing that I wanted the end result to be, you're gonna get coaching, you're gonna get support, you're gonna be subbed out to work on a common lesson plan, you're gonna work all these things. I couldn't present it that way.

Some principals used a reflective protocol to broach difficult topics. When one teacher on a principal's second grade team had consistently lower assessment data, one principal utilized a more inclusive problem solving session.

> Privately the conversation was not about what happened. It was about "why" this happened with the data. 'So why do you guys think it turned out that way? I would really go in for why do you think it turned out that way? What are some things that could you change anything?'

A second example of this collaborative and reflective approach was shared by a principal when discussing a training in which he had participated.

> I had great experiences. When CSLA was first being developed by the county, I went through that training back in the '80s. And it was very powerful because it was inclusive and we dealt with what later became known as reflective conversation.

This anecdote further supports the notion of being invitational versus antagonistic.

Building Upon Teacher Strengths

Six of the ten principals discussed the importance of considering and building upon teacher strengths when engaged in change initiatives. Principals discussed this in the context of staff leading professional development; building teams with a variety of different strengths and incentivizing teachers to try new things; and finally, looking at organizational strengths versus individual strengths and expertise. One principal discussed the implementation of the readers and writers workshop. This school had teachers operating in "silos'' using different literacy programs across the lower grades. Consequently, they were getting different results. So when determining a more coherent literacy program for all teachers, this looked at who was getting the best results.

> But it was something that a couple of my second grade teachers were already doing. And the more I learned about it, the more it made sense to me. And the fact that it is standards based balanced literacy.

This principal had the option to use different programs. But she expressed that by "tapping into my own teachers expertise", she gained greater buy-in.

Two principals used a "middle school" teaming structure where staff could "teach to their strengths". The motivation was to get the best out of their teachers while reinforcing the importance of collaborative teams. One principal started with "the willing" when building complimentary teams.

> I'm looking at it as you find the strengths of a teacher and you exploit them where I could. If there were teachers open to teaming, instead of making it a demand at a grade level team, I would encourage people to a team. I would find ways of making it something that would be supported. And you work on those strengths, and then you transfer to the areas that were weaker later. So every teacher has strengths and you find them. If there was a case where two teachers, one hated math and one loved math, there was an obvious thing you could look to do. It wouldn't necessarily be perfect, but it would help a situation.

In this case, the teacher built complimentary teams to maximize strengths and build high performing teams. He added that when other teachers saw the success of the established teams, "they wanted in."

A third principal used the same teaming strategy and discussed a time when they did not agree with the suggested teaming assignments proposed by teachers.

> The three of them asked me to team. Teacher A would teach this and B that. But they wanted Teacher C to teach math. And I was like no way. She consistently had the worst math scores in the upper grades. I had to have a discussion with her about my concerns. I eventually coached her down to kinder where she started her career. She later appreciated this because she was much more successful. And happy. And she's still there.

This example showed a leader who was in tune with the strengths of each teacher. The last example reframes the notion of building upon strengths by looking at organizational versus individual capacity. When asked if teacher strengths impact curriculum and program selection, this principal used a more macro lens.

> Well I think it's more, I really – last year when I read *Strength Finders* last summer, and then this summer the staff did a lot of work with that. It's the idea that each individual is not gonna have all those areas as strengths. But as an organization are you gonna have it. And so can we be very mindful of which of those pieces we each bring, and know it about each other, and make sure that things are covered in our team. And that it's not that I have to give feedback to an individual that's just gonna be working against the grain. How much struggle do I want to create in someone that has so much flow in so many other ways?

When asked if they would take a path that didn't align to teacher strengths, another principal commented "Well I feel like I'm going down that road right now [LAUGHTER]. It's a challenge, but I'm gonna continue to go down this road because I feel like we need to not only strengthen the tier one, but the tier two."

Finding #4

Personal and professional experiences figured prominently in how principals negotiated the seven responsibilities associated with second order change. While teaching experiences and administrative training programs were mentioned, there were other factors that played more significant roles in impacting who these principals were as leaders and how they approached their work. These experiences include their role as a parent, their role in their nuclear family growing up and formative experiences that gave them "thick skin". This section will explore each of these findings.

Being a Parent

Nine of the ten principals are parents. The parental experience was referenced multiple times in the interviews as a contributing factor to leadership style. When asked if being a parent made them a better principal, nine out of nine principals said yes. Two themes emerged throughout the interviews. First, half of the principals identified that being a principal helped them understand that not everything was in their locus of control.

> It certainly humbled me. Wow, did it ever humble me. I've always come up with humble as the first word that I think of to describe what parenting feels like. And also the realization that you don't have control over the things that you think you have control of, the things you think you should have control of, the things you would like to have control of. You just don't have it.

One principal described this as liberating, knowing that they didn't have to "micro-manage" every little detail. Four principals expressed the sentiment that this allowed them to "escape the minutiae" and see the job from "thirty thousand feet". One principal referred to a colleague who was not a parent and felt they had to have their hands in everything.

> By trying to get everything done, she accomplished nothing. Well not nothing. But you know. She couldn't get to the big things and the important things.

According to principals, learning to focus on the high leverage items over the granular details helped many of the principals engage in change and continuous improvement.

A second finding from the parental role was a heightened sense of empathy for kids and families.

> I am a parent of three, elementary, middle, and high school. So I feel like having all that perspective definitely helps with my job. Because when someone has a concern or a question or whatever it may be, I can relate to it and I can say I really do. 'Cause I know it.

A second principal expanded on the notion of empathy when sitting with parents and having difficult discussions during conferences.

> After our son was born, there was never a time that I wouldn't for a second think, I could be sitting on the other side of the table, and someone over there could be delivering this message to me. Now how can I deliver this message in a way that's gonna show loving and caring.

Four of the ten principals added that it gave them greater credibility. One participant explained that parents of his students were more likely to listen to him. He stated that he could "give them messages they have to receive. And they were more likely to receive it."

Only one principal brought up discipline explicitly, however the sentiment of greater empathy and care of students was mentioned multiple times. In this example, a veteran principal discussed a transformation of how he approached disciplinary issues after he became a father.

> But I think how I dealt with certain kids when I was upset, once she was born and I realized that I would never want some idiot talking to my kid the way I just talked to this boy or girl. It really humbled me and it made me realize, whoa, I gotta – so on that end, I think having that child made me see things that I hadn't seen before. Because I couldn't relate. Maybe I should have been able to relate. I just didn't. But once I could picture my own daughter being the one in front of me, if I talked to her that way, I would have destroyed her.

This type of empathy was described as "parent eyes" by one participant. According to multiple principals, they approached the job and human interactions with greater compassion.

The Family Role

Beyond parenting, the role principals played in their own families often shaped the way in which they led their organizations and supported their constituents. Those who were middle children described themselves as observant and diplomatic.

> Because I was a middle child. So I got to see these things that were happening with my older brother with my parents. And I got to watch that interaction and study it. So I spent a lot of time studying their interactions and making decisions about why did this go wrong, why did that go right, that sort of thing, so I could navigate myself.

This principal added that he uses this skill daily and would likely not be successful avoiding metaphorical landmines without this skill. Another principal described growing up as a middle child being focused on "making sense" of the things happening around him. She expressed that her middle position gave her access to everyone. So she observed and developed the ability to understand motives and intentions. She further added that having this skill already developed prior to her first administrative position benefitted her greatly.

Principals who were the middle children also had a natural affinity for keeping the peace. Principals expressed an inherent "desire for peace", their natural role of "peacekeeper" and an often conflict averse disposition. For some principals, engaging in difficult conversations has been a growth area. One principal response on having courageous conversations illustrates the difficulty in being conflict averse.

> But I'm getting better. And I'm not talking as much. I make a very concerted effort when I'm talking to a couple of people on my campus when I'm having a conversation that I'm bringing up something that's very uncomfortable for me and probably for them. I just lay it out there and let it sit. And that's so hard. 'Cause I want to justify it and explain why this is so important and why they should listen to me and why I'm right. But I let it sit. I'm not always successful at that.

Another "middle child" principal, reframed conflict as dissonance that is not by nature antagonistic. This principal explained, "So there are ways of challenging the status quo that are not necessarily conflictual, but are more invitational and more dialogical." This principal explained that his conflict averse approach can be "converted to a more inclusive leadership style".

Battle Scars

All of the study's participants spoke to the often harsh criticism received from their constituencies. The need for developing "thick skin" was pervasive. Seven of the ten principal participants had a formative experience that "toughened" them up prior to assuming the principal position. While there was a great variance in the nature of these experiences, these principals felt they were consequently better prepared for the job due to the challenges they endured. One participant explained, "It's just getting battered all the time. You have to have enough self-confidence that it doesn't destroy your sense of self." Some of these experiences that "toughened them up" occurred prior to becoming principals and some while on the job in a more

of a “trial by fire” scenario. Irrespective of when it happened, all principals reported that it was a critical element of their development and training.

One principal shared personal trials during her childhood and how they toughened her up. She discussed her unconventional childhood how those experiences impacted her personality.

> So I would say weird things that [LAUGHTER] it wasn’t acceptable…So I developed thick skin because I was an unusual character growing up in a very – at the time when I was growing up, you knew what was cool, and I knew that I wasn’t that. So if you could put up with that.

For this principal, these childhood and adolescent experiences allowed her to feel comfortable on the outside looking in. She added that the principalship is an isolating experience where you often feel like the outsider. Another veteran principal reflected on a current situation where a parent was complaining about her to the school board. She explained that it was difficult, but gets easier to compartmentalize over time.

> I think the first time, just like the first time you’re called a bitch or racist it hurts. I’m thinking when I was a preschool teacher and I was called a racist, and I was like 22 years old. [LAUGHTER] And I cried and I cried. I was like – and then I think, how many times have I been called that since. Now I kind of laugh about that. Oh yeah. It’s like so I think sometimes your skin does get tougher with things that happen repeatedly. But there are always new situations that you encounter, it is hard for me to deal with.

While these assaults became easier to deal with , no principals felt that they were completely immune to the harm inflicted on the job.

Two principals attributed different professional development opportunities to their ability to give and receive tough messages. One had participated in a very prescriptive literacy program which included “frequent critiques”.

> Wow. It was phenomenal. It was one of the hardest things I’ve ever done. Teaching behind a two way mirror with a live student, with the parents on one side, with a full class of peers, with a professor that’s pulling apart your lesson, every minute is daunting. But boy it makes you grow. So, but it’s all about growing as an educator, as a professional. And sometimes growing is a little painful.

This principal had this experience well before she was an administrator and felt strongly that it was her best preparation for the emotional stress that comes with the job. The second principal concurred and noted that his experience was invaluable to having courageous conversations.

Some principals shared professional experiences as teachers in which they were forced to "grow up" quickly. One principal described how a politically controversial curriculum led to media scrutiny and public "conflagration".

> When I was a teacher, I had two defining moments in my career. Both were first amendment issues. Both ended up with major controversies and lots of publicity. It taught me a lot. And so I think those things shaped me when I became a – not knowing I'd be a principal, but when I became a principal nothing bothered me 'cause I'd been through hell and it was okay, I landed on my feet. So there you go.

This principal reported that this experience provided some inadvertent training that later served him well in the principal's chair.

Not all principals gained these valuable experiences prior to becoming principals. Two of our principals developed their thick skin on the job. Both faced very public controversies.

> I think more good came out of that situation because it was trial by fire immediately. I don't know if you've ever been in a situation where a camera and a reporter is standing in your face, and you know it's gonna be on the 5:00 news in one hour. [LAUGHTER] That really tested our mettle because over the next year we continued to receive hate mail, threats, and so forth. Almost immediately, within 12 hours death threats were coming to me. And if that – that in itself is a very sobering thing. And to have it go nationwide in six hours, the east coast was calling us that evening wanting to interview us on Larry King Live and all that. It was incredible how it just went.
>
> And I had to account for my decision and I had to back it up. So it told me first of all, don't make a decision unless you know all the pieces. You need to know, you gotta have your ducks in a row. Because if you make a decision just out of your gut, it'll bite you. It will bite you. And that probably was a really good lesson in administration. It sobered me up.

This situation brought awareness to the scrutiny that is placed on the principal. A second principal faced a scandal resulting in an employee being terminated. He was "deeply affected"

by this incident knowing that something had happened under his leadership. "It took me a long time to come back from that. It's part of me now. It will always be part of me.", he explained. This anecdote demonstrates the emotional tax paid by principals and the need to endure great pressure.

Finding #4

In this section I performed a document analysis of district resources related to the PSP. Both districts relied primarily on recruitment and panel interviews when selecting new principals. These documents included sample principal interview questions, writing prompts and job descriptions. The relevant district documents were analyzed through four lenses which were connected to my findings from the principal interviews and my research questions. First, I examined the prevalence and distribution of first versus second order change activities revealed by the principal interview questions. Secondly, I identified which second order responsibilities are given the greatest weight in the interview process. Next, I assessed the representation of the enduring and high leverage behaviors, skills and experiences that were used across multiple responsibilities. Finally, I identified which interview questions and job description criteria referenced specific leadership dispositions.

First Versus Second Order Change Responsibilities

The first finding describes the distribution of first and second order change responsibilities addressed in the interview questions. While this is not directly connected to a specific research question, it is connected to one of the purposes of the study. Moreover, it examines districts' hiring practices that would contribute to either protecting the status quo via first order change or seek out systemic transformations through second order change. I examined 132 questions across the two participating districts. Seaside had 59 different questions

and Hamlet 73 different questions. Of these questions, 41 or 31% of the questions focused on second order change responsibilities. Seaside had 34% of their questions aligned to second order change responsibilities and Hamlet at a slightly lower rate, 29%. The next section will show the distribution of questions for each second order responsibility.

On which Responsibilities did the Hiring Protocols Focus?

Of the questions focusing on second order change responsibilities, 66% of the second order change responsibility questions were related to Ideals and beliefs and Knowledge of Curriculum and Instruction alone made. No principals identified either of these responsibilities as the most important. In terms of Ideals and Beliefs, some examples would include:

- What do you believe is the role of the principal in the improvement of classroom instruction and student achievement?
- Please describe in specific detail the qualities and characteristics you would look for in selecting a new teacher?
- Please describe key factors that are essential ingredients in a school to help make it exemplary.

Each of these questions reveals philosophical views and values.

Knowledge of Curriculum and Instruction was threaded through 34% of the questions aligned to second order change. These questions included examples such as:

- When you walk into a classroom, how do you know you are in the presence of an outstanding teacher?
- Describe a successful program for students with special educational needs and how it should be implemented in the context of the overall school program.
- In order to have an outstanding academic program, what strategies or innovative practices would you encourage in order to have standards an integral part of the curriculum?

These questions reveal a principal candidate's technical expertise as it relates to what constitutes a strong instructional program.

Based on principal interviews change agent was identified, more than any other responsibility, as the most important. When examining the interview questions in Seaside and Hamlet Districts, zero questions focused on the role of Change Agent or the notion of challenging status quo practices.

Behaviors, Skills and Relevant Experience

Finding #3 highlighted the five practices that are exhibited by multiple principals across several responsibilities. These include nurturing relationships and creating teams; building upon teacher strengths and expertise; engaging in courageous conversations; tying decisions to core values; and modeling continuous improvement. These enduring responsibilities have minimal representation within the principal interview questions. Seven questions are connected to the aforementioned high leverage practices or behaviors.. Courageous Conversations are embedded in three questions. For example, two of the questions used scenarios to address conflict resolution. Nurturing relationships and building teams was included in three of the 132 questions. Districts asked questions on inclusive decision-making; partnering with parents and staff; and building relationships with staff. The notion of continuous improvement was mentioned once, while the principal's ability to scale strengths or take an asset based approach to staff was not addressed at all. No questions were asked regarding value-based decision making.

Leadership Dispositions

Most interview questions used by Hamlet an Sunset assessed what principals know and do. When focusing on leadership dispositions, we are provided with insight into "how"

principals negotiate their responsibilities. This final section will demonstrate to what extent the participating districts focus on leadership dispositions, or how principals approach their work. There were a total of 7 unique questions that could be used to assess and evaluate leadership dispositions. See Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4

Leadership Dispositions Represented in Interview Questions

Leadership Disposition	Definition	Number of questions asked
Open/Reflective	Adaptable, flexible and willingness to consider multiple perspectives.	0
Strategic	Strategic, data-driven or research based.	2
Supportive	Provides resources, coaches and performs any task needed.	1
Interpersonal	Active listening, relationship based, empathetic understanding of others' motivations.	3
Pragmatic	Judicious, focused and systematic.	
Collaborative	Inclusive, invitational and has a focus on building and aligning teams.	3
Moral/Inspirational	Focused on values, equity and motivating others.	1
Communicative	Disseminates information proactively.	0
Risk Taking	Comfortable with conflict and making controversial decisions.	3

These questions used questioning phrases such as "how do you", "have you" or "would you". Open ended questions, such as those listed below, have the potential to provide insight into leadership dispositions.

- Please describe your leadership style.
- Please take a few moments to tell us something about yourself we may not have learned from your application materials, but would help us better understand why you should be the next principal in our district?

These questions could certainly, but not necessarily, reveal leadership dispositions by providing a glimpse into how candidates approach professional responsibilities.

Some of the other questions indirectly focusing on leadership dispositions gave candidates general scenarios to analyze.

- How do you encourage creative thinking and willingness to try new things (i.e. take risks) among staff, while still maintaining a sense of cohesiveness, collaboration and team?

- How do you handle a situation in which a key educational issue arises between parents and staff?

With regard to examining leadership dispositions in the context of second order change responsibilities or tasks, these questions could reveal a great deal. These examples both ask a candidate to describe how they go about difficult tasks. These questions could both reveal core values and the approaches used to negotiate complex responsibilities and tasks.

Supplemental Materials

Beyond interviews, both Districts used supplemental materials as part of their PSP. One district used very detailed job descriptions and both used writing samples. I will start with the district that used both. This district produced lengthy job descriptions that were inclusive of a variety of skills. Each description included the following subheadings:

1. The School and District
2. The Position
3. Distinguishing Characteristics
4. Examples of Duties
5. Qualifications
    a. Knowledge of
    b. Ability to
6. Experience, Education and Certification

Across job descriptions for five different schools, only the School and District section had any variance. The District description was identical for all four schools, however two of the schools added a "School" section. For example, a small project based school included phrases such as, "humanistic"; "constructivist alternative to the traditional public school"; and "progressive, forward thinking model of education". And a highly diverse STEM school described an "interdisciplinary approach that develops literacy by integrating, arts, the sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics across the curriculum". The diversity in race, ethnicity and socio-economics was not mentioned or celebrated.

Beyond the two examples in school description, no differentiation existed with regard to skills, experience or qualifications. Each job description contained identical verbiage for The Position and Distinguishing Characteristics. They all included the same 16 Examples of Duties, eight "Knowledge" Qualifications, five "Ability to" Qualifications and four "Experience "criteria. It is important to know that the four sample job descriptions were very different schools, in terms of location, demographics, size and community/school dynamics. In addition to a lack of variation across school sites, there was also a lack of variation over time. The questions from Hamlet were developed no later than 1998. And the Seaside materials were a compilation of questions traced back to 2005.

Sunset often used a writing sample in its process as well, asking candidates to bring in a one page writing sample of their choosing. No other parameters were provided. During the interview, the panel asked the candidate to distribute the writing sample and explained that the committee would "examine this writing sample later and consider this evidence when making their decision". It was not clear whether this was an assessment of written communication, core values, ideals and beliefs or all of the above.

The Hamlet District did not provide job descriptions but did include the protocol for gathering a writing sample. This phase was separate from the interview process and appeared to be an on demand task. Questions or prompts included:

> **Your audience is the Community:**
> *Explain to your community pupil free days for staff development purposes:*
>
> **Your audience is the Staff:**
> *Welcoming them back and introducing yourself to them:*
>
> **Reporting to the Superintendent and Governing Board:**
> *Critical issues facing school districts in Southern California this year:*

These questions were used for all schools. Similar to the other participating district, it was not clear what the specific purpose of this activity was.

CHAPTER 5

A Reflective Conversation

The initial data collection for this study occurred in 2012. Since collecting and analyzing my qualitative data for this study, some things have changed. In California, the funding and accountability systems have both experienced significant overhauls over the past seven years. The enactment of the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) has required a more inclusive and transparent brand of school leadership. But we also know that the "loosely coupled" nature of our educational system can be inherently resistant to sweeping changes(Weick, 1976). So, have the external political forces altered the nature of the principalship in any way since the initial data collection of this study? This chapter will explore the current state of the principalship as it relates to this study's findings from 2013.

Informing this chapter is a July 2020 conversation with an elementary principal from one of my case study districts. I myself have been sitting in the principal chair for nearly 15 years. As experienced school leaders, we discussed the Phase I findings from Chapter 4. These findings explored emerging leadership dispositions themes, second order principal responsibilities, principal practices that are used across multiple responsibilities and formative experiences that impact the professional role of the principal. I used a semi-structured, inductive approach to explore the findings, identifying those which resonated with each of us and those that did not.

The participant in this final phase of the study is a veteran principal who has worked in multiple districts in this role. For the purpose of this study, I will refer to this principal as Jordan, the school as Grande and use the non-binary pronoun they/them/theirs. As a point of

departure, Jordan completed a ranking survey of the seven second order change responsibilities. See Figure 5.1. This is where we started our discussion.

I asked Jordan to revisit the completed ranking, ask any clarifying questions or make any adjustments if necessary. Jordan's initial comment was,

> Yeah. I think when looking at these various responsibilities, we do all of these things, and each of them are very important. So when I was telling you that I think they all could be number one or number two, to say that flexibility is number seven. Of course it's not. It (flexibility) has to be ingrained in everything that you do.

Jordan also added that he struggled with the survey a bit due to the "rigid" definitions. They explained that these responsibilities are often intertwined. So we dug deeper into this. I wanted to know how they tackled some of these responsibilities and which dispositions were used to successfully affect change. We decided together to look at change agent. Change agent was the second order activity with the most principals ranking it as their most important responsibility. It was also the responsibility with the greatest number of behaviors and skills associated with it. Additionally, Jordan ranked change agent toward the bottom and I wanted to gain clarity on his thinking.

> Q: So you ranked change agent low in terms of importance and you express that as a new leader, you need to be careful challenging the status quo. Can you be a change agent as a new principal at the school?
>
> A: You're a new principal to a school, maybe not a new principal, but new at that school, and you use your fresh eyes and your experience to look at the systems that are in place, you can be a change agent. You can fight the status quo, but you have to do it in a way that doesn't alienate your staff. These are things that they are wedded to.

Table 5.1

Chapter 6 Ranking Results

Responsibility	Ranking	Comments
Knowledge of C and I- fosters shared beliefs & a sense of community & cooperation	1	I ranked this number one because the school community must move in the same direction to be effective. I think this could be broken into two sections: knowledge of C and I and then fostering shared beliefs/community/cooperation. I would also add the fostering of an environment of trust and support.
Ideals and Beliefs- communicates & operates from strong ideals & beliefs about schooling	2	If you don't stand for something… An effective leader has strong beliefs and is not afraid to stand up for them. While this question refers to beliefs about schooling I believe all people should have strong ideals and beliefs about life. Too deep??
Optimizer-inspires and leads new changes and innovations	3	This is extremely important. Effective leadership is constantly staying current and is not afraid to introduce ideas that may benefit the learning community. It may not always go your way but you need to start the conversation.
Monitoring and Eval- monitors the effectiveness of school practices & their impact on student learning	4	SLTs are key in this area. This should be a shared responsibility between site admin and staff and district committees.
Intellectual Stimulation- ensures that faculty & staff are aware of the most current theories & practices & makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture	5	See above. It is also important to build an effective team that believes in the school's mission of educating students. Strong staff support systems must be developed and nutured. Ongoing and regular conversations need to be a part of the culture and staff should feel empowered to engage in these conversations even without admin facilitation.
Change Agent- is willing to and actively challenges the status quo	6	I think it's important to challenge the status quo but we are so often constrained by district priorities/mandates.
Flexibility- adapts leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation & is comfortable with dissent	7	You don't want to waver too far from your core beliefs and leadership style. Your staff needs to know what you're about and be able to rely on you.

Jordan's ranking of second order change responsibilities with 1 being the most important and 7 the least important. In this exchange, Jordan cautions a rush to judgement or making abrupt changes before gaining an understanding of practices and why they exist. They expand on this sentiment.

> They're... It's part of the system that they're in, and you run the risk of insulting your staff. Perhaps you have people on the staff that are part of creating those structures, right? So, I think what you need to do is come in with your fresh eyes and experience and put together a really coherent argument as to why those things don't work anymore, and give examples of how it could be better. Those are things that I've done at Grande, where you walk in and say, "You know, I understand you do this and all that, but let's talk about it from another angle."

I pushed Jordan to gain a sense of how one formulates this "coherent argument" and frames this conversation that may be fraught with landmines.

> Q: So, what do you... What you just said was, you have to frame that, right? What do you anchor that in? What do you...?
>
> A: It's a slow process sometimes, and I think that you need to plant seeds all over the place. It's not, you just bust into the staff meeting and say, "Here's what I think." I think that you need to take the temperature of the staff. You need to have individual conversations with site leaders, teacher leaders, and start planting the seed, have those conversations. You need to identify who your leaders are on campus, and you need to create a relationship with those people because not everybody will listen to the new person.
>
> But if you can create those relationships with the teacher leaders, with the people that the staff does listen to, then you've now built... You built a team.

This response touches on the nuances and complexities of leadership as a school leader. In doing so, they addressed the importance of relationships and building teams. When delving deeper into this, Jordan describes how he goes about the important work communicating vision and nurturing relationships.

> A: You have to have that vision. But you need to constantly take the temperature, I'm always taking the temperature of the staff. And it isn't always... I'm not always sending

> out a survey, "How are you feeling today?" It's making human connections. It's actually giving a... Oops, I'm sorry, I'm on tape.
>
> Q: Go ahead.
>
> A: It's actually giving a shit about your people, about your staff, giving a shit about your parents and the kids in particular. It's kind of digging deep into who they are. It wouldn't kill you to know your teacher's husband's names or remember that their kids are in the high school or in elementary school or that they have a disability or that their mother has passed away recently, and they're dealing with that. It wouldn't kill you to stretch yourself and learn those things about your people in an authentic way, not in a self-serving way, but really care about your people.

According to Jordan, building relationships is requisite for taking on change. Taking "temperature" of the school, tying decisions to vision, getting to know people and building teams are integral to the change agent role.

When looking at specific examples of the change agent role, Jordan details the act of providing support through listening. "When you start, you need to go on a listening tour." They added that a staff needs space to "feel, process and grieve" change. Our discussion also revealed a focus on creating a "happy" climate through human connection. According to this principal, building opportunities for open communication and honoring the past creates fertile ground for change.

Although Jordan ranked change agent 6th of seven responsibilities, he certainly had a lot to say about it. Additionally, he described a convergence of leadership dispositions that were consistent with findings in Chapter Four. Jordan discusses the importance of two-way communication, support and interpersonal relationships when challenging the status quo. The synergy of these dispositions was also described by other principals in the change agent role. Jordan also referenced high leverage practices referenced by multiple principals. Connecting

actions to vision and building teams were both identified as principal behaviors that transcend multiple responsibilities.

This triumvirate of dispositions resonates with me in my own experience with affecting change in an elementary school. The advice that most new principals receive (novice or just new to the school) is to pay attention and don't make any big changes your first year. This is likely sound advice but not the path taken in every situation. In one experience I came into a school that had a specific grade level outperforming all of the others. So I went and talked to them immediately to see what they were doing. They had implemented a response to intervention (RTI) model that was allowing them to differentiate in a powerful way. I had significant experience in this model and was able to provide some additional resources to support the program. As an example of high expectations for all students, I then shared their results with the entire school. My idea was to get them paying attention to a possible best practice. But this more than piqued their interest, I distinctly recall teachers asking really good clarifying questions of their colleagues. And finally, one teacher said, "Why aren't we all doing this?". Several teachers jumped on that. I explained that if they did take this risk, I would bring in retired teachers and reading specialists to support the implementation. We were off to the races, building a sustainable RTI program that contributed toward growth across all subgroups.

I will admit, this was partly dumb luck. But I was able to learn a lot from this experience that I would later apply to other change initiatives. More specifically, I was able to see some best practices. These included support, clear communication, connecting decisions to evidence and vision; and building upon organizational strengths. Not until I engaged in this research was able to understand how these dispositions and practices worked synergistically in fostering a climate of change. For example, I could have simply pointed to the grade level data and the

school vision describing “excellence for all” as a call for change. However, without relationships this could have been perceived as judgmental, leading to push back and possible conflict. By adding the third layer of building on an existing strength of a specific grade level team, the staff opened up to solutions due to a pre-existing relationship with these colleagues. This allowed me to leverage this relationship prior to building my own connections with staff over time and jump start a second order change.

Reactions to the Findings

We then took a break so Jordan could review the findings of Chapter Four. We followed this up with a reflective conversation on what holds true for the two of us, what does not, and what additional questions do the data raise. From this dialogue, familiar and novel themes emerged. To the extent possible, I will organize the themes in alignment with the framework of my findings.

Jordan’s initial reaction to the data was, “this doesn’t surprise me”. This was followed by an explanation of factors that had contributed to his ranking of responsibilities. Jordan acknowledged that one’s guiding principles as a school leader are shaped by a variety of life experiences and that people in general should have “strong ideals and beliefs about life”. Also revealed in the principal interview were three significant factors that influenced their ranking. These influences included the length in tenure in this principalship, past professional experiences and a dominant leadership disposition. Jordan was a recent hire to one of the participating districts. According to Jordan, their colleagues had “not really seen the ‘real him’ yet”. They expanded on this, using terms such as “keeping my head down” and being “in hibernation”. This was partially attributed to taking a pragmatic approach as a new principal and spending time

listening, observing and building relationships. According to Jordan, his mindset was more risk averse. But being new was only one influencing factor in the ranking.

Formative Experiences

The data from this interview reveal the importance of past experiences in shaping a principal's beliefs and practices. When I think about the highest impact experiences of my career, they do not feel traditional in a professional sense. The role I served in my family, some previous work experiences (as an instructional coach and bartender) and a couple of graduate school courses best prepared me for the rigors of the principalship. My role in the family was characterized by diplomacy, relationships and leadership. The work and academic experiences were all challenging and helped me develop resilience, speak courageously and build humility. I have met many smart school leaders who understood what was best for kids, but ended up in stalemates with their staffs', limiting their ability to affect change. For me, these characteristics and behaviors are what allow me to put theory to practice.

Jordan spoke of three experiences that played a critical role in who they are as a principal. These factors included familial experiences, a former career and a toxic work environment which they had previously experienced. Jordan was the middle child of three. The family moved several times during the kids' formative years. Jordan attended six different schools and attributes their adaptability, "friendliness" and tendency toward listening and observing before diving in, to the transient nature of their childhood. Growing up, Jordan was self-described as "hell on wheels" and found connection in counterculture. The high mobility coupled with a connection to those on the "outside looking in", developed a unique lens as a principal through which they would support those that are marginalized or disenfranchised by the educational system. This played out when Jordan challenged systems that weren't good for all

kids. They described a longstanding process for building classes that favored some families and harmed others. Jordan mentioned favoritism, subjectivity and parent requests creating "roadblocks" to learning for kids of color at Grande. Jordan explained that this process was stopped once the process came to light at the end of the first year. "I stopped it immediately." Jordan asked questions on how this process could play out, revealing the alienating aspects of the tradition. They then examined those effects side by side with the school's core values. This led to eliminating the process and rebuilding it from the ground up. Jordan felt that this abrupt shift in an entrenched practice was only possible due to the relationships that were built and by "planting seeds" rooted in equity over the course of their first year at the school.

A second experience shaping and preparing Jordan was a first career in the corporate world. This was one of those experiences that "thickened his skin" preparing him for the "battering" you inevitably face as a principal.

A final experiential factor influencing Jordan in the principalship was a prior work experience that ended in public controversy. "You all don't really know the real me yet. I have been in hibernation." Jordan explained this was the result of getting "put through the meat grinder." He commented on how working in a healthier work environment was a silver lining. "This is like a dinner party here, compared to my last job!" But they also added that they learned a lot that helped him in this current position. Jordan had indicated that they had considerable social capital in their former community. Jordan explained that sometimes you fly too close to the sun and get burned. This experience had two major impacts on Jordan professionally. First, having had an experience where they felt unsupported and even betrayed, Jordan is in a risk-averse mode. "I'm just "keeping my head down". Secondly, this experience reinforced Jordan's tendency to support and connect with his staff. Having felt unsupported, Jordan is proactive, and

perhaps hypervigilant, about support and including others. This tendency came through strongly with regard to prevalent leadership dispositions.

Leadership Dispositions

Threaded throughout Jordan's interview were behaviors aligned with the interpersonal and supportive leadership dispositions. He continuously used the terms such as "authentic relationships", "have their back" and "teachers' principal". When asked if their approach was relational, he simply responded, "very". When asked how they go about building relationships, Jordan listed listening, collaboration, vulnerability as a leader and authentic care. Listening and collaboration were mentioned in tandem as the most frequently referenced practices. Jordan mentioned actively seeking out the motivation of the staff and core values of the school culture. "I listen to their celebrations and their grievances." This did not necessarily mean Jordan would "adopt their solution", rather they would consider this information when charting a path.

Vulnerability, humility and support were also referenced in the discussion of connecting with staff. "I will do any task needed". Jordan referenced supervising recess, cleaning up in the cafeteria, answering phones and doing first aid. "They need to know you like kids." And equally important is knowing who you are as a person.

> It's okay to show emotion as human and be transparent about feelings. Sad, happy, disappointed. Not hiding parts of who you are. You have to be your authentic self.

Jordan added that when you are your authentic self, you get to see others authenticity. This was essential to building a team and making change.

Finally, Jordan's interpersonal disposition was demonstrated by an authentic care for the staff. "I care about teachers….even the knuckleheads. As long as kids are safe." When asked they would describe a climate of success, Jordan said, "happiness". Jordan expanded this saying

these were “real people with real lives”. Through human connection, Jordan builds teams. “Would it kill you to know their husband, their kids’ names or what they do on the weekends?” Jordan added a concluding comment that demonstrated the value placed on the transformational leadership role. “If you only want an instructional leader, you might not pick me. But I can build a good team.”

Some Things Matter More

Based on my conversation with Jordan and our collective years of experience, it was surprising that the responsibility of communication did not figure more prominently in terms of representation of behaviors and leadership dispositions. It is possible that the transparency of the LCFF accountability age requires a more intentional and robust communicative disposition. While the communicative disposition was not represented broadly. It was a key disposition for the three most highly represented responsibilities: change agent, optimizer and flexibility.

This makes me think of a story told by Max Kellerman, a sports personality from ESPN. When he was 16 years old he hosted a public access show called *Max on Boxing.* Years later he recounted a frequent argument he would have with those calling into the show. The question at hand was: “Who was the best fighter ever, pound for pound?” This asks participants to consider who had the greatest skill, assuming size and weight were equal. Max would convincingly argue that Pernell Whitaker, an Olympic gold medalist and world champion, was the guy. However, this was met with a great deal of opposition. People would call in and say, well this fighter is better at this, and that and the other thing. Max would reply, “True. But the things Pernell is better at, matter more”.

Leadership matters. But, depending on an organization's needs, some things will matter more. It is incumbent upon districts to understand what they need in a leader so that teachers, children and ultimately the community receive what matters most.

CHAPTER 6

Introduction

School districts are seldom intentional in identifying what they need in prospective principals and how they will select the best candidate for their schools. We know that the principalship's complexity does pose problems for the selection process. The principals I interviewed engaged in dozens of responsibilities. Looking specifically at how these school leaders engaged in second order change responsibilities provides guidance for my case study districts. Moreover, this study underscores the importance of knowing what a school needs in a leader and how to identify aligned skill sets, dispositions and experiences that meet the organizational needs. In this final chapter, I discuss the practical implications drawn from the findings that can help schools and school districts identify and hire the principals they need. This is followed by a discussion of the study's implications for further research, limitations and dissemination of the results.

My study yielded five major findings detailed in the prior chapter. These findings were all aligned to the research questions. First, nine themes or leadership dispositions emerged when examining the behaviors and skills used to engage in the seven second order change responsibilities. Not only did specific leadership dispositions emerge with greater frequency, but these dispositions were often used in concert with one another to perform second order change responsibilities. Second, principals spend more time and energy on three of the seven second order change responsibilities. In some cases this was a leadership tendency and in others it was a reflection of the great demands these responsibilities required. Third, the study revealed six high leverage behaviors that were used by the majority of principals across several second order change responsibilities. Fourth, while my participants came from diverse personal and

professional backgrounds, some common experiences emerged that prepared them for engaging in second order demands at their schools. Finally, an examination of principal selection documents reveal a stark misalignment between second order change responsibilities and the PSP. Perhaps more alarming, is the lack of district intentionality when hiring principals and the fact that the criteria used for evaluating principals does not match the day to day work of the school leaders.

Connection to the Literature

Fit

This study aligns to current research in some notable ways, raises some questions and also adds to the current literature on principal efficacy. First, the document analysis of the PSP materials reveals a lack of intentionality on the part of districts, which is well documented in the principal selection literature (Baltzell and Dentler, 2003; Schlueter, 2008; Rammer, 2008;(Palmer, 2017b)). Consequently, the case study districts were vulnerable to an overreliance on "fit" as a default criteria for hiring principals. The lack of intentionality could be characterized by the static nature of the job descriptions and the recycling of interview questions and prompts over time. Further evidence points to a reliance on fit. At the time of these interviews, the participant sample consisted of a demographic that is nearly identical seven years later. Figure 6.1 shows demographic shifts that occurred in leadership when these schools selected new principals.

Table 6.1

Demographic Shifts in Principals Selected

School	2013	2020	Demographic Shift
A	White Male	White Male	No
B	White Male	White Male	No
C	White Male	White Male	No
D	White Female	White Female	No
E	Black Male	White Female	Yes
F	White Female	White Female	No
G	Latinx Female	White Female	Yes
H	White Female	White Male	Yes
I	Latinx Female	Latinx Female	No
J	Black Male	White Female	Yes

Of the 10 participating schools, nine have different principals in 2020. Of those schools that hired new principals, 6 of 9 experienced no demographic shifts in school leadership. Of those that did change, all hired white principals. Currently, 9 of 10 principals are white and 6 of 10 are female. These statistics reveal a bias in the process and in the community. In terms of the process, a stagnant hiring protocol would indeed produce similar results over time. Coupled with the absence of a purposeful interview design, Sunset and Hamlet appear to be pre-dispositioned, or at the very least vulnerable to the phenomena of fit.

Integrating Leadership Dispositions

The findings on the use of multiple leadership dispositions when engaging in specific responsibilities is supported by the principal efficacy research. Multiple studies argue that a combination of instructional and transformational behaviors should be used in combination with one another (Hallinger, 2003; Robinson 2008; Leithwood, 2010; Day 2016; Marks & Printy, 2003). Day explored the notion of "layering" these practices. He argued that,

> By layering, we are referring to the ways in which, within and across different phases of their schools' improvement journeys, the principals selected, clustered, integrated, and placed different emphases on different combinations of both transformational and instructional strategies that were timely and fit for purpose (2016, p.226)

While this study did not focus on how a school's level of "organizational maturity" impacted principal behaviors, a tangential finding did emerge. Based on discussions of personal and professional experiences, it was revealed that a principal's individual evolution impacted how second order change was approached. Jordan's description of "keeping their head down" after a difficult professional challenge adds another variable to how principals engage in their responsibilities.

The research above references an integration of principal behaviors. For example, Printy et. Al. argue that transformational and shared instructional leadership should "coexist" (2003). Leithwood discusses four pathways, (2017). Hallinger concludes that school improvement comes through mutual or "reciprocal" influences (2005). This research provides frameworks for impacting student learning, but at a high level. Additional research provides a deeper look into more specific principal activities and behaviors needed for second order change.

Complexities of Second Order Change

In School Leadership that Works, Robert Marzano, Timothy Waters and Brian McNulty speak in depth to second order change. I will present three areas of focus that connect to this study's findings. First, this resource guide highlights and reinforces the complexity of second order change. Second, Marzano et. Al. assign an effect size for each of the second order change responsibilities. Finally, the authors detail second order change responsibilities and the important actions to take when executing these tasks.

The authors make a clear distinction between solutions for first and second order change. They assert that, "The common human response is to address virtually all problems as though they were first order change issues." (Marzano, 2005, p.67) They expand on this problem in explaining that first order change issues are solved with a "previous repertoire of solutions". However, second order issues require solutions that are novel and not readily imagined. Intractable issues, such as the achievement opportunity gap, are complex requiring innovative and systematic solutions. This research supports Finding #1 which points to an interdependent web of leadership dispositions utilized to broach, negotiate and sustain significant change.

One principal discussed implementing a complete overhaul in their school's language arts program as an example of addressing the opportunity gap. This effort involved some first order solutions such as intensive professional development, progress monitoring and fidelity to a program. However, she also had to restructure the entire schedule for this one subject area. The change effort involved a new level of collaboration and alignment that was unprecedented at the school. So the school blocked out schoolwide intervention times, movement of kids to different classes, the use of instructional aides to progress monitor and the rehiring of retired teachers to create more favorable teacher/student ratios. These moves required supportive, collaborative and

communicative dispositions. The change also required an imagination to use resources in a way that they had never been used. This example aligns with Marzano's call for novel solutions. Had the principal just provided professional development and time to plan, this initiative would neither have moved the needle on student achievement nor sustained over time.

Actions That Support Second Order Change

In addition to quantifying the effect size of each second order change, Marzano also identifies "actions" important to second order change" (2005, p. 120). These actions are connected to both principals and leadership teams (see Figure 6.2). My findings align to Marzano's identified actions in multiple responsibilities. For example, under the change agent responsibility, the authors recommend connecting discussions to current achievement data and an openness to different paths for the implementation of the innovation. Under the responsibility of flexibility, they recommend a willingness to include others and adjust plans and use situational awareness. These strategies are consistent with my findings.

Table 6.2

Leadership Team Responsibilities and Actions Important to Second Order Change

Responsibility	Actions of the Leadership Team
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment	● Work individually with staff members regarding implementation of the innovation. ● Attend staff development opportunities regarding the innovation
Optimizer	● Speak positively about the innovation. ● Provide examples of other schools that have successfully implemented the innovation. ● Express a continued belief that the innovation will enhance student achievement. ● Identify roadblocks and challenges to the innovation.
Intellectual Stimulation	● Include research about the innovation in conversations. ● Ask questions that cause teachers to be reflective in their practices related to the innovation. ● Lead discussions around current practices related to the innovation.
Change Agent	● Raise issues around achievement related to innovation. ● Share data related to the other schools that have implemented the innovation. ● Compare where the school is and where it needs to be in terms of implementing the innovations. ● Demonstrate "tolerance for ambiguity" regarding the innovation.
Monitoring/Evaluating	● Look at both formative and summative assessments in relation to the innovation. ● Conduct classroom walk-throughs related to the innovation.
Flexibility	● Continually adjust plans in response to progress and tensions. ● Use situational leadership regarding the innovation. ● Use protocols that allow for input regarding the innovation without bogging down into endless discussions.
Ideals/Beliefs	● Communicate ideals and beliefs related to the innovation in formal and informal conversations and model behaviors. ● Ensure the practices related to the innovation are aligned with shared ideals and beliefs. ● Ask strategic questions regarding the innovations when actions don't reflect agreed-upon purposes, goals and understandings.

Additions to the Literature

My findings explore below the surface level of how these actions are executed and consequently contribute some additions to the literature. More specifically, my study finds that responsibilities are most successfully and sustainably executed when there is an integration of leadership dispositions versus a more narrowly defined set of actions. Marzano calls for "situational leadership" when engaged in a new initiative, however this study provides greater specificity and suggests that integration, and possibly an interdependence, of specific leadership dispositions for three of the second order change responsibilities. For example, under change agent, data-driven discussions and expressing the moral imperative are encouraged. While my studies reveal these same strategies, they only work when connected to clear communication on the expectations, establishing trust through relationships and building capacity through proactive support. In Chapter Four, I provided an example of relying only on data and the moral imperative to persuade teachers to change a socially unjust cell phone policy. Without providing a replacement behavior, building capacity to solve a problem differently and clear communication, moral and intellectual arguments are not enough. If support was not provided directly, people reverted back to a default practice.

A second example involves the suggested actions for the optimizer role. The actions in Figure 6.2 associated with this responsibility have a "cheerleader" tone to them. They include staying positive, providing other examples, and modeling a belief that the "innovation will enhance student achievement" (Marzano, 2005, pl. 120). This study's findings are not at odds with these strategies. But my study does offer more explicit actions of ways to operationalize this responsibility, taking a "30,000 foot" solution to sea level. Two examples in Chapter Four speak to this idea of being a positive presence. Two participants participated in grade specific

professional development and even taught classes to demonstrate their commitment to a new initiative. These actions helped build relationships and modeled a necessary vulnerability needed for taking on systemic change. My findings identify the integration of collaboration, openness to a variety of solutions and authentic relationships. Staying positive is important. But it must be accompanied by more than words.

Additional contributions to the literature include the identification of five behaviors or actions that support a majority of responsibilities. As mentioned in Chapter Four, they include nurturing relationships and creating teams; building upon teacher strengths and expertise; engaging in courageous conversations; tying decisions to core values; and modeling continuous improvement. Marzano et al. list of actions do have some overlap and similarities with this list, yet when they do, these actions are assigned only to one responsibility. For example, under change agent, the authors suggest "raise issues of achievement" and lead discussions based on "where the school should be". My study reveals the high leverage actions of tying decisions to core values. However, my study goes on to show that tying decisions to core values was used by at least six principals when addressing the responsibilities of optimizer, flexibility, change agent and ideals and beliefs.

A final contribution to the literature questions the utility of the Balanced Leadership Framework for practicing principals. The 21 Responsibilities are inherently "siloed", implying a singular and simplified notion of school leadership that is linear and disconnected from the reality of the job. My discussion with Jordan in Chapter 5 underscores two important ideas. First, these responsibilities are complex and interrelated. Jordan quipped, "They all could be number one" adding that it was difficult to separate one responsibility from another. Second, an extraordinary amount of energy is expended prior to engaging in these responsibilities. Prior to

assuming the change agent role, Jordan mentioned several activities to position the school for change. They "planted seeds"; built relationships; "went on a listening tour"; "grieved" and shed tears with their staff; observed; and showed that they cared. To a veteran principal this is not surprising. However, this level of insight is absent from the Balanced Leadership Framework and its supplementary literature. I do not argue that the Framework is flawed, rather it is incomplete. This study establishes a point of departure for broader and deeper investigations into the adaptive and complex demands of the principal. Moreover, an expansion of this study could bridge theoretical models to the daily reality of an elementary principal.

Implications for Schools and Districts

Know What You Need in a Principal

The study's findings reveal PSPes of the participating districts are neither intentional nor aligned to the second order change responsibilities in which its principals engage. By not having need based criteria infused in the questions and job descriptions, the process becomes vulnerable to fit. The research has taught us that fit alone can result in the maintenance of current systems and practices. This study's findings provide some guidance for Sunset and Hamlet as they both look to hire future school leaders that match their organizational needs and have the ability to lead them through inevitable change.

Identify School Needs

I will preface all recommendations on the PSP with one caveat. First identify what you are looking for prior to asking any question, creating any task or designing any part of the PSP. As previously discussed, lack of clarity on desirable traits, experiences and qualifications of principals can result in taking a default mode of principal selection based on fit. So it is paramount to know what you need in a new principal. My research also suggests that some

behaviors, dispositions and experiences are high leverage and enduring. These criteria along with school specific information should be integrated into the job description, writing tasks, interview questions and process itself. Criteria should include questions that are aligned to the responsibilities with the highest priority; experiences and skills needed for impending or existing leadership challenges; leadership dispositions based on need; experience with high leverage behaviors; and a process that reveals *how* prospective principals approach second order change responsibilities. The participating districts used job descriptions, writing samples and interviews. Each component should be purposefully designed to meet the needs of a specific school.

Job Description

The job descriptions used were largely generic. While two schools listed some site specific information about their schools, the experiences and qualifications were identical. This presumes a single type of candidate for all principal positions. I would first suggest a list of characteristics, qualifications, experiences and traits that reflect the needs of the school. Identifying those criteria would be important. Based on the job descriptions provided, there are some sections where differentiation could create a more streamlined process of identifying the best candidate possible.

Starting with the school description, create a sense of the current school reality, inclusive of challenges. Schools should continue to describe programmatic initiatives and a cultural profile of the staff and community. More specificity gives greater focus to the hiring committee, reinforcing essential leadership criteria. When the description is overly general, committee members may give greater weight to what they individually find to be important. This section should also highlight current initiatives and challenges. For example, a school may be implementing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). This can take a decade of hard work

to build a sustainable PLC culture. It would be important to know where the school is in the process of building PLC capacity. It would be hard to find a principal candidate who couldn't speak intelligently to PLCs. Finding a person who has supported PLCs in the early versus middle versus later stages is much more difficult. These school descriptions are often glossy and fail to prepare a candidate for the reality of a school's struggles. Transparency on assets as well as challenges will support a principal selection committee in identifying the best candidate for a specific context.

The boilerplate quality to the job descriptions is undoubtedly serving multiple purposes. Beyond its purpose as a recruitment tool, it is likely addressing California Education Code regarding minimum requirements for principals. It is also setting baseline expectations for what the job entails. While serving this larger purpose, it does diminish the quality of accurately setting the stage for what the position entails. I would not include leadership dispositions, principal behaviors and specific experiences in this section. Rather, I would create an interview process and writing samples that would reveal how a principal candidate utilized different dispositions for a variety of challenges.

Writing Samples

An underutilized method to examine specific experiences, behaviors and leadership dispositions is the use of a writing sample. The writing samples used by both Sunset and Hamlet are very general in nature. I was not able to gain clarity on intent or evaluation protocols for this activity in either district. They certainly could provide insight into written communication skills and knowledge of the educational landscape. However, this is perhaps a missed opportunity to gain insight into desired leadership behavioral qualities and experiences. I recommend open ended questions that would elicit what the candidates have accomplished in the past and how

they went about it. Below would be a layered example that could reveal a great deal about a candidate beyond just their knowledge base.

> Provide an example of an experience when you led an equity-minded change initiative. Please be sure to address the following.
>
> How did you build consensus?
>
> What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?
>
> Was the change effort sustainable?
>
> What would you do differently next time?

This question addresses second order change and how the candidate navigated the responsibility of optimizer and change agent. In doing so, they would reveal behaviors and leadership dispositions. For example, it would demonstrate tendencies toward collaboration, interpersonal relationships, support and other dispositions. By asking interviewees what they would do differently in the future, committees could gauge some sense of humility, vulnerability and reflectiveness. It would also provide an opportunity to examine which behaviors and dispositions are used when engaged in second order change.

Aligning Questions to Identified Needs

Chapter Four identified an imbalance of questions, where both districts focused primarily on first over second order change by a ratio of two to one. Additionally, the majority of second order change questions were focused on knowledge of curriculum and instruction. While my study focused solely on second order change, it is important to know that the three most represented responsibilities (64% of all responses) accounted for only three (3) of 132 questions or less than 2%. According to the literature, principals must be flexible and agile in our highly dynamic political environment (Leithwood, 2010; Printy, 2003). If districts are looking for

principals who can navigate complex and ever-evolving systems, it would be prudent to include questions that strike an appropriate balance of first and second order change responsibilities. For those second order change responsibilities, I recommend a focus on both experiences with leading change and an examination of how they navigated these responsibilities in the context of executing specific change responsibilities, ie. Leadership dispositions.

Specific leadership dispositions are disproportionately employed when engaging in second order change responsibilities. An integration of interpersonal, supportive, strategic and reflective dispositions are used to lead change initiatives. These dispositions often work in concert with one another. Questions focusing on specific second order change responsibilities would reveal valuable insight into experiences and leadership dispositions.

Rather than go through each highly represented second order change responsibility, I will focus on a change agent to provide a framework for questions examining second order change and seeking to identify specific leadership dispositions. The change agent responsibility is characterized by challenging the status quo. If a district and or school has an interest in challenging current practices or systems, it would be important to gauge a candidate's experience in this responsibility but also how they have approached the task. Providing opportunities to give examples is important because it provides a better sense of a prospective principal's direct experiences as opposed to receiving canned answers. This first example focuses on knowledge of a particular topic.

What would you do if a specific grade level was struggling in reading at your school? What would you do to improve student learning? Potential answers might include examples such as having teachers look at data, requiring fidelity to a program, implementing PLC's, creating an intervention, engaging parents, classroom observations and new professional

development. All of these responses seem reasonable and they would demonstrate an acceptable knowledge base regarding school improvement. However, this question is unlikely to provide insight into how a candidate might navigate the rough waters of change. Asking interviewees to provide an example would give a much more comprehensive picture of how the principal candidate works. This example might produce a clearer picture of leadership style, expertise and experiences.

Please provide an example of a time when you challenged a school practice that wasn't working for all kids. How did you initiate change and what was the outcome? What would you do differently in the future? This question directly addresses the essence of the change agent which is to challenge the status quo. Keeping the question general provides multiple entry points for the question is much more likely to produce an authentic response versus a checklist of educational jargon. Second, asking how change occurred pushes the interviewee to reveal their tendencies toward specific dispositions. It may reveal a collaborative, moralistic, supportive or open leader. It may show the leader using multiple dispositions. It is then up to the committee to compare these responses to the predetermined dispositions they are looking for. Finally, asking what they "would do differently in the future", measures a degree of reflectiveness, an identified high leverage disposition.

The question above could be modified to address the other highly represented second order change responsibilities as well.

Please provide an example of a time when you led a change initiative. How did you initiate change and what was the outcome? What would you do differently in the future? Or **Please provide an example of a time when you faced dissent or opposition to a change initiative. How did you initiate change and what was the outcome? What would you do**

differently in the future? The principalship is complex. Layered questions could serve as a valuable tool to getting beneath routine knowledge and deeper into the nuanced execution of school leadership. This recommendation is analogous to developing teachers questioning abilities in classrooms. Many districts ascribe to Dr. Norman Webb's Depth of Knowledge (DOK). This questioning framework refers to the amount of thinking required for a given question or task. Aligning your questions to different DOK levels facilitates higher-order thinking and deeper learning for your students. There are four DOK levels, 1 (knowledge and recall questions) being the least cognitively demanding and 4 (application, connection and design) presenting the highest demands of critical thinking. In the classroom setting, you often find teachers who focus on DOK 1 instructional questions but then assess DOK 4 thinking. Both Sunset and Hamlet primarily rely on DOK 1 questions which focus on knowledge recall. I am not suggesting that districts should not ask basic knowledge questions. I am arguing that the principalship is often steeped in synthesis, creation, analysis and abstraction. If a district is looking for leaders who can thrive in a dynamic educational system, they need to ask questions that would assess these abilities, experiences and dispositions.

High Leverage Behaviors and Practices

I recommend that both districts include questions that assess a candidate's experience in or abilities to engage in those practices that broadly support second order change responsibilities. A majority of principals interviewed reported five common behaviors or practices that informed their work with second order change responsibilities. These behaviors include nurturing relationships and creating teams; building upon teacher strengths and expertise; engaging in courageous conversations; tying decisions to core values; and modeling continuous

improvement. This is not an exhaustive list of best practices, but they are used by multiple principals across a majority of responsibilities.

The use of some of these behaviors could be assessed with direct questions.

Tell us about your experiences having difficult or courageous conversations with staff or parents. Please provide a specific example. How do you model continuous improvement for your staff? Please provide an example. These questions directly explore a specific behavior. The direct question also begins the orientation process for a prospective principal. It sets an expectation in the district that principals are expected to engage in difficult conversations and model continuous improvement. Some desired behaviors and practices could be couched in more open-ended and complex questions.

What variables do you consider when making important decisions that have a schoolwide impact? As a new principal, how do you determine next steps for school improvement strategies? Open-ended questions like these could elicit many responses. A district should pre-determine some preferred answers. In the first example, you could see a variety of behaviors. Based on this study's findings, you would look for decision-making tied to vision or data. The second question focuses on how one gets the "lay of the land" and an understanding of systems and high leverage instruction. For this question, you would hope to see responses such as "speaking with stakeholders"; listening; building on existing strengths; or looking at data. This recommendation is a plea to the case study districts, and all districts, to first identify school needs. Then, design hiring processes that reveal characteristics, behaviors and experiences.

Principal Training

This study revealed that specific formative experiences impact principal behaviors and how they negotiate second order change. Principal's roles within their own families, parental and "toughening up" experiences shaped their style and prepared them for the rigors of the job. While these experiences can't be replicated, some of the lessons learned could inform the training and development of prospective principals in a district's leadership pipeline.

Know who you are as a leader and play to your strengths. Multiple principals identified birth order or their family role growing as a contributing factor to how they lead. The study did not reveal a preferred role or birth order for the principalship. Rather, it underscored the importance of being "authentic". Those who were the oldest sibling tended to be more "parental" and the identified middle children tended to be more relational and diplomatic. There are a lot of preconceptions on what a leader should look like, do and say. When attempting to assume a role that is counter to your own experience and personality, it can be viewed as disingenuous and negatively impact a leader's credibility. When supporting aspiring or new principals, it is important to encourage authenticity and proactively building upon their strengths. Part of this process is supporting these school leaders in understanding their own core values and what drives them. If leaders are uncertain on their core values, they will often be inconsistent in how they make decisions. They will also be more vulnerable to catering to the loudest voices, possibly at the expense of those who need their help the most.

For example, one principal expressed that his litmus test in making decisions was two-fold. "Is it good for kids and is it legal?". Another principal identified "happiness and engagement" as her guiding principles. "Wouldn't it be nice if we were all a little happier and a little more involved?". So when she mapped out her vision, it was guided by creating a kinder

school culture and one that was “a little less boring”. Another principal was unable to express his core values. This principal admittedly struggled in his position, feeling like he was “caught in the middle” of stakeholder groups. He is no longer a principal and currently resides in a different role in a new district. Had he been more solid in his own tendencies and core values, this may have played out more positively for him and his school. When looking for a new principal, I would want to know to what extent they internalized their core values and professional motivations. I would also recommend that districts create support, protocols and safe space for aspiring leaders to identify their core values and determine how they would use these values to do what’s best for kids, teachers and families.

A second experience referenced was how the role as parent impacted their ability to thrive as a principal. Multiple principals described the “humbling” experience of parenthood and how it heightened their sense of empathy for kids and families. Parental experiences also nurtured a tendency to care for your school community. Principals discussed their process for building relationships with staff. Being a strong listener was mentioned by all ten principals. Some principals talked about the challenge of staying present when having so many things to do. One participant said they learned early on from a mentor to “listen longer than you’d like to” and “avoid going right into problem solving mode”. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Jordan commented that knowing things about your staff and their families is important to building trusting relationships. This connection became the foundation for the challenging work of leading new initiatives. According to principals, teachers were more likely to take risks when they felt you “had their back”. For the study’s participants who had children, humility, empathy and building caring relationships was developed through parenthood. Supporting principals in training on developing interpersonal and supportive dispositions, could provide that same

powerful benefit gained through parenthood.

Receiving feedback. A major finding of this study is the revelation that all principals "endured" an experience that toughened them up, consequently preparing them for the rigors of the principalship. These experiences ranged from professional training to work experiences in unrelated fields to public controversies on television and in newspapers. I am not suggesting that this is a prerequisite, but rather a desired qualification. But I would recommend that districts interested in creating leadership pipelines leading to the principalship should provide training that embodies the spirit of these "battle scar" experiences. These experiences were characterized by receiving regular feedback; resolving controversies or conflict; and continuous reflection. One possible scenario could be dedicated time for administrators in training to grapple with scenarios in a "fishbowl" setting. This would be followed by feedback and self-reflection. Routinizing these practices would build capacity in the prospective principals in terms of poise, problem solving and continuous improvement.

Create a process that emphasizes how principals work over what they know. The current processes for both Sunset and Hamlet have a significant focus on first order change and knowledge principals have regarding curriculum and instruction. While this knowledge is essential, the process assigns limited importance to the complex nature of second order change and provides little insight into how a school leader negotiates continuous growth schoolwide. In addition to a focus on knowledge, the districts' interview processes also assign significant importance to a candidate's ability to answer questions quickly and succinctly. These are potentially important qualities yet are disconnected from what principals do. When solving problems, principals often take time to research information, consult colleagues and reflect before providing a solution. This process messages to candidates a game show version of the

principalship, emphasizing speed and knowledge of facts. In order to gain deeper insight into how principal candidates think and problems solve, I would make the following recommendations. Once a district identifies what they need in terms of second order change criteria, I recommend that hiring committees spend approximately 30 minutes prior to seeing candidates to review specific strengths, needs and challenges of the school in question. This would orient the committee to look for specific skills, leadership dispositions and experiences.

Second, I recommend that hiring committees integrate the recommendations mentioned above, realigning questions to desired responsibilities, dispositions and experiences. An additional recommendation is to provide the questions ahead of time to get the most authentic and thoughtful answers. Providing approximately an hour to look at the questions could provide more insightful and rich responses and consequently provide greater insight into both the candidates' knowledge and process.

Third, I would recommend that both districts add components to the PSP that go beyond the interview. I first suggest that the districts request an on demand writing sample to assess communication skills, leadership dispositions, experiential qualifications and understanding of the educational landscape. I would also suggest an additional process that could reveal how prospective principals communicate, collaborate and think. Providing a fishbowl problem solving exercise would accomplish these goals. An example would be to have the 2-4 finalists for the position review school achievement data and then work together to develop a school improvement path moving forward. This process would reveal collaborative tendencies, communication style and assess instructional knowledge and core values. This would provide a more in depth profile of each candidate and how they could contribute to the organization.

Further Research

Examining the Integration of Second Order Responsibilities

This study revealed a prioritization of the responsibilities of change agent, flexibility and optimizer. These proved to be the most complex and demanding of the second order change responsibilities. Based on Marzano's research, there is variance in effect size, albeit small, that exists across the seven second order change responsibilities (see Table 6.3).

Table 6.3

Effect Sizes Drawn from Marzano's Meta-Analysis (2005)

Correlation with Achievement	Responsibility
.28	Flexibility
.27	Monitoring/Evaluating
.25	Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
.25	Change Agent
.24	Intellectual Stimulation
.22	Ideals and Beliefs
.20	Optimizer

Based on Marzano's findings, flexibility, or comfortability with dissent, has the largest effect size at .28. Change agent has an effect size of .25 and optimizer is .20. Flexibility figured prominently in this study and is shown to have the highest effect size of second order change and the second highest effect size of all 21 responsibilities. The prioritization of flexibility by the participating principals is aligned to the impact of this responsibility. The effect size of change agent was also toward the higher end of the range and optimizer was toward the bottom.

Although not connected directly to my research questions, this study did find that these responsibilities seldom occurred in isolation. For example, when reconceptualizing or replacing an instructional program, leaders are engaging in multiple responsibilities. The principals would lead the challenge of a current practice (change agent), introduce a new initiative (optimizer) and likely have to be open to dissent or alternate solutions (flexibility). I would argue that it would be difficult to disaggregate the effect size of each individual responsibility in this case. Consequently, I would suggest that the impact of the integration of multiple responsibilities would be a fertile ground for future research.

Variance in Behaviors Between Title I and Non-Title I Principals

This study examined principal practices, emerging dispositions and experience of ten elementary principals. Half of the participants were Title I principals. Though not a focus of this study, notable differences in behaviors or practices between Title I and non-Title I did not emerge. While both districts outperform County and State in terms of standardized testing results, neither have made significant progress in closing the opportunity gap. This raises the question of whether or not systemic district tendencies of reproductive practices work against leadership practices

Developing a Needs Assessment Aligned to the Leadership Framework

This study aligns to the prevailing research showing a lack of district and school intention in the PSP. Fortunately the Balanced Leadership Framework provides guidance in this process. Protocols for the evaluation of prospective principals through the PSP do exist at the secondary level(Wildy, Pepper, & Guanzhong, 2011). However, no instruments exist to identify specific needs relative to schools initiatives, balanced leadership competencies, culture and where schools reside in the school improvement process. It is not enough to look for research based

practices. Districts must also weigh these evidence based practices against the reality of a specific school. For example, a district ready to take on a structural change with a veteran staff would likely have different needs than a school in its 12th progressively successful year of implementing Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI). In a perfect world, a well-prepared principal could navigate both scenarios. It would also be reasonable to argue that each scenario would look for some specific qualities to support their school improvement trajectory. At the very least, the context could be factored into the PSP.

Examine the Relationship between Responsibilities and Leadership Dispositions

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between second order change responsibilities and leadership dispositions, I would recommend an expansion of the sample population with a quantitative method. A lot more could be learned about how principals engage in and integrate various leadership dispositions to accomplish responsibilities. In this study, an understanding of each responsibility was sometimes a challenge and likely impacted some responses. Consequently, I would suggest a survey where principals examine scenarios that capture the essence of specific responsibilities and indicate which dispositions they most rely upon when engaging in this work. If districts want to be intentional in their PSPs, they will need finer grained data on what principals do most and how they do it.

Limitations

From my findings, I was able to provide some concrete recommendations for my case study districts. A qualitative approach allowed me to delve deeply into the principalship and gain a deeper understanding of how principals approach and execute specific second order change responsibilities. However, due to sample size and the entrepreneurial nature of these districts, my findings are limited in generalizability. Conducting a qualitative study on a broader

scale would have been prohibitive in terms of resources. Continued research in the areas of principal efficacy and the PSP would provide greater validity to the findings of this research.

Both of these districts are mid-sized and entrepreneurial in nature. This likely had an impact on principal responses with regard to priorities and leadership dispositions. Principals had great agency to build a collective vision, determine curriculum and design an instructional program. Districts that have a similar culture of autonomy could benefit from these findings. However, applying the recommendations above may have limited use in larger districts that are by necessity more directive or prescriptive in school programming.

A final limitation was in the how principals assigned meaning to the responsibilities. Some of these responsibilities were familiar enough "jargon" to have a preconceived notion of what it might mean. For example, the term change agent is used in the literature on leadership and in schools and district offices regularly. However, some participants interpreted this to mean someone who brings in new initiatives. This definition is actually the role of the optimizer. Where the primary definition of change agent is a one who challenges the status quo. I do not think it significantly altered data or impacted findings, but it did require to do a lot of reorienting and explaining during the interview for some of the participants. If I were to reconceptualize the Phase I interviews, I would provide some examples of what each responsibility would like in practice.

Dissemination

At the onset of this study, both case study districts had an interest of examining their PSP and improving the process. I will be sharing my findings with both the superintendent and assistant superintendent of human resources in Hamlet and Sunset. This will include a snapshot

of my findings and recommendations. My hope is that they consider my recommendations for the PSP and reimagine their process with intent in mind.

The Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) offers several annual conferences with specific areas of focus. I do believe this study's findings could benefit districts who are looking to improve their PSP or develop a robust leadership pipeline. I will be submitting a request for proposal (RFP) for the 2021 ACSA Leadership Summit and other conferences with a human resources focus. Additionally, I will seek out opportunities to present at local ACSA regional events. These findings could add value to district leadership teams, sitting and aspiring principals.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW

Principal Interview Protocol

First, I would like to thank you for participating. I'd like to ask you a few questions but want to assure you that I will not use your name or any names that might identify you as a participant. If there are any questions that you are not comfortable answering, please let me know and I will skip them. Also, with your permission, I would like to record our conversation so that I might transcribe it and include it as part of my data collection when I write up my findings. Do I have your permission to record our conversation? Do you have any questions or concerns? Let's begin.

Before we explore your responsibilities and priorities in more detail, I want to gain a better sense of how you see the work you do at your school on a daily basis.

1. How would you define a climate of success?
2. You ranked X the highest. Tell me how you came to that decision?
3. What makes you able to effectively negotiate that activity?
4. Could you provide an example?
5. What experiences have prepared you for this activity?
6. Have you done this in another job?
7. Have you had an experience outside of education that has prepared you for this work?
8. What behaviors are important when engaging in this activity?
9. What skills are important when engaging in this activity?
10. What training has helped you become effective in this area?
11. At what point in your career did you receive this training?
12. You have ranked X responsibilities highest in relation to the work you do. I want to share the findings from my study with 10 other principals to determine to what extent your experiences and perceptions align with the general conclusions.
13. What conclusions ring true with you?
14. Are there any findings that do not resonate with your experience?
15. Are any of these findings surprising or curious to you?
16. What other important practices of the principal should be included in this discussion.

APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT OVERVIEW

Steve Richardson
Dissertation Overview

Principals affect schools. An extensive body of literature suggests that the school principal has significant influence over the function, culture and ultimately academic outcomes of a school. Studies reveal that the building principal shapes school culture and climate (Anderson & Management, 1991; Cotton, 2003; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Sergiovanni, 2000), orchestrates and aligns resources with a collective vision (Kochamba, 1996; Murphy, 1994; Schmoker, 1999), and positively affects academic achievement (Phillip Hallinger, 1996; Philip Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). Kenneth Leithwood (1994) argues that, " the principal, more than any other individual, determines the nature and success of the school program(Leithwood, 1994)."

This exhaustive research over the past decades has led to studies with the objective of identifying key characteristics, skills and traits of effective principals. Drawing from these data and others, multiple instruments have been developed to assist districts in the recruiting and hiring of principals. Such hiring resources include: the Interstate Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC); McEwan's Traits; Cotton's Leadership Behaviors; the Mid-Continental Research for Education and Learning's (McREL) Balanced Leadership Framework; and, the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education (VAL-ED).

Despite the overwhelming evidence underscoring the importance of the principal and the extensive resources available to districts detailing critical principal behaviors, the selection

process has largely been overlooked as an important lever to school improvement. Studies over the last 40 years show that the selection process for principals ranges from haphazard to uneven, at best(Baltzell, Dentler, Abt, & National Institute of, 1983; Baron, 1990; Hooker, 2000). A 2008 study of principal hiring in Iowa revealed that only 54% of the districts represented have identified criteria for prospective principals. Of those that do, only 21% of those criteria could be classified as second order change.

Why is such a critical process, the selection and hiring of school principals, proven to be elusive despite volumes of research on principal effectiveness and selection?

Your Involvement:

1. Completion of a professional profile including work history and school demographic information (5-10 minutes)
2. Participation in an interview to discuss the behaviors, traits, skills and experiences that inform the successful navigation of the identified high leverage activities. (1-2 hours)

APPENDIX C

TOP RESPONSIBILITIES AND ORDER OF CHANGE

Principal	Overall Top Ranked Responsibility	Order of change	Overall Top Ranked Second Order Change Responsibility
#1TR	Communication	First	Change Agent
#2TG	Change Agent	Second	Change Agent
#3RW	Change Agent	Second	Change Agent
#4NC	Communication	First	Optimizer
#5NA	Monitoring and Evaluation	Second	Monitoring and Evaluation
#6HS	Culture	First	Ideals and Beliefs
#7RM	Situational Awareness	First	Change Agent
#8YM	Optimizer	Second	Optimizer
#9OC	Visibility	First	Change Agent
#10NG	Change Agent	Second	Change Agent

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY OF PHASE I

Phase I of this study focuses on the principal experience. More specifically, it examines the seven (7) second order change responsibilities identified in Marzano, McNulty & Waters, *Balanced Leadership Framework* (2003). These responsibilities are associated with transformative changes that often disrupt traditional practices, systems and traditions. I use the principal experience as the unit of analysis in order to identify the behaviors, skills and leadership approaches that impact school improvement most positively. Below is summary of my findings for Phase I:

Finding # 1: Three of the seven findings are positively disproportionate in the regular practices of the principal. These responsibilities include in order of importance:

- Change Agent: willingness to challenge the status quo.
- Optimizer: inspires and leads new changes and innovation
- Flexibility: adapts leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent.

Table D1

Principal Ranking of Second Order Change Responsibilities

Principal	Number #1 Second Order Change Responsibility
A	Change Agent
B	Change Agent
C	Change Agent
D	Change Agent
E	Ideals and Beliefs
F	Optimizer
G	Change Agent
H	Optimizer
I	Change Agent
J	Monitoring and Evaluation

Based on principal interviews, these three responsibilities accounted for nearly 70% of all responses. Additionally, when principals were asked to rank these seven responsibilities, six (6) principals ranked Change Agent as the most important and two (2) ranked Optimizer as their number one. See Figure D1.

Finding #2: Nine themes reflecting specific *leadership dispositions* emerged from the data. These data reveal an increased reliance on four of the nine leadership approaches. They include: Open/Reflective, Data Driven, Supportive and Interpersonal. See Figure 2 below for definitions and frequency of responses:

Table D2

Leadership Disposition Frequency

Leadership Disposition	Definition	Distinct Responses
Open/Reflective	Adaptable, flexible and willingness to consider multiple perspectives.	88
Data Driven	Strategic, data-driven or research based.	76
Supportive	Provides resources, coaches and performs any task needed.	71
Interpersonal	Active listening, relationship based, empathetic understanding of others' motivations.	70
Pragmatic	Judicious, focused and systematic.	42
Collaborative	Inclusive, invitational and has a focus on building and aligning teams.	40
Moral/Inspirational	Focused on values, equity and motivating others.	38
Communicative	Disseminates information proactively.	26
Risk Taking	Comfortable with conflict and making controversial decisions.	22

Beyond the prevalence of these four approaches threaded throughout the principal interviews, they all figured largely in the critical principal responsibilities of Change Agent, Optimizer and Flexibility. For example, in the role of Change Agent, principals heavily relied upon **interpersonal relationships, providing proactive support and actively communicating**. In the case of Optimizer, principals showed **proactive support, active communication** and **modeled open/reflective behaviors**. So while it is important to know that some leadership dispositions are used more often with second order change, it is also true that some of these dispositions work in concert with one another to accomplish responsibilities and affect change.

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