

MORRISON, SHIRLEY D., Ed.D. School Administrator Selection and Placement: "A Case Study on Dispositions that Support the Identification of Successful School Leaders." (2009)
Directed by Dr. Carl Lashley. 129 pp.

A significant amount of research has been conducted on the impact school leaders make on the quality of schools. Prior to the twentieth century, the role of the school principal was generated by public expectations. The school principal functioned as a lead teacher and manager. The role of the principal has changed to address the challenges in our present society. There is ongoing concern regarding how school systems select and place successful administrators in school communities. This problem is closely identified with the impact school leaders make upon student achievement, accountability and a culture for learning. In addition, school leaders assume huge responsibilities for the overall culture of the school community.

This research study identified and examined the dispositions and characteristics of successful principals in twenty-first century schools. A strong focus was placed on interviewing and selecting leaders. The research questions for this study were: (a) What dispositions support the identification of successful principals in the twenty-first century schools?; and (b) How can a district principal selection and placement process tools ensure a good fit between the principal and the school community?

The methodology of this study was a case study design. Data were collected through interviews, observations, review of personnel files, and school

data. Six principals and three community representatives from each school participated in the study. The principals were chosen from the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

The findings in this study showed that successful administrators possessed the following qualities:

- People Skills and Vision
- Understanding and use of data
- Strong Organization Skills
- Understanding of the importance of community involvement
- Flexibility
- Empathy

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR SELECTION AND PLACEMENT:
“A CASE STUDY ON DISPOSITIONS THAT SUPPORT
THE IDENTIFICATION OF SUCCESSFUL
SCHOOL LEADERS”

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduation School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Greensboro
2009

Approved by

Dr. Carl Lashley
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I dedicate this doctoral dissertation to my parents, Lizzie and Karl; my stepfather, Leon; my family members, Faye, Mona Lisa, Herman, Apryle, Herman II, and Latoya; and all of my aunts, uncles, god-children and cousins, who have provided me with inspiration and encouragement for many years. You have shown me support, love and caring throughout this process. You have encouraged me to trust and believe in hard work, which has always gotten me through whatever I have encountered..

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Although this dissertation bears the name of a single author, many should be acknowledged for its successful completion. First, I would like to thank my doctoral committee, who contributed their time and expertise during the dissertation process: Dr. Carl Lashley, Dr. Charles P. Gause, Dr. Rick Reitzug, and Dr. Larry Coble. Dr. Lashley spent many hours advising, reading, editing, and encouraging until we were both satisfied with the final product.

I would also like to acknowledge my extended family, friends, colleagues, and organizations for their support and assistance during my graduate studies. Special thanks to: Action Greensboro Administrative Doctoral Cohort Fund, Richard Allen, Dr. Carolyn Riehl, GCS Doctoral Cohort members, present and past employees of the GCS Human Resources department and most importantly, those supervisors who were understanding of the many requirements in this process and who granted me flexibility.

Heartfelt thanks is also extended to several special friends. The first of these are Dr. Doris Brown and Dr. Phyllis Martin, who never allowed me to give up, no matter how many times I threw in the towel and called it quits. Their tireless efforts and nonstop encouragement got me through this task. Others are Ms. Jeanette Horney, the best typist in the world, as well as Dr. Betty Royal, Dr. Chuck Morris, Dr. Doris Henderson, and Dr. Tony Burks II, who continued to be my proofreaders, conscience, strong arms, and cheerleaders until the end.

Finally, I am most thankful to the administrators, teachers, and parents of Cuttino County Schools. They gave freely of their time and afforded me the opportunity to probe their brains with numerous questions, ideas and scenarios. The administrators embraced my efforts and allowed me every opportunity to explore their lives as leaders in an effort to find answers that might make a difference for those who will join or follow them in the future. For this, I am most grateful.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the past decade, a vast amount of research has been conducted on the tremendous impact school leaders make upon the quality of schools. School administrators are the most important professionals in schools with responsibilities for the overall school climate, the effectiveness of the staff, the support from the community, and the educational development of our youth (Huges, 1994). Leadership is second only to good classroom instruction. Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) reported that there are no documented cases of troubled schools being turned around without the guidance of a powerful leader.

Over the next few years, more administrators will be selected for schools than has occurred during the past two decades. Most of our current school leaders will either be leaving the profession or retiring. Throughout the United States, administrator turnover continues to be of major concern, hence reinforcing how imperative it is that outstanding professionals move into the leadership role (Winter & Jaeger, 2002). The fate of the principalship rests in the performance of principals. By their daily operations, those in the role will either enhance the principalship or diminish it. People carve out roles from the reality they see.

Quite a bit of work has been done in the past two decades to develop a core of educators more able to describe what *is* than to see what *ought to be*, or what is possible, in education. Minds focused on what *is* are blinded to the importance of relatively intangible forces and difficult-to-measure interrelationships that make it possible to understand learning processes. Such minds can be obsessed with the purely mechanical, the easily measurable, the lifeless elements of life and learning. Such blindness is pseudoscience, of course, but it passes for wisdom when the trappings of science are substituted for insights and intuitions that are possible only when scientists recognize and account for their own limitations. Torrance (1965), once compared creativity with intelligence by saying that an intelligent person challenged to improve the whale oil lamp would improve the design of the lamp, improve the efficiency with which the lamp consumed oil, and brighten the light from the wick; the creative person would invent the electric light. We need educators who see potential for electric lights in what appears to be an oily and sooty problem (Wayson, 1979). One might say the major barriers to leadership come from within an individual; consequently, the major way to help anyone become a leader is to enable him or her to discover and practice ways of expressing his/her potential. We know that training, selection, and assignment procedures will open new perspectives to future leaders, as well as promote problem solving skills and encourage initiative, all of which facilitate leadership. We must move our administrators beyond reality into a state of improving all that they see.

Prior to the twentieth century, the role of the school principal was closely aligned with public expectations. The elementary school principal functioned as the head teacher and substitute parent, fulfilling both the roles of instructional expert and *in loco parentis*. The secondary principal was a scholar, overseeing a narrow college preparatory curriculum and a teaching staff focused on getting a very few students ready for advanced study. What the public wanted was for young children to be disciplined and to learn basic skills and for a very few older children to become practicing professionals or attend the university. The narrowness of the mission made the nature of the school clear and the job of the principal a manageable one (Cottrell, 1983).

The role of the principal has changed over the last decade. As stated by Rubin (2002), the public pressure to hold students to a higher standard and the political pressures for accountability are making the principal's job more challenging. This makes the task of finding effective principals more difficult. In addition to high stakes accountability measures, school districts are faced with larger numbers of retirees. According to the 2002 National Association of Elementary School Principals report, 66% of 29,500 elementary and middle school principals and assistant principals will retire in the next six to ten years (Caper, 2004). This is due in part to the large number of "baby boomers" who started working 30 or more years ago. In the Spokane Public Schools study (Caper, 2004), Superintendent Nancy Stowell stated that their elementary principal retirement rate went from having no vacancies one year to three the

following year. She states that filling the three positions caused a domino effect as people within the district applied for jobs, which created other vacancies. Since many principals today enter the field with little or no education experience, the selection process for this important job is the most significant factor in assuming quality candidates (Kirkpatrick, 2000).

William Harwood (2004) believes that over 75% of “failed hires can be traced to flaws or gaps in the hiring process” (p. 448). At times, districts are in such a hurry to fill the position that little thought is given to the community in which the school is situated or the students. Rubin (2002) argues that building collaborative relationships with other agencies, institutions, and community groups is the only way educational leaders can successfully help all students. Unfortunately, this theory is often overlooked in principal assignment.

Over the last five years, Cuttino County Schools, the district in which this study occurred, has hired more than 60 new principals. Cuttino County Schools is the third largest school district in the state serving more than 72,000 students. The school district is the second largest employer in a 12-county area, employing more than 10,000 full and part-time employees. Of the district’s 122 schools located in both urban and rural areas, 68 are elementary, serving grades K through 5, and in some settings Pre-K through 5. The district also boasts 21 middle schools, 25 high schools, including middle and early colleges, two special education schools, and six alternative and high school academies.

As the Executive Director of Human Resources for Cuttino County Schools, I realize that the selection of school administrators is a significant factor that can change a school's history. With this knowledge, we forge ahead on a path crafted by Dr. Martin Haberman based on a composite of theory, research, and best practice. Haberman's efforts represent a blending of effective principals' behaviors and their ideology; that is, the beliefs they hold that undergird and support their behaviors. By looking at performance behaviors and beliefs, Haberman developed a dual process for searching the literature and checking it against the craft wisdom of star principals. This procedure yielded eleven functions that became the key to his interview tool. In his book, *Creating Effective Schools in Failed Urban Districts* (2004), Haberman states that those functions include:

Leadership—*It predicts the principal's willingness to persist in dealing with tough problems over and over, day in and day out. Is this the kind of leader who will never give up, or will he/she simply learn to live with conditions that may be legal but which are not in the best interest of children?*

Commitment to Student Learning *It predicts the principal's willingness to protect and enhance children's learning. Is this the kind of leader who will create tension between these easily espoused goals versus pleasing his supervisors?*

Theory into Practice—*Effective principals have a vision of what their schools can achieve for their students and community. They create this vision by drawing on their ideology regarding what a school charged with the responsibility for educating a free people should aspire to be. This leader should be able to clearly and persuasively explain a vision for the school and how this set of purposes was developed.*

The Role of the School Serving Students in Poverty—*this function provides insight into what the candidate truly believes about the children and why they are being underdeveloped in schools. These beliefs in turn reveal whether or not the candidate really believes all children can learn.*

Curriculum and Instructional Leader—*effective leaders hold their teacher and students to high expectations. They spend a major portion of each day working with teachers to improve the educational program.*

Creating a Positive School Climate-Fighting Burnout—*burnout can affect everyone. School principals are especially vulnerable since they are responsible for conditions which they can influence but not control.*

Principals must be sensitive to the causes of their stress and accept them as an inevitable part of the job. Good principals must believe that they themselves might be victims of burn-out.

Evaluation—*predicts the principal's ability to improve students' learning, teachers' instruction, the school program, and his/her own performance.*

The effective leader knows and can articulate which goals are merely means toward more important ends.

Decision Making—*it predicts whether the principal believes this is “my school” or “our” school. The basis for expecting the principal to create a genuine school community of staff, teachers, children and parents, or whether he/she will try to create a situation where people do what they are told.*

Fallibility—*a predictor of idiosyncratic behavior, it seeks to gauge the nature of the school climate the candidate will create as principal.*

Administrative Style—*it predicts the respondent’s performance as a leader of change efforts. Will the leader follow a decision making style that is democratic in which involvement of others is stressed as much as outcomes?*

Administrative Relations with Parents and Community—*schools serving children and youth in poverty are community institutions. They belong to the people, including parents, neighbors, and members of culture groups who identify with the school. (Haberman, 2004, p. 2)*

In spite of the time spent on conducting structured interviews and having those interviewed who received moderate to high scores on the Haberman instrument, not all of these individuals have been successful in the administrative role. An effective urban school or highly impacted school cannot be led by a

principal functioning as a building manager. This leader must instead be an individual ready to function as the leader of a non-profit community organization.

In Cuttino County, the “highly impacted” school is identified as one demonstrating that the K-12 membership has sufficiently high percentages of economically disadvantaged students. “The formula for distribution of funds to these schools shall take into consideration the total of all students enrolled in the school and shall equally weigh five factors: Student mobility, students eligible for free and reduced school lunch, students of ethnic minorities, students of limited English proficiency, and students from single parent families” (Bartlett, 2005, p. 13). Funding is provided for students in high-poverty schools to enhance instruction and services.

The effective leader of a highly impacted school must accomplish three basic goals: “S/he must create a vision; build an effective team to implement that vision; and engender commitment to task” (Haberman, 2004, p. 2). This means that the principal does not carry him/herself as one hierarchically looking down on those at the school, but as an advocate for all the constituent groups in the school community upward. The number one priority of this leader is helping the teachers, staff, parents and community to demand what is in the best interest of stimulating and enhancing the learning of the children in the school. To be effective, the leader of the highly impacted school must be ready to identify with the school. The community cannot be ignored if the school is to be effective. The school should be the safe haven for all groups within the community and work to

protect these groups at all cost. It should be an inviting place with a constant flow of parents, community resource people, visitors, and the entire real world surrounding it. The most critical dimension of this effort is who the principal is and how s/he approaches others.

Haberman (2004) suggests that key concepts to the success of such a match are respect, empathy and involvement. The leader must demonstrate genuine feelings of respect for the parents and families of the school community. Regardless of the poverty, violence, unemployment, drugs, or other conditions which impinge on their community, leaders can never fall into the trap of looking down on or acting superior to the parents and families they serve.

An effective leader must pay close attention to the language he/she uses with parents. Even though the manner in which s/he speaks may be different from the parents, the leader must be cautious not to create social distance. In writing and in oral communication, the leader should demonstrate respect for the parents by speaking in ways that are understandable and friendly and in a manner that does not put the parent off.

If a leader will listen to what a parent has to say, he/she has the most powerful means of showing that he/she really does respect the parent. The leader should demonstrate empathy by showing he/she understands and cares about parents' problems. If the parent raises questions the leader should have helpful tips that can be shared with the parent. Most important, however, is for the leader in a school to involve parents. Parents should be stakeholders and

active participants in the school at all levels of decision making and in the improvement of students.

Haberman (2004) reminds us that in a successful urban school, the leader becomes a strong, persistent advocate of his/her constituents against the system. The effective leader does not take “no” for an answer. If there are no resources within the system, s/he seeks ways of reworking budgets to make things happen. The effective leader figures out ways to circumvent or mitigate the impact of the systems policies. Effective leaders never ask for “permission” before implementing policies and practices which support children’s learning. They are experts at knowing how systems work, who the people are at the central level who can help them, and the specific ways in which they can make things that are not typically done become acceptable or go unnoticed. These are not leaders who aspire to be in central office roles, and they could care less about being one who can be trusted. Often the leader of an effective school is one who is seen as someone the system puts up with and tolerates because they become too visible to be easily reassigned.

Educational organizations suggest that where these qualities are present, the organization is more likely to be effective in achieving its aims and objectives. Knowing that the attributes described are those needed to ensure that the leader in a highly impacted school is successful creates for us a tremendous challenge. How is it that we ensure that any candidates selected by our screening tools accurately and adequately reflect that individual who demonstrates these

characteristics? The research seems to indicate that we must go beyond the answers found in the screening tool. We know that the consequences of ineffective leadership are that the educational institution not only fails to achieve its educational objectives, but also fails to provide satisfactory environments for the development of personally significant learning or personal relationships (Harling, 1984). Given the importance of effective leadership for the achievement of educational objectives in schools, it is necessary to examine several points.

First, leadership is not related to a role. It is a term used to describe a particular combination of personal qualities or 'way of being' (Harling, 1984, p. 18) which both encourages and enable others to follow. Often we think of a person in a leadership role as having a set of skills which can be learned or developed. Leadership is not about skills, rules or procedures but about the person and the quality of that person's relationship with others (Harling, 1984).

Secondly, leadership is not about power. Leadership must always be defined in the context of openness, acceptance, sharing and exchange. Leaders who see themselves as organizers, decision-makers, or supreme authorities will experience difficulty as leaders since they will create dependency and will often be the subject of criticism (Harling, 1984).

Thirdly, leaders may occupy any position in the school. Getting away from having all decisions made by the head, or senior colleagues reinforces that leadership can and should come from anywhere in the school (Harling, 1984).

Finally, training for leadership cannot be normative, prescriptive, skill-based or problem-centered. Instead, it needs to focus upon the personal and interpersonal qualities of the person. To accomplish these points, we must go beyond discussion and role play. Rather than discussing the role of the leader or possible responses to imaginary problems, we need to give candidates real problems and ask “what will you do, and how will you do it” (Harling, 1984, p. 23). This approach allows leadership to be experienced while those responsible for hiring have an opportunity to see first-hand areas of strength and those needing more work (Harling, 1984).

This study addresses how school systems select and place successful administrators in school communities. This first chapter has introduced the study. The study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What dispositions support the identification of successful principals in twenty-first century schools?
2. How can a district’s principal selection and placement process tools ensure a good fit between the principal and the school community?

As I prepared for this research, I reviewed relevant literature on school leadership, principal selection and placement, and the changing role and requirements of principals. In the next chapter, I reviewed the relevant literature in more detail.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Researchers have named the principal as the key factor to a school's success (Leithwood et al., 2004; Owens, 2001; Prestine, 1993; Richardson & Lane, 1993). Huges (1994) argues that the principal can be responsible for the success or failure of students. Many studies have shown the massive role of the principal by developing lists of skills and qualities of effective principals (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990; Kowalski, Reitzug, McDaniel, & Otto, 1992; Thomson, 1992). Few research studies, however, supply methods to help schools find the "star" principals who can move a school forward (Haberman, 1999).

Equipping today's school with outstanding educational leaders is becoming increasingly difficult (Malone & Caddell, 2000). In order to help answer the questions for this study, I reviewed literature on the following topics: the changing role of principals; the shortage of qualified candidates and the reasons for that shortage; special programs and recruitment incentives; the structured interview process and school administrator selection and placement.

The Changing Role of School Leaders

In the past, a principal's day could be bogged down with managerial duties (Ervay, 2006). Monitoring instruction was not a part of the principal's role. Today,

however, the principal is charged with being the leader in curriculum and instruction (Bertani, 2002; Macmillan, Meyer, & Sherman, 2001; Mulford & Silins, 1998). Over the past two decades, there has been a wave of change in the public schools in the United States (Lam, 2001). Beginning in the early 1990s, educators sought ways to reform and improve our schools (Collard, 2004; Lam, 2001). It was during this period that curriculum standards and statewide testing had a strong impact on instruction (Caldwell & Haywood 1998; Collard & Pascoe, 1995; Marginson, 1997). These changes have caused the role of the principal to change. Bolman and Deal (1992) believe that no other professional position has received more changes.

School leaders today face many challenges. Principals are constantly under the microscope (Fowler 1991; Moorthy, 1992); they are overburdened with more and more responsibilities and they don't always have the knowledge to address these problems (Lane, 1992; Richardson & Lane, 1993; Thompson, 1992). Principals have to be concerned about teacher shortages, teacher turnover; standards-based reform and accountability (Drago-Severson, 2007). In many school districts, principals are hired to improve the curriculum in a school by guiding teachers to determine the best ways to increase student achievement (Ediger, 2002). Increasing student achievement and accountability is an important consideration in choosing school leaders (Andrews & Ridenour, 2006). Some scholars have suggested that the role of a principal can be viewed as a performing art rather than a set of skills, competencies, and knowledge (Sarason,

1999; Vaill, 1989). A principal is expected to perform many tasks in order to ensure school success. The duties of a principal can be expressed more in actions than in words (Wayson, Bruno et al., 1996).

Sergiovanni (1996) lists today's principal's roles into the following tasks:

- Proposing-bringing shared visions into school and department covenants that speak compellingly to supervisors, teachers, parents and students with a moral voice.
- Maintaining harmony—building a consensual understanding of school and department purposes and functions, and of the moral connections between roles and responsibilities, while respecting individual conscience and style differences.
- Institutionalizing values—translating covenants into a workable set of procedures and structures that facilitates the accomplishment of purposes and provides norm systems for guiding behavior.
- Motivating—providing for the basic psychological and cultural needs of members to experience sensible and meaningful school lives.
- Managing—ensuring the necessary day-to-day planning and support that keeps the school and the department running effectively and efficiently.
- Explaining—giving reasons for asking members to do certain things, and providing explanations that link what they are doing to the larger picture.

- Enabling—removing obstacles that prevent members from meeting their commitments, and providing appropriate resources and support.
- Modeling—accepting responsibility as head proponent of the school's covenant by modeling purposes and values in thought, word and action.
- Supervising—providing the necessary oversight to ensure that the school meets its commitments and, when it is not, to find out why and to help everyone to do something about it. (pp. 1, 2)

Principal Shortage

Researchers have found that fewer school educators are interested in becoming a principal (Winter & Jaeger, 2002; Murphy & Beck, 1994). This is due in part to the demands of the job, as well as the high accountability standards (Mitgang, 2003; Winter & Partenheimer, 2002). Thus, the selection of qualified school leaders is more and more difficult for human resource administrators. Many school districts today are finding it difficult to find good school principals (Roza, 2003). In a study of human resource directors sponsored by the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds, Roza found that:

- The average district receives 17 applications for each principal's position it is trying to fill, a modest decline of perhaps two applicants per position over seven years.
- Nearly two-thirds of human resource directors report little difficulty finding principals.

- In most regional labor markets studied, increased numbers of applicants in some districts are offset by decreases or no change in others. Within each metropolitan area, the real problem is one of distribution, not inadequate supply.
- Some districts (and schools within districts) are avoided by prospective principals. Districts and schools with the fewest applicants are typically those with the most challenging work conditions, higher concentrations of poor and minority students, and lower salaries for principals. Taken together, these factors generally separate the high “need” districts from the rest.
- Rural educators, who receive the lowest number of applicants per position, are largely unconcerned about the situation; confident they can identify needs in advance and groom the leaders they need. (pp. 7, 8)

Roza (2003) suggests that although there appears to be a universal acceptance of the notion that school districts in the United States do not have enough principals to staff their schools, there is very little data to support this view. Mitgang (2003) believes that there is no shortage of certified candidates for the principalship. He contends that the problem of filling the principal vacancies lies in the inability to find principals with quality rather than with the needed certification. Winter and Partenheimer (2002) argue that there are enough

certified administrators to fill vacant positions; however, they are not qualified for the position. Researchers concur that recruiting and selecting qualified school principals has become a growing concern (Bowles, 1990; Educational Research Service, 1998; Fenwick, 2000; McAdams, 1998; McCormick, 1987; Pounder & Merrill, 2001). The pools of qualified applicants for school vacancies are rapidly decreasing in number (Winter & Jaeger, 2002).

School Administrator Selection and Placement

Selecting the right leader for a school is important. Some researchers believe that recruiting and selecting qualified school principals has become a national crisis (Bowles, 1990; Fenwick, 2000; McAdams, 1998; McCormick, 1987; Pounder & Merrill, 2001). Finding a principal who will be successful is more and more challenging. When a principal fails, it creates problems for the students, teachers and community (Knuth & Banks, 2006). Researchers (Davis, 1997; Coutts, 1997; Knuth & Banks, 2006) concur that principals who are unsuccessful early in their career leave the profession forever. This only adds to the shortage problem.

Filling vacant principal positions is becoming increasingly more difficult for school districts in the United States (McAdams, 1998; Young, Peterson, & Short, 2002). Current trends show that filling the open principalship will become harder as the pool of qualified applicants continue to shrink (ERS, 1998; Newton, 2001).

Researchers (Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998) attribute the shrinking pool of applicants for the role of principal to the pending retirements of experienced

principals and the exiting of individuals in other types of leadership positions in an organization. Another cause of the limited number of applicants might be attributed to the changed role of the principal (Murphy & Beck, 1994) Principals today have higher expectations and standards set for them.

Although most districts report a shortage, some researchers disagree. In a study to examine the supply of principal candidates, Marguerite Roza (2003) found:

- The average district receives 17 applicants for each principal's position it is trying to fill, a modest decline of two applicants per position over seven years.
- Nearly two-thirds of human resource directors reported little difficulty finding principals.
- In most regional labor markets studied, increased numbers of applicants in some districts are offset by decreases or no change in others. Within each metropolitan area, the real problem is one of distribution, not inadequate supply. (p. 9)

There is growing evidence, however, that the number of public school principals is decreasing (Howley, Andrianaivo, & Perry, 2005; Malone & Caddell, 2000; Murphy & Beck, 1994). Studies concluded that even teachers with principal certificates do not pursue the principalship (Jordan, McCauley, & Comeaux, 1994). This has led to the difficult task of selecting qualified individuals for the principal role.

In an effort to select and place principals in vacant positions, many school districts react by developing administrator recruitment procedures and incentives (Pounder & Young, 1996). In addition, many districts create leadership programs that will enable them to “grow their own” (Malone & Caddell, 2000).

Selecting and placing an individual in the vacant principal position is only the beginning of retaining competent and effective administrators. In addition to being a strong leader, a principal must be able to collaborate with families and community members and respond to diverse community needs (Malone & Caddell, 2000). Little research has been done on ensuring a good fit between the principal and a given school community. This study examined how principal selection and placement can be revised and expanded.

Theoretical Perspectives and Research on Principal Selection

Marzano (2003) has shown that students in effective schools, as opposed to ineffective schools, have a 44% difference in their expected passing rate on a test that has a typical passing rate of 50%. Whether a school operates effectively or not increases or decreases a student’s chances of academic success.

Selecting the right principal to lead a school is the first key to a student’s success. It is crucial that school districts invest in hiring candidates who are well suited to lead our twenty-first century schools (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Since the role of the principal is so important, selecting the person to fill the role can be as equally important. According to Kouzes and Posner (1993), choosing a leader should be a decision that is free and binding. It should be a

long process that could include lengthy discussions, interviews and a day “in the field.”

Based on previous theory and research on principal selection, especially concerning the right “fit” for a given school, my conceptual framework is that if school districts define the needs of a given school, use a selection process that clearly shows a candidate’s leadership skills, and assign principals to schools for which they are suited based on the selection process outcomes, we will have successful leaders for our twenty-first century schools.

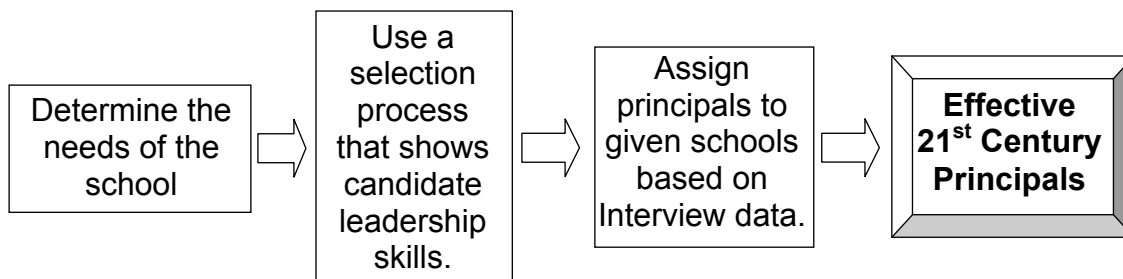


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The Structured Interview Process

Various interview processes are utilized by school districts in the selection of administrative leaders for their schools (Haberman, 1999). Sammons, Hillman, and Mortimore (1995) have found that rigorous, transparent, and well-defined selection processes are crucial for building and sustaining successful schools. Selecting the right candidates for leadership positions has a significant impact on effective school performance. Selection to a principal position shall be

determined solely on the basis of merit assessed against the selection criteria for the position.

Upon my arrival in the department of Human Resources with the Cuttino County Schools 1993-1994, I was included in the selection and placement of various school administrators. Initially, the selection of administrators for positions was based on the ratings of an interview team. These teams were usually made up of five to seven members from the district's leadership group. Questions asked by this team generally were developed by the Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and generally focused on: Commitment to the field of work; Reliability; Initiative; Aptitude for the position; Emotional Stability; Interpersonal Relations; Ability to Maintain Rapport; Effectiveness; Appearance; and Voice and English Usage. The instrument had questions under each title and points designated for each item. The applicants with the highest scores were deemed the most desirable candidates (see Table 1). This process continued for a period of about seven years and was only altered when someone of status insisted that their best friend, old classmate, or family member be hired. Unfortunately, it never mattered how well this person did in the interview process.

Understanding that there is no more important job in any school district than recruiting, selecting, and retaining outstanding school administrators (Evans, 2007), during the 2000-2001 school year, the Human Resources department was charged with the task of seeking out and examining selection instruments.

Table 1. 1993-1994 Cuttino County Schools Principal Selection Instrument

Focus Questions	Ratings			
	5 Strong	4 Average	3 Below Average	2 Unsatisfactory
Questions that rate reliability				
Questions that rate initiative				
Questions that rate aptitude				
Questions that rate emotional stability				
Questions that rate interpersonal relations				
Questions that rate how a candidate would maintain rapport				
Questions that rate effectiveness				
Questions that rate appearance or the candidate ability to “dress professionally”				
Questions that rate the candidate’s voice and English usage.				
Total				

There was a desire to acquire an instrument that would capture the true feelings, beliefs, and values of an individual as well as their talents. It was believed that if candidates could be found who demonstrated mastery of these areas, they held the strongest probability of being successful administrators. We began the process by examining two unique instruments: The Gallup Principal Insight Interview and Ventures for Excellence Administrator Screener.

Gallup International was formally founded in May, 1947, with 11 original members and Dr. George H. Gallup as its first President. Dr. Gallup served until his death in 1984. Currently, the Gallup International Association is registered in Zurich, Switzerland, and has almost 60 members and research capabilities in about 100 countries around the world. One of the principal strengths of Gallup International is the ready access it provides to survey research capabilities and facilities around the world.

Gallup boasts of having helped school districts recruit and select outstanding principals for more than 20 years, through the use of a tool called Principal Insight. Gallup's research-based selection tool goes far beyond a surface inquiry into knowledge and skills; it assesses the talents needed for success in the principal's role. The outcomes of an assessment is based on the applicant's responses and includes a score that is predictive of an applicant's potential for success as a principal based on his or her talents.

As part of Principal Insight, Gallup provides district representatives with the Principal FIT (Further Insight into Talent) interview. This series of open-ended questions assists district leaders or interview teams in assessing the "fit" of finalists for the position. The Principal FIT interview gives applicants an opportunity to describe in a personal interview some of the talents assessed by Principal Insight (Evans, 2007).

Ventures for Excellence was founded in 1978 by Dr. Vic Cottrell. Dr. Cottrell, a renowned teacher, professor, trainer and consultant, believed that

thriving organizations in the twenty-first century will be ones where the executives are constantly innovating, employing and supporting the most talented people. The driving force behind success of any organization is selecting the right employees and maximizing their talents (Cottrell, 1983).

The Ventures for Excellence principal search process requires each applicant to respond to a series of everyday school leadership situations with their style preference. The resulting profile gives school leaders helpful information that is used along with other application data to identify candidates consistent with district needs. Ventures for Excellence professionals studied in-depth the life styles, attitudes, skills and behaviors of excellent administrators and have defined several core areas which reoccur in outstanding leaders. When those areas were studied, they assisted the Ventures team in developing qualities that help school districts select and develop outstanding administrative leaders. Those qualities include: Purpose/Human Worth, Human Interaction/Relationships, Human Development, and Practical Application/Resources Awareness (Cottrell, 1983). The Cuttino County Schools Human Resource Department began using the Ventures for Excellence instrument in 2003 for the selection of school administrators. After approximately two years, there was a push to move toward an instrument that addressed and supported efforts to find the principal able to function in a more urban school setting. This promoted the Human Resources Department to search for another selection tool. As a result of

extensive research and encouragement of school board members and the superintendent, the Haberman Star Administrator tool was implemented.

The Haberman Educational Foundation founded in 1993 promoted a research-based interview developed by Dr. Martin Haberman, Distinguished Professor, University of Wisconsin (Stafford, 2003). Dr. Haberman's foundation was developed to find teachers and principals of excellence for all children and youth in America. The Haberman interview process for principals uses a questionnaire that merges the knowledge and research base with effective practices of outstanding urban principals (Haberman, 2003). The research and theory base was summarized in 24 domains of Knowledge and Skill Base. Outstanding or "Star" principals in three city schools districts were identified: 27 in Houston, 18 in Milwaukee and 84 in Chicago. The principals from these districts were invited to participate in the development by using the principal's achievement scores for a three year period; they were rated by their staff members and they all had the support of their parents and community. The domains of written knowledge base and duties performed by the principals in the study were combined into eleven functions. These functions represented the behaviors that the star urban principals exhibited:

- Leadership
- Commitment to Student Learning
- Theory into Practice
- Role of the School Serving Students in Poverty

- Curriculum and Instructional Leader
- Creating a Positive School Climate and Fighting Burnout
- Evaluation
- Decision-Making
- Fallibility
- Administrative Style
- Administrative Relations and Parents & Community (Haberman, 2003)

The Human Resources Department of Cuttino County Schools began using the Haberman Interview process for all principals in 2005. Since that time, no principal has been assigned to a school without being interviewed by a team of central office personnel. Dr. Martin Haberman himself has helped select new principals in the district.

Through the literature examined, I learned that although there are several selection tools designed to identify school leaders, no two focus on the same functions. Based on previous theory and research, my conceptual framework is that after the needs of the school are determined, we should use a selection process that allows candidates to demonstrate leadership skills and assign that candidate based on the interview data. I gathered data that helped me determine how to develop an instrument based on the themes that emerged from this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

I explored the question of how effective the interview process is in selecting and placing successful principals in the twenty-first century schools. This study was an attempt to contribute to the limited knowledge of finding qualified educators to lead in today's schools in an effort to assist human resource administrators select candidates who are able to lead the schools to which they are assigned. I investigated these questions using qualitative and quantitative methods to do a case study. This study was an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What dispositions support the identification of successful principals in twenty-first century schools?
2. How do principals' leadership skills affect the outcome of student achievement?
3. How can a district's principal selection and placement process ensure a good fit between the principal and the school community?

Research Approach

Presently, Cuttino County School District in Florence, North Carolina, uses the Haberman Star Principals process, a structured interviewing process, in assigning principals to schools. The process involves the rating or quantifying of

the applicant's responses. At the completion of the interview process, candidates are given a number or score that represents their expected level of competence. Although this quantitative method is useful, I feel that more thought should be given to answers or questions that can only be answered in a qualitative mode.

In order to understand the prospective principals' thoughts and feelings about a given school or community and in order to determine the effectiveness of that principal, I used both a qualitative and a quantitative case study approach. Shank and Villella (2004) describe qualitative research as a lantern used to illuminate dark areas so that we can see. It is my hope that this study will shed light on the issue of "School Administrator Selection and Placement." Riehl (2001) defines qualitative research as drawing a large net around any research that uses methods to help researchers analyze data in ways to understand the world on its own terms. Maxwell (2004) suggests that qualitative research recognizes the reality and the importance of its meaning as well as the interpretive nature of our understanding of that reality. Schwandt (2001) contends that "qualitative inquiry deals with human lived experience. It is the life-world as it is lived, felt, undergone, made sense of, and accomplished by human beings that is the object of study" (p. 84).

In choosing both qualitative and quantitative research methods, I had to consider the characteristics of both. In quantitative research, data are usually presented in some numerical form and are then analyzed with statistical procedures, while in qualitative research, the data are words which are analyzed

for their meanings and relationships. Qualitative research is interpretive; it provides an opportunity for people to talk about ideas and feelings in their own language or to be observed by the researcher for their meanings and relationships. Using a qualitative research approach helped me construct a deeper understanding of how to appropriately assign principals to schools and communities (Sipe & Ghiso, 2004). I accomplished this by doing a field study that involved limited case studies of principals with data collected through interviews, surveys, and observations. In addition, I used data from Cuttino County's candidate rating forms. The number ratings indicated a candidate's orientation to the work of the school administrator. These numbers supported a candidate's strengths and weaknesses for accomplishing the task involved in of school leadership.

A case study design is used to gain a clear understanding of a problem or situation (Merriam, 2002). Yin (1994) defines the case study research process as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are clearly evident" (p. 13). Miles and Huberman (1994) think of a case study as a "phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (p. 25). They show a case study as a circle with a heart in the middle. The heart is the focus of the study, while the circle "defines the edge of the case: what will be studied" (p. 25). Principals are the heart of my study, and the edge is studying how those principals are assigned to their given schools and the impact they

might have on the school community. Each principal represents a distinct but limited case; together, the multiple cases should provide a window on principal selection. The principals are selected as a result of the interview process, and these factors are hard to separate. Since case studies are appropriate to use when it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from the context (Yin, 1994), this was a good design for my study. Additionally, case studies "concentrate attention on the way particular groups of people confront specific problems, taking a holistic view of the situation" (Shaw, 1978, p. 21). Using a case study design also allowed me to get close to the participants. Bromley (1986) argues that case studies

. . . get as close to the subject of interest as they possibly can, partly by means of direct observation in natural settings, partly by their access to subjective factors (thoughts, feelings, and desires), whereas experiments and surveys often use convenient data, e.g. test results and official records. Also, case studies tend to spread the net for evidence widely, whereas experiments and surveys usually have a narrow focus. (p. 23)

Since case studies are often prevalent in the field of education (Merriam, 2002), this design was suitable for my study.

Data Collection

I collected qualitative data on the participants in my study through interviews and observations.. Further quantitative data was gathered from personnel file review, the interview selection rating forms and teacher working conditions surveys. Interviewing is a popular way to gather qualitative research data because talking is natural (Griffiee, 2005). Interview techniques do not

presuppose any statistical knowledge, and the people interviewed might be close at hand and willing to talk (Griffie, 2005). As Patton (1990) explains, we interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe.

He states:

We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (p. 196)

In this study I was interested in behaviors, feelings and how people interpret the world around them. I was also interested in past events that are impossible to relive (Merriam, 2002). Through one-to-one interviews, I was able to interpret the participant's perspectives. Interviews were a good way to get data for my study. Reissman (1993) states that interviews "are conversations in which both participants/teller and listener/questioner develop meaning together, a stance requiring interview practices that give considerable freedom to both" (p. 55). Listeners can clarify uncertainties with follow-up questions. Although this method is suitable for my study, as an African American senior staff member in the district where my research participants work, I had to be very careful in conducting interviews. Because of my position of "perceived power" in the district, I made sure that I established trust with the participants by ensuring them

that the data I collected was not shared with their supervisors or anyone else in the system.

Observation is the process of gathering data. In observation, “the researcher watches the behavior and documents the properties of the object” (Potter, 1996, p. 98). Observation data can represent firsthand knowledge of a phenomenon (Merriam, 2002). Thus, spending time in the principals’ school was a good way to explore my research topic. One way to meet this goal was to live in these schools, but instead I observed for a couple of hours in order to see how the principals interacted with the teachers, parents and community. I used an observation form and recorded positive and negative interactions. I also looked to see signs of how the principals were connected to their communities.

Research Settings and Participants

I conducted a case study of six principals who were leaders in schools embedded in a large urban district setting. Principals were selected from recommendations by senior level administrators and board members in the school district where the study was conducted. For each principal, three persons from the school community who were familiar with the principals’ work were interviewed. My study focused on the behaviors, actions and interactions of the school principal with his/her school_community. The participants in my study were selected from three different levels of schools: elementary, middle, and high (see Table 2).

Table 2. Research Participants

Participant	Grade Level	Race	Gender	Years of Experience	Years at Assigned School
Dr. Hamm	Elementary	African American	Female	16	2.5
Ms. Lynn	Elementary	Caucasian	Female	35	8.0
Ms. Songbird	Middle	African American	Female	21	1.5
Mr. Barley	Middle	Caucasian	Male	9	3.0
Dr. Turner	High	African American	Female	25	3.0
Ms. Ebony	High	Caucasian	Female	17	3.0

Schools and their Leaders

Valley Middle School

Valley Middle School was named after a well known Governor in the state of North Carolina and is located in the northeast section of Florence, North Carolina. The community is filled with late nineteenth and early twentieth century residences and is often referred to as a historic district in Florence. Valley Middle serves 677 students in grades 6-8. Presently the school is 70% African American, 14.6% White, 5% Asian, 5.9% Hispanic and 4.5% Multi racial. Over time new buildings have been added to accommodate the growth of the student population. The school provides a strong connection between classroom practices and technology. There is a Spanish Immersion Program at Valley, where students take advantage of a second language.

Parental involvement and community support continue to be a challenge. Valley Middle offers a wide range of support services that include mentoring,

counseling, musical programs, social and academic clubs, athletic and academic teams. Valley maintains a collaborative relationship with three local universities.

The mission of Valley Middle School is that the school will be centered on building relationships with the concept that all “All students must learn.” The Valley school community shares the following vision:

- All stakeholders will make bold commitments to foster better results.
- Children will be treated as individuals who have numerous talents and strengths
- All learners will engage in active learning and collaboration which develop the whole child
- Parental support and input will be highly encouraged and valued by the whole community
- Character development will be important and will contribute to a safe and orderly school environment

The school leader. Ms. Songbird, an African American female, grew up in a neighboring community to Florence, North Carolina. Before becoming a principal, Ms. Songbird was a classroom teacher. Because of her unique ability to teach mathematics to elementary youngsters, Songbird became the Elementary Math Curriculum Specialist for the school district. In this role, she assisted classroom teachers with math instruction. She also conducted staff development activities for the district employees. After serving in the role of math curriculum specialist, Songbird became a teacher on special assignment (TOSA).

In this role, she worked as a coach for beginning elementary teachers in all content areas. During the 2001-2002, school year, the school district initiated a new organizational structure. Principal supervisors (Instructional Improvement Officers) were assigned a reading and math coach in order to help schools raise the achievement levels of their students. Songbird was placed on one of the new teams as a Math Coach. After serving in her new role for one year, she became an assistant principal and it was evident right away that she had the ability to help teachers move a school forward.

When district officials needed a principal at a struggling elementary school, Freedom Elementary, Songbird was tagged to take the role. This school had not made adequate yearly progress (AYP) in two years and the State Department of Public Instruction had sent an improvement team to the school. Ms. Songbird was not at the school long before improvements became evident. At the end of her tenure, Freedom Elementary was no longer in school improvement. Ms. Songbird's performance impressed district officials, and she was promoted to Valley as a middle school principal.

Ms. Songbird's varied experiences prepared her to become a school principal. Growing up in the area and living with parents who were educators helped her understand the district that later employed her.

I am from a few miles north of here. I grew up here. My parents are both educators, retired. On my paternal side all have been teachers and educators at some point. On my maternal side, some teachers are there and all are ministers. That has had a strong impact on me. I have been in education for 20 years and can't see myself doing anything else.

Administration kind of evolved, it wasn't something I set out to do, but experiences along the way created this desire in me to create a setting that modeled my beliefs and philosophies even as a teacher.

Phifer High School

Phifer High School a predominately black high school was established in 1929 and named after a former college president. Building upon its legacy and heritage, Phifer High School was a landmark for the African American community during segregation. In the early years, students from the school excelled in academics, sports, drama, dance, debate, music and other extracurricular activities. Now 76 years later, numerous social and demographic changes have resulted from integration and redistricting. An Academy was initiated within this school specifically designed to encourage students to continue their interest in the areas of science, math and technology. Phifer High School has a student population of approximately 1,500 students, 98% of whom are African Americans. At the time of this study, approximately 63% of the students at Phifer High School were classified as economically disadvantaged.

The mission of Phifer High School is to work in partnership with all stakeholders promoting academic excellence, responsible citizenship, and lifelong learning. The Phifer school community shares the following beliefs:

- Our school is a safe and caring place for teaching and learning
- Every student should be given the knowledge, skills and support services to succeed in high school
- Every student can and will learn

- Parents, staff, students, community agencies, and Phifer stakeholders must partner to achieve academic success

Phifer High School engaged in a series of major initiatives that were designed to improve the overall climate of the school and academic success of its students. These initiatives included:

- Staff Training on Cooperative Learning
- Hiring of a Literacy and Mathematics Facilitator to provide direct instructional support to all staff
- Professional Development for teaching in a 90 minute block schedule

Implementation of the comprehensive reform model. The challenges for Phifer High School were to increase student performance levels, master the federal mandates of Adequate Yearly Progress, and increase SAT and AP scores, while creating a climate where students develop skills as lifelong learners.

The school leader. Dr. Turner, an African American female, was born and raised in Florence, North Carolina. She grew up with many teacher role models in her life. Her mother was a teacher, and their home was located not far from the Phifer High School campus. Dr. Turner's path to an education vocation did not follow the traditional route. After graduating from college, she worked in the law enforcement field. Upon completing her master's degree in counseling, she became a middle school counselor.

I became an administrator because I wanted to broaden my scope of helping students. As a former school counselor I was able to assist students with problem-solving strategies and appropriate choices. I realized that many of the challenges that students faced were academic challenges. I wanted to be an administrator because I felt that I could help the whole child become successful. I enjoy the fact that each child is different.

Dr. Turner was named principal of a struggling elementary school at a challenging period in the school district. Three small school districts in Cuttino County became one district. Dr. Turner had spent her career in the Cuttino County District, but her first principalship was in a former Florence City School. In spite of her challenges, Dr. Turner did an outstanding job at the school and was rewarded by being promoted to a middle school assignment. Again, Dr. Turner excelled in her assignment and was selected to “save” her alma mater, Phifer High School. Because Dr. Turner had attended and graduated from Phifer during its heyday, she was eager for the challenge and ready to bring the school back to the way she remembered it.

King Middle School

King Middle School was founded in 1928 and named for an antebellum Quaker Minister. The school has a long tradition of being the catalyst for holding its community in high standing. King Middle opened a new school building in 2007 and serves an ethnically diverse school community, with 730 students being comprised of African American (298), American Indian (6), Asian (45), Hispanic (69), White (282), and Multiracial (30) students. King Middle School also

provides services for students with disabilities, academically gifted, and language as a second language.

Over the past ten years, King Middle's proficiency percentage has increased from 63% to 84%, a gain of 19.4 percentage points then back to 4-6% after renorming of the middle school scores a few years ago. The school continues to incorporate educational techniques that serve to give students ownership of their own learning and provide opportunities for social development. The overall attendance rate for students at King continued to hold steady, hitting 94.7% for the 2005-2006 academic school year. While more students attended King on a consistent basis, fewer and fewer were retained or lost to dropouts.

The mission of King Middle School is to improve the quality of education for every student. The belief that students want to succeed and need an opportunity to taste the success is embraced in their slogan of "Success Generates More Success." The King school community share the following beliefs:

- All students can and must learn. A student should not have the choice to fail.
- Since success breeds success and failure breeds failure, we must assure success for every student and staff member
- The school staff/student relationship is the most important factor in contributing to or preventing the student's success in school

- A student's disadvantages or disabilities provide opportunities for growth and success, not excuses for failure.

King Middle, while striving to improve in all areas, is targeting specific areas for improvement. This includes reading and math for all students with disabilities. At the time of this study, the major challenge for King Middle was making sure that students with disabilities would make Adequate Yearly Progress.

The school leader. Mr. Barley, Caucasian Male, started his education at home in Cuttino County, guided by parents who were educators.

I grew up and attended this school system as a young kid. I graduated from a local high school. I got my first job at a middle school nearby teaching middle school Social Studies as an eighth grade teacher. I love it, I loved the classroom. I taught there for four years and moved into an assistant principal role at another middle school, and worked for two years. Then I moved into a principalship at another middle school, from there I opened a new school this year. So, I have always been in this area.

Mr. Barley was one of the youngest principal participants in the study. Although he did not spend much time in the classroom teaching, he loved being a teacher. His father was the principal of a middle school before Mr. Barley secured his first administrative assignment. At the time of this research, his father continued to work as a principal at another school in the district. After teaching middle school, Mr. Barley served as a Curriculum Facilitator and later as an assistant principal before becoming the principal at King Middle School.

Renn High School

Renn High School is a traditional, four-year high school situated in the eighth largest city in the state of North Carolina serving 1,442 students. Some 82 languages and dialects and 123 ethnic groups constitute the rich diversity that is reflected in the school census of 44% African American, 10% Hispanic, 37% Caucasian, and 9% American Indian, Asian and Multi-Racial students. A positive and friendly atmosphere of student-centered learning marks Renn High School.

The school offers various educational programs such as Advanced placement, Culinary Arts, International Baccalaureate, Health Services, ROTC, School of Business and Marketing, and technology pathways in which students pursue the most challenging curriculum that is appropriate to their needs. The school staff is culturally and ethnically diverse and reflects the student body. The school's goal is to focus their skills on raising expectations for all students and

- To accelerate learning for those who are below grade level/credits
- To give all students a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose
- To emphasize that success is a product of hard work
- To graduate productive members of society who are able to contribute positively in any given environment
- To increase the number of minority students taking more rigorous courses and who are academically prepared to do so

The mission of Renn High School is to create a climate that is engaging and meaningful for all students. The following is the vision of Renn High School:

- The community, parents, faculty and students will work as a family to provide motivation, communication, and opportunities to enhance student success. Members of this family will interact with each other with respect, integrity, and compassion toward the common goal of preparing young people for a better future.

The staff will recognize that all students can learn, but that not all students learn in the same way or at the same time. The staff will provide opportunities to accelerate student learning and to accommodate the different learning styles of the students with a multi-faceted, extended learning plan, which includes staff development, tutorials and Saturday Academy. School Leader

The school leader. Ms. Ebony, a Caucasian female, grew up in Loham County a small community not far from Cuttino County. Although she did not have lots of experience, Ms. Ebony started her principal career after serving as a teacher and an assistant principal.

I have been a teacher, a coach, an Athletic Director, an assistant principal, and now a principal. I enjoyed being in the classroom helping students, but the more I progressed in my career as a teacher, I really enjoyed helping new teachers as they came into the school and I enjoyed being a part of the leadership team and making changes and watching the school grow. I realized that I wanted to be a part of that, at the top, helping lead the way.

Though many central office administrators questioned naming Ms. Ebony principal of Renn High School because of her limited experience, she was assigned to the school.

Grass Elementary School

Established in 1915, Grass Elementary School remains a historical neighborhood school. Love for and value of Grass is deeply embedded in the community. The present school building was built in 1951. It houses for education children from Pre-K through fifth grade. One hundred percent of the students enrolled in Grass Elementary are eligible for free/reduced meals. Grass is identified as one of Cuttino County's Equity plus schools, allowing for smaller sizes in Kindergarten through Third grades.

Students at Grass Elementary come to school from homes with many challenges. Over ninety-five percent of the population comes from low-income homes. A considerable number of students are living in governmental subsidized housing. Some students lack the basic experiences needed to access adequate prior knowledge and build upon language skills and concepts. In many cases, students are limited in reading and math skills. A large number of students reside with grandparents or live in single parent homes. Many parents are working one or two part-time jobs for hourly wages. There are parents who have transportation problems and no telephones, making communication between home and school challenging. Personal contact and home visits by staff facilitate communications with families. Parental involvement is fostered through ongoing contact with newsletters, telephones calls, notes and conferences.

The mission of Grass Elementary is to provide all students with the highest quality educational program that will develop their abilities to learn

effectively in a safe learning environment. The following are beliefs of Grass Elementary:

- Each child is unique in his/her learning style, experience and culture
- Families, children, and the global community have the responsibility for each child's social growth and development

Grass Elementary School's staff further believes that a spirit of cooperation enables them to be flexible, share ideas and materials to help student be successful.

The school leader. Dr. Hamm, African American female, attended college in Cuttino County. When she completed her undergraduate degree in education, there were no teaching jobs in the area. Dr. Hamm moved to Chicago, found a teaching job and completed two graduate degrees. While in Chicago, Dr. Hamm worked as the principal of a school for struggling students.

My teaching experience included high school teaching and also community college. The early part of my years was in rural Georgia in what we now call highly impacted. Then I spent a couple of years in Tennessee and finished high school in Asheville in the mountains. I've been an administrator in both K-12 alternative schools and also in traditional schools.

After hearing that Cuttino County was interviewing principals, Dr. Hamm applied for a position in the district. Impressed with her interview and credentials, Dr. Hamm was hired as the principal of Grass Elementary. This assignment appeared to be a good "fit" for Dr. Hamm, because she, too, grew up in a low income, single parent household.

We knew we were African American and poor but we didn't know it was called highly impacted. In my family teaching was the best job in the world, the most respected profession by my family, a family of great uncles and aunts that helped raise me. My mother was a teenage mother so we had an extended family that took part in raising me. They felt that, that was the best job in the world and all of my role models were teachers, not only when I was in elementary but middle and high school too.

Sann Elementary School

Sann Elementary School has always had a history of strong parental support. Upon entering the school, the parental involvement is immediately noticeable. Sann's Parent Volunteer program logs an average of 500 hours per month. The Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) is strong and active, with over 50 board members. The school has several business partners, including Harris Teeter, Food Lion, Chick-Fil-A, Moe's Southwestern and McAllister's Grill. Effective communications between the community, home and school are of great importance. Effective communication is achieved through monthly PTSA newsletters, Friday Folders to parents, report card conferences, parent/teacher conferences and parent meetings. Parents are also active members of the school's school leadership team.

Over the past seven years, Sann Elementary School's performance composite in overall achievement continues to show improvement. The proficiency rate has increased from 81.9% in 2000, to 90.5% in 2007. The school has been named as "Honor School of Excellence" with high growth. They continue to meet all of their Adequate Yearly Progress goals each year. The

school believes that a strong parent/community support, coupled with a safe and orderly environment, has contributed to the overall success.

The mission of Sann Elementary School is to create a safe, child-centered environment that provides a solid academic foundation for each child. The following are the beliefs of Sann Elementary School:

- Every child is unique and has special talents and strengths
- All children can learn
- Learning is a lifelong journey
- A school, parent, community partner is vital to ensuring the success of all students

The challenges of Sann Elementary School are to close the achievement gap of all student subgroups. Sann has implemented best practices to help close the achievement gap, including flexible grouping for math, reading, tutoring for all level I and II students, and use of graphic organizers, curriculum guides and pacing guides.

The school leader. Ms. Lynn, Caucasian female grew up in Hot Pocket, North Carolina. She began her career in education by becoming a classroom teacher. She stopped teaching for a few years and then went back to school to get her master's degree in supervision and curriculum. She later got a degree in school administration.

I saw the opportunity to work with teachers in the school and wanted to affect more change for children. To be able to improve education overall rather than just working in a classroom and helping your children achieve.

I saw it as a possibility for me to be able to help a lot of children achieve better. I like the challenge of working with the children, the challenge of everyday being different, no two days are ever alike.

After serving as an assistant principal, she was named principal in several schools throughout the district. During the merger of the three school districts in her community, Ms. Lynn was assigned as principal at Peace Elementary, a struggling school. This school was located in a high crime area, and most of the students lived in severe poverty. In spite of these factors, Ms. Lynn was able to turn the school around by working in the community and helping the parents beyond the classroom walls. In addition to turning the struggling school around, Ms. Lynn was also asked by the superintendent to help train principals. After working at Peace Elementary for numerous years, Ms. Lynn was reassigned to work at Sann Elementary whose school community was totally different from Peace Elementary.

I think my challenge is the community; getting the community on board and having them view me as a leader and competent in knowing what I'm doing so they'll trust me to get the job done. (Ms. Lynn, 2008)

Data Analysis

I analyzed my data by using a coding system for qualitative data analysis and theorizing. Coding helped me examine my data by creating categories (Kleinman & Copp, 1993). I identified common themes and intertextuality that existed in the narratives of the participants as they expressed their beliefs, and ideas. Coding helped "create a written product that reads more like a list of

findings than an integrated story” (Kleinman & Copp, 1993, p. 25). Searching for patterns, I color-coded the data and grouped them into themes. The themes that evolved were: people skills and vision, understanding and use of data, strong organizational skills, understanding of the importance of community involvement, flexibility and empathy.

Subjectivity

All research is subject to researcher bias (Morrow, 2005; Peshkin, 1988). Peshkin (1988) argues that researchers should be aware of how their subjectivity may be shaping their outcomes. In an article entitled: “In Search of Subjectivity-One’s Own,” Peshkin (1988) uncovers six I’s, (a) the Ethnic-Maintenance I; (b) the Community Maintenance I; (c) the E-Pluribus-Unum I; (d) the Justice-Seeking I; (e) the Pedagogical-Meliorist I; and (f) the Non-research Human I. He stated that the I’s may change from place to place which he called “situational subjectivity.” By this concept, he suggested that though we bring all of ourselves- (our full complement to subjective I’s) to each new research site, a site and its particular condition will elicit only a subset of our I’s.

Peshkin (1988) said subjectivity can be seen as virtuous, “for it is the basis of researchers’ making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected” (p. 286). He further stated that he actively sought out his subjectivity when he conducted a study, “I did not want to happen upon it accidentally as I was writing

up the data. I wanted to be aware of it in process, mindful of its enabling and disabling potential while the data were still coming in, not after the fact” (p. 286).

As the Executive Director of Human Resources for the Cuttino County Schools, I had to make sure that my personal experiences with principal selection did not affect my analysis and interpretation. I kept my subjectivity at the conscious level because when subjectivity remains unconscious, researchers do not knowingly clarify their personal stakes (Peshkin, 1991). Part of my responsibilities in the Human Resources Department involves interviewing prospective principal candidates. The principals in the study were interviewed for their present positions by a committee of which I was a member. Having been involved in these interviews in the past, I had to ensure that my previous perceptions did not influence the outcomes of this study. Additionally, as an educator for over 25 years, I have definite ideas about the educational system. These feelings forced me to examine my subjectivity or the *Pedagogical-Meliorist* / as described by Peshkin. Throughout the study, I concentrated on staying focused on the participants’ beliefs and ideas.

Throughout this study, I made sure that my trustworthiness is revealed as I show data to support everything I report.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS

As stated in Chapter I, this is a study about the dispositions that support the identification of successful school leaders. It also addresses school administrator selection and placement. This chapter is organized to compare the responses and actions of principal who were involved in the study. I will report the patterns and differences among the participants. I will also analyze each principal's selection and placement process to determine whether or not the principal is a good fit for the school community.

Because the role of the principal has changed, it is vastly important to examine the dispositions of effective leaders. It is also crucial to understand how teachers and parents reflect on what makes a leader effective, because they are the individuals who are involved in the day-to-day operations of a school. For this study, I talked to principals, parents and teachers.

In order to make sure that outstanding leaders were selected for this study, I met with Cuttino School District's Instructional Improvement Officers. These individuals were responsible for the supervision of all school level administrators. I gave each officer a checklist with all of the district's 119 schools and I had them to rank the top elementary, middle and high school leaders. After gathering this data, I arranged a time to meet with each principal, and I asked

them the questions developed for this study. The principals helped me select the teacher and parent participants. They gave me the names of teachers and parents who might be interested in the study. I contacted all of the people whose names were submitted to me, and they all agreed to be a part of this study.

Keeping in mind our administrators' busy schedules, I met with them away from their school settings in a conference room in our central office. This was convenient for them, as they were required to visit the central office to turn in teacher evaluation forms and to conduct teacher interviews. I met with the parents in this study at their homes, on their jobs and at other locations in close proximity to their child's school. Teacher interviews were conducted at their schools in given classrooms. All participants were interviewed in settings based on what they indicated would be easier for them. Each participant seemed eager to talk and share ideas on leadership. Although all three groups had similar views on leadership, each had different ideas and opinions.

Based on the responses from the principals in this study, it is evident that the role of the twenty-first century administrator has changed. It was also obvious that reforming and improving schools is of the utmost importance (Collard, 2004). None of the principals mentioned that managing their buildings was key to being a great leader. This would not have been the case two decades ago. There has been a wave of change in our public schools, and the principals in this study are a part of those changes. They seemed more focused on shared vision (Sergiovanni, 1996). They were also concerned about motivating others and

leading their teachers in school improvement. Dr. Turner, principal of Phifer High School stated:

Principals are responsible for improving student achievement at all levels. Today principals have to worry about not only the slow learners, but they have to show improvement in all subgroups. In the past, there was an emphasis on the slow learners and schools spent lots of time and resources on the lower end. Now we have to focus on everyone. You also have more social problems to deal with. Society has spilled over into the school setting. If principals remained in the manager role, you would not be sensitive to the culture of the school. If you are just a manager, you simply worry about the problem and you don't look for at the entire issue. For example, thinking only on the problem can prevent you from seeking proactive measures that will help the whole student.

Dr. Turner's response was typical of the principals' responses. Their suggestions showed a need for a different kind of leader in today's school. A few principals in this study seemed to feel that the skills they possessed were natural skills for a principal as they used the term, "you must have":

You must have that approach . . . You have to be very flexible, and by that, I mean, you know, some days I go in and I have my calendar all set for what I'm going to do for the day and I might not do a thing on that calendar, because I have to handle things as they come up. That's my job, to handle the day. . .

Throughout my interview with the effective principals, I noticed that they did not think that what they were doing was anything special. They appeared to view what they were doing as what they were supposed to do. Table 3 shows the principals who agreed with the overall dispositions.

Table 3. Principal Responses

Name	D	PS	V	E	F	CI	M	O	H	R	EM	RE
Hamm	X	X	X			X		X	X			
Lynn	X	X	X		X			X			X	
Songbird		X	X	X				X				X
Barley		X	X			X						
Turner	X	X	X			X	X	X			X	
Ebony		X	X		X			X		X		

Note: **D**=Understands and uses data; **PS**=People skills; **V**=Vision; **E**=Empowers; **F**=Flexible; **CI**=Understands the importance of community involvement; **M**=Motivates people; **R**=Recognizes successes; **O**=Organized; **H**=Sense of Humor; **EM**=Empathetic; **RE**=Uses resources

Teachers can benefit from the success of an effective leader. Some teachers would argue that they know more about good leaders than the most qualified researcher. The teachers in this study definitely had their opinions on what makes an outstanding school administrator. They also stressed the importance of recruiting and selecting qualified individuals. Mr. Steve, a teacher at King Middle School, stated:

You need a principal who is flexible and approachable. They have to be good communicators and be able to involve all stakeholders. They even need to talk to the students because the students might have ideas too. The more the stakeholders are involved the better the fit is going to end up being.

Many teachers agreed with Mr. Steve and they suggested the characteristics listed in Table 4 as those needed in good school leaders.

Table 4. Teacher Responses

Name	DM	GL	OF	KC	TP	SD	P	TS	L	S	D	IC	VV	NA	F	WW	R	GO	AP	PE	KS	ET	A	SF	V
Alexia	x				x	x	x	x	x				x		x		x			x				x	x
Lisa			x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x				x			x					
Morgan	x	x			x	x	x	x	x			x	x	x	x		x	X	x	x		x	x	x	
Mary	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x		x	X			x	x			x
Denise	x	x				x		x	x			x	x	x	x		x	X	x			x	x		x
Repete		x				x		x	x			x	x		x		x		x						
Steve	x	x	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x		x	x	x	x
Lindsey	x	x			x	x		x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x	X	x	x			x	x	x
Fern	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x		x		x	x			x	x	x
Malachi						x			x			x					x								
Clara	x	x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x	x			x	X	x	x		x	x	x	x
Michelle	x		x	x	x	x			x			x	x				x	X		x	x		x	x	x

Note: DM=Decision makers; GL=Good Listeners; OF=Offers Suggestions; KC=Knows the curriculum and content area; TP="a part of the team"; SD=strong disciplinarians but not punitive; P=positive; TS=a person who is willing to take a stand; L=a great leader; S=a person who is supportive; D=determined; IC="the person in charge"; VV=very visible; NA=a person who is not afraid to "get in the trenches"; F=a person who is flexible; WW=Works well with others; R=a person who is able to use resources/organize; GO=a person who has goals and objectives; AP=a person who is always present; PE=a person who is personable; KS=knows how to create a schedule; ET=empowers teachers; A=approachable; SF=straight forward; V=clear vision.

Like teachers, parents, too, have a vested interest in the employment of strong effective school leaders. Mrs. Melinda, a parent whose child attends Sann Elementary School, felt that her principal was very successful. Based on Mrs. Melinda's responses, this leader exhibited many characteristics needed to lead a twenty-first century school:

My principal stands out in the carpool line. She relates well to everyone. She doesn't just sit in her office. She knows what the children need to learn and she helps the teacher teach.

The other parents also listed characteristics that were far beyond the role of administrators decades ago (see Table 5). For example, they listed traits such as understanding and monitoring the curriculum. This was far beyond the old management role. It was very interesting to get the teachers' and parents' thoughts on what they viewed as important characteristics of an effective leader. Although many of their thoughts coincided with what the principals listed, most of their ideas were more specific. Morgan, a teacher who had worked with ten different principals stated that principals "must be willing to be in charge." She further stated:

A leader has to be willing to listen to other people, to listen to other people's ideas. They have to be willing to change their game plan after speaking to other people. I think being a leader, you cannot work in isolation. Being a leader means you work with other people and you work on a team and you make each person on that team feel that they are valued and that they contribute and play an important part in any decision making

Table 5. Parent Responses

Response	Imani	Melinda	Louise	Keishanda	James	Clark
High Expectations		X	X	X	X	X
Beyond the Call of Duty	X	X	X		X	X
Effective Communication Skills	X	X	X	X	X	
Open Door Policy	X	X	X	X	X	X
Good Listener	X	X	X	X	X	X
Focus on Students	X	X	X	X		
Parents Feel Welcome	X	X	X	X	X	X
Teacher/Parent Accountable	X	X	X	X		X
Follow Through		X	X		X	
Treat with Respect	X	X	X	X	X	X
Empower Parents and Staff	X	X	X	X	X	
Keep Students from Failing	X		X		X	
Maintain Order and Discipline	X	X	X	X		X
Good Character, Honest and Fair	X	X	X	X		X
Confronts Others		X	X	X	X	
Motivates Others		X	X		X	
Gets Best from Staff and Students	X	X	X	X	X	X
Understands and Monitor Curriculum	X		X	X		X
Ability to Understand Others	X	X	X	X	X	X
Involves Stakeholders		X	X		X	
Makes Hard Decisions	X	X	X	X		X
Educates Students	X		X			
Makes Time for Parents	X	X	X	X	X	X
Examines Things that Don't Work		X	X	X	X	

The teachers and parents appeared to respond in more detail as if I were taking an order from them on the kind of principal they desired. I found this very helpful in identifying the characteristics of the effective principals in this study.

Student achievement was an important factor to most parents interviewed in this research. They connected their school's academic success to the quality of their principal. Louise, a parent of a student at a school that used to be low-achieving, felt that the school started improving because the new principal has a solid foundation in curriculum and was someone who "truly understands the accountability model."

After each interview, I constantly analyzed the data gained from my dialogue with the participants. I utilized thinking units (Hofmann, 1995) to focus my thoughts on the common set of themes which would evolve out of the characteristics and relationships that were emerging. The following themes emerged through this process (see Table 6):

- People skills and vision
- Understanding and use of data
- Strong organizational skills
- Understand of the importance of community involvement
- Flexibility
- Empathy

Table 6. Six Major Themes

Themes	Principal Responses	Teacher Responses	Parent Responses
People Skills and Vision	PS, V, E, H, M, R	GO, ET, DM, OF, TP, P, TS, L, S, D, VV, WW, AP, PE, ET, A, SF, V, GL	HE, BCD, CS, ODP, GL, FS, WP, TPA, FT, RO, EP, OD, CHF, CO, M, SSS, UO, IS, DM, TP
Understands and uses data	D	KC, HE	CS, FS, TPA, EP, NF, CO, UC, DM, ES, WW
Well-organized	O	IC, R, KS	BCD, FT, EP, DM, WW
Understands the importance of community involvement	CI, M	A, HE	CS, ODP, FS, WP, TPA, RO, EP, NF, OD, CHF, M, UO, IS, DM, TP, WW
Flexibility	F, RE	NA, F, AP, ET	BCD, FS, FT, EP, UO, IS, DM, WW
Empathy	EM	GL, SD, HE	CS, ODP, GL, CHF, UO, DM, WW

Principal Responses: Note: D=Understands and uses data; PS=People skills; V=Vision; E=Empowers; F=Flexible; CI= Understands the importance of community involvement; M=Motivates people; R=Recognizes successes; O=Organized; H=Sense of Humor; EM=Empathetic; RE=Uses resources

Teacher Responses: Note: DM=Decision makers; GL=Good Listeners; OF=Offers Suggestions; KC=Knows the curriculum and content area; TP="a part of the team"; SD=strong disciplinarians but not punitive; P=positive; TS=a person who is willing to take a stand; L=a great leader; S=a person who is supportive; D=determined; IC="the person in charge"; VV=very visible; NA=a person who is not afraid to "get in the trenches"; F=a person who is flexible; WW=Works well with others; R=a person who is able to use resources/organize; GO=a person who has goals and objectives; AP=a person who is always present; PE=a person who is personable; KS=knows how to create a schedule; ET=empowers teachers; A=approachable; SF=straight forward; V=clear vision.

Parent Responses: Note: HE=High Expectations; BCD=Beyond the Call of Duty; CS=Communication Skills; ODP=Open Door Policy; GL=Good Listener; FS=Focus on Students; WP=Welcomes Parents; TPA=Teachers/Parents Accountable; FT=Follow Through; RO=Respects Others; Empowers Parents; NF=No Student Failure; OD=Maintains Order and Discipline; CHF=Character, Honesty and Fairness; CO=Confronts Others; M=Motivates; SSS=Success from Students and Staff; UC=Understands Curriculum; UO=Understands Others; IS=Involves Stakeholders; DM=Decision Maker; ES-Educates students; TP=Takes Time with Parents; WW= Knows What Works.

People Skills and Vision

The principals in this study felt that having a vision and being capable of working with people were essential to their success. Dr. Hamm, principal of Grass Elementary School, felt that in order to successfully work with her students, she needed to first be able to work effectively with adults. She stated:

In working with teachers, I would change their lives so that they could work with parents, especially needy parents or parents who need help understanding. It helps principals to have an understanding on how to maneuver in the community and school setting. The community needs to know where the school is headed.

Dr. Hamm felt that having the ability to work with her staff would help them be able to work with the teachers and school community. Her feelings about working with her staff and community might have stemmed from what happened at her school before her arrival. The former principal had a difficult time working with the parents and students in the school. Her difficulty was passed on to many of the staff members. Ms. Imani, a parent from her school commented on the difference in the two leaders:

The other principal did not have any personality, no upbeatness about her. She didn't have any character. It was like I'm here, I'm here to collect a check, and that's basically what I am here for. Whatever your child does, your child does, and that's it. Whereas, with this particular principal, she is very, very concerned about the students. If there's a problem with a parent, she looks out for the parent, the kids, and anybody she can reach out to. This particular principal, she just does it. It's not something she thinks about, it is just automatic.

Dr. Hamm not only displayed her people skills to her parents, but her teachers felt that working with people in a positive fashion was a natural part of Dr. Hamm's make up.

Ms. Songbird felt that in order to convey her vision to her staff and community she needed to work alongside them. When Ms. Songbird was named principal at Valley Middle School, she followed a principal who had worked at the school for only one year. When the former principal left, much work needed to be done to bring the teachers and the community together.

One of my greatest challenges is that although I am in this position that I can and desire to make an impact, I also need teachers and staff members and people around me who embrace that idea, embrace my philosophies and are willing to be part of my vision and share in that passion that students, whether they are motivated or unmotivated it is our job to educate them.

Ms. Imani, very outspoken stated that school leaders must possess characteristics that work well in a school. She said:

I feel that people are very important, in this particular school setting, the principal here is very personable. She knows every child's name and she's very friendly. You would never, ever know that she had any problems. She's one of those people that, you walk through a turnstile and whatever was bothering you when you came in is gone as soon as you hit that door.

Throughout the interviews many participants felt that not only should the principal have good people skills in their work with staff and parents, but they also felt that those skills are essential in their work with children as well. Ms. Imani further stated:

This particular principal, very, very concerned about the students. If there's a problem with a parent, she looks out for the parents, the kids, anybody she can reach out to. This particular principal, she just does it. It's not something that she thinks about, it's just automatic. If you come to her and say, "Look, I have a problem, can you help me?" She will go beyond that and I admire that about her because that is something, going back to my upbringing, I'm used to principals being that way. Here in this county, the other three principals that I've dealt with, they didn't know all the kids' names. She's almost like a second mother to these kids.

Michelle, a teacher at Ms. Songbird's school praised Ms. Songbird for her ability to work with the staff.

Ms. Songbird is very good about soliciting information from teachers as far as making sure there is teacher input on the decisions as they are going along. Whether it is how to create a procedure, how to go about gathering materials for tutoring, you know the different things we need to see in the classroom.

Principal Barley, though the youngest of the participants seemed wise beyond his years of experience when he stated,

You have to have a vision. You have to be able to present that vision. I think leaders, no matter if you're a leader of a team or leader of a school or leader of a business, the people that are working in that institution have to believe that you are moving them toward a positive result, a beneficial goal. So you can't just be a manager and come in and try to keep things as they are, but you have to, not only have a vision that is good for kids, in this case with schools, also the community, but you have to be able to show it and you have to be able to motivate people to adopt it for themselves. So I think having a vision is one of the primary pieces of being an effective leader, having it and being able to display it.

Mr. Barley's beliefs were evident in his actions. Ms. Repete, a teacher in his school reported:

Our principal sees a vision for the organization. He knows how things work, he does scheduling and everything. He has a global view of everything and is available to the teachers and staff. He helps the teachers to know they can go to the principal and express their concerns and they know they will be heard. He is also very visible in our classrooms.

A leader's success is often determined by one's ability to demonstrate genuine feelings of respect for the parents and families of the school community. Often when faced with the impact of poverty, violence, unemployment, drugs, or other conditions which infringe on their community, it is easy for a leader to find him/herself blaming parents or the influence of their community. It is important that leaders never allow themselves to fall into the trap of looking down on or acting superior to the parents and families they serve. (Haberman, 2004)

Mr. Clark, a parent from Phifer High School, reflected on his experience with two principals in the schools where his children attended and their approaches to working with people. He felt that

. . . the principals stood out in character, the way they would carry themselves. I would say they are very honest, motivating, trying to get the best out of students. Other characteristics they possessed would be very good at motivating and good at speaking to children as well as to adults just as they would someone on their same level. Speaking to the parents as they are parents, listening to the parents, getting the best out of them, having great listening skills, understanding where the parents are coming from is very important, I think.

He also shared thoughts on how the principals interacted with the students and the teachers:

They listen to the students as well because students have their own perspective, so you have to get that from them as well and move at it from that standpoint. Also listening to teachers. Having been a teacher myself, I've had principals myself who did not listen to me as a teacher or my co-workers as teachers. They did not listen to us. They took the side of students or parents before they actually talked to us. So I think it's very important that you have good relationship between all of them.

Dr. Turner, the principal at Phifer, like many of the other principals felt as if she was only doing her job:

I think it is the responsibility of principals today to have an understanding of the community they serve and understand how to use data and determine the impact it has on instruction and relationship building. Leaders must be able to work with teachers and the community because everyone should be moving together in the right direction to help students achieve.

Ms. Ebony, principal at Renn High School, shared Dr. Turner's views when she stated:

I think a good school leader has got to take the time to know where they're working and who they are working with. They need to get involved on various committees within the community, the entire community because it helps you become a better leader when you have everyone working together.

Mr. James, a parent at Renn High School, felt a positive connection with the principal:

Before Ms. Ebony, I never saw a need to waste my time bothering the principal. All of my children have gone to this school and I have known five principals. Ms. Ebony is open, you never get a cold shoulder. I like her presence in the building versus some of the others. I think she has a good,

professional presence but also connects very well with the kids. As to some others, I found a weak side.

It is interesting to note that although Ms. Ebony followed a principal who was not successful at her school, a leader considered one of the best in the district had served at Renn during the time that one of Mr. James' children attended the school. The given administrator was able to help produce good test scores, but, she was not known for her people skills.

Lisa, a beginning teacher from Sann Elementary, praised her principal for her ability to work well teachers and the school community:

I mean our principal is a super leader. I mean, sometimes when you think, okay, well, you know, I don't know if I'm doing this right or any type of question that you have, she will say, I will meet with you. She is determined to make the school work; she is determined to make us feel good. It is just a big happy family here. She is an excellent leader.

Each participant stressed the importance of an outstanding leader having people skills and setting the vision for the school.

Understanding and Use of Data

In summarizing the crucial role that principals play in improving teaching and learning, Usdan, McCloud and Podmostko (2000) reported that principals must know academic content and pedagogical techniques. They must work with teachers to strengthen skills. They must collect, analyze, and use data in ways that fuel excellence. They must rally students, teachers, parents, local health and social services agencies, youth development groups, local businesses, and other

community residents and partners around the common goal of raising student performance.

When the participants were asked to suggest traits and characteristics that districts should look for in selecting principals, all participants said that leaders should be able to use data. Keishanda, a parent at King Middle School stated:

You need someone who is able to help the teachers know what to do. They need to be able to look at the data and know what to do with it. Teachers need more than someone giving them a lecture.

Lisa, a teacher from Grass Elementary, felt that one of the reasons her school was beginning to make progress was because Dr. Hamm, the principal, understood how to use data to drive instruction.

She is different from our old principals; she knows how to look at where we are and help us do things that will help us move forward. Before she came we were a low performing school. She has helped us so much as we continue to raise our scores. She meets with us and discusses what we did and she gives us strategies that will help us do better.

Principals in the past did not have to worry about data because they were not viewed as the instructional leaders of the school (Bertani, 2002). Since principals have begun to worry about Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), data has become a major function of the role. Ms. Lynn, the most experienced principal in this study stated:

The role of the principal is so different today than when I first started. You have to be concerned with so many things. We are much more of an instructional leader in this day and time. I don't remember any principal

when I first started being an instructional leader. Now you have to know your school data. You have to stay on top of it so that you can continue improving.

Although he was the youngest principal in the study, Mr. Barley understood the difference. He felt that the role had changed drastically in his short period:

The principalship has changed from managerial to a real leader position. My experiences with principals when I was a teacher were that they just had to handle the day to day routines and the planning of events and hiring. This position transformed into an instructional leader position now. I want my school to see me as the primary instructional leader, the one who understands the data and who understands what is happening with curriculum. I am the one who knows the best practices for instruction, the one who leads the discussions on what should be happening in our classrooms, content specific.

Strong Organizational Skills

Principals in the twenty-first century have to juggle many activities throughout the day. In addition to maintaining harmony, motivating, explaining and modeling, principals have to stay focused on teacher development and student achievement (Sergiovanni, 1996). The principals, teachers and parents in this study felt that principals must be well organized in order to meet the demands of the job. Mr. Barley, principal at King Middle School said that being organized is very important, "I am always very organized. I have to be because I have lots of responsibilities." Mr. Steve, a teacher at Mr. Barley's school, commented on Mr. Barley's organizational skills:

He is very organized. It makes me feel good because I like a principal who is organized. I am organized myself and it works well for me. It drives me nuts when a principal is not organized. If there is anybody in the leadership role that is organized, that makes me more comfortable personally.

All of the principals in this study viewed themselves as being very organized. Dr. Hamm said that she “could not function” without being organized, and Ms. Songbird felt that she had to model what she expected from her teachers, and being organized is an important trait to have.

As the instructional leader, I have to model what I expect from my staff and community. If they come to see me and my desk is a mess, then what message am I sending out to them and the community? I work hard to remain organized.

Ms. Michelle a teacher at Ms. Songbird’s school stated that being organized was one of Ms. Songbird’s strengths. She said, “My principal is a good leader. She is very organized.”

In comparing Ms. Ebony to other principals, Mr. Clark a parent at the school stated that

Ms. Ebony is doing such a great job. She motivates people and she is very organized. She knows what she is doing and she keeps up with everything that is going on in the school. The last principal didn’t seem to know what was happening. I don’t think she was organized either.

When asked what characteristics a district should look for in selecting principals, Ms. Louise, a parent from Valley Middle School stated that districts

should look for candidates who are very organized. She shared an experience of working with an administrator who was not organized:

It was terrible. She didn't know what was going on and she appeared to always be overwhelmed with her role. I really don't think she knew how to organize herself in a manner that would make her more effective in her job. Principals have to be organized. They have so much to keep up with.

Understanding of the Importance of Community Involvement

It is important that twenty-first century principals work well with not only their school staffs, but with the entire community at large. The parents in this study felt that their principals were exceptional leaders, because they were able to involve all stakeholders. Ms. Melinda, a parent at Sann Elementary School, shared how Principal Lynn created a caring culture between the school and parents:

My first child started school. Ms. Lynn helped me become familiar with the school by inviting all of the new parents to a meeting. She encouraged us to join PTA and she invited us to volunteer at the school. She explained to us the parameters for when we needed to go into a classroom and when we needed to let the teachers teach. I became involved right away because I felt that she really wanted me there. I am now a parent liaison on the school leadership team because I want to do all I can to help her.

Ms. Keishanda, a parent from King Middle School, stated that she never felt welcomed at the school until Mr. Barley arrived:

To be honest with you, I actually just started being an active member at my school last year. I was more active in elementary school but I like working with Mr. Barley.

Ms. Imani, parent at Grass Elementary School, compared Principal Hamm to former principals when she stated:

I have worked with a total of three principals at this school. I have always felt that it was important for me to see the principal whenever I visited the school. Dr. Hamm is the only principal I have seen. She really connects with the community. Everyone knows she cares about everyone here.

Mr. James, a parent from Renn High School, felt that one of Ms. Ebony's strongest attributes was her ability to work with the school community:

I would say actually on the principal level; Ms. Ebony was my first principal that worked well with the parents. She is always involved with everyone. If you want to talk to her, you will see her versus some other person. As for the others, I found them weak.

The principals interviewed in this study felt that being able to work well with the community was of great importance. Ms. Songbird, Ms. Lynn, Dr. Turner and Dr. Hamm mentioned understanding and working in the community as a challenge for today's principals. Dr. Turner shared:

Today you have to really involve the community and get parents involved. Many times it is a challenge because it requires lots of time and effort. A principal must have the support of the school community in order to move a school forward.

Flexibility and Empathy

Although several principals did not use the words, "flexible and empathetic," they did state traits that fell into these categories. Ms. Alexia, teacher at Grass Elementary School stated that her principal, Dr. Hamm,

understood whenever she needed to take care of her sick children. Mr. Barley commented that remembering how it felt to be a teacher helped him be a great leader.

A few principals expressed that it was important for principals to be flexible as leaders. Ms. Lisa, a teacher at Grass Elementary, in remembering how bad the situation was at her school before Dr. Hamm arrived, mentioned that the previous principal did not get input from the staff.

Dr. Hamm always gets input from us and we plan together. She doesn't always have all of the answers and makes us do what she wants us to do. She seeks input from us and sometimes she changes her plans.

Ms. Songbirds stressed the importance of being flexible:

A good leader listens to her staff. She has ideas, but she does not write her ideas in stone. She must listen to teachers and be open to their ideas. I always feel that it is a good idea for your staff and community to see the leader as someone who is willing to be flexible.

The empathetic characteristic came out in the interviews when the participants discussed their leaders having good people skills. Ms. Lisa, teacher at Grass Elementary stated:

Dr. Hamm is a good principal. She works so well with the teachers and the staff. She especially works well with the children at this school. She understands what their home lives are like, and she works hard to give them everything they need. She also seems to know what the teachers at this school are going through.

Observations

I observed at each of the principals' schools at least one time. On the visits, I looked for positive or negative interactions between the principal and students and between the principal and the staff members. I also looked for evidence of community involvement. For example, I noticed special parent bulletin boards, I watched to determine how many parents entered the school buildings, and I also looked for signs of other business partnerships. While at Valley Middle School, for example, I noticed many community leaders in the buildings.

The teachers and parents at Grass Elementary School had lots to brag about in regard to their principal. On the day that I chose to observe, I noticed many positive traits in this leader. She greeted all staff members and students as they entered the school building. It was evident that she knew the students by name. She also spent most of the morning in the classrooms. While in the rooms, she offered lots of positive support and praise to the students. In one particular class, she checked on a student who apparently had a lot of difficulty turning assignments in on time. When she spoke to him, he smiled as he showed her his work. Although Grass Elementary School was once a low performing school in an impoverished neighborhood, there were lots of parents visible throughout the building. Dr. Hamm spoke the education language that the teachers spoke. She mentioned strategies they could use for guided reading, math and science. Her sense of humor was evident as she asked the teachers questions about what

they were doing. In a few cases, it appeared that they were not doing what she required, and she offered her help to each of them. Dr. Hamm greeted each of the parents by name and used them as resources. "I want you to come back and help me with . . ." She did this rather than tell them what to do. During my visit, the Grass Elementary staff and parents were planning a celebration for the community, and she was very excited as she discussed her plans with several parents.

Ms. Lynn, principal at Sann Elementary School, also greeted her staff, students and parents by name when they entered the building. When she visited the classrooms, it was apparent that she did frequent walk-throughs. During my visit, Ms. Lynn had to reprimand a student. Although she was firm with her voice tone, she spoke to the student as if she had very high expectations for his behavior. The student immediately calmed down. Several parents were in the building on the day of my observation. It appeared that they felt welcomed and that they had good working relationships with Ms. Lynn.

Ms. Michelle, a teacher at Valley Middle School, stated that her principal was a "part of the team." This was shown on the day of my observation there. Ms. Songbird appeared to know all of her students' names. She greeted the staff members by asking them how they were doing and personal questions about their families. She spoke the "language of academic improvement." She talked about cooperative learning activities, graphic organizers and quickly critiqued what the students were doing and supposed to be doing as she visited the

classrooms. It was apparent that there was a lot of parental involvement at the school. Throughout the observation, many parents and community leaders were visiting. As Ms. Songbird walked from classroom to classroom, she often stopped to pick up small pieces of paper, and she used her feet to get up scuff marks. She buzzed the custodian immediately when she felt that a bathroom needed some attention.

Mr. Barley, the least experienced principal in this study, showed some of the same characteristics as the veteran administrators. On the day of my visit, I observed him greeting all of his students and teacher warmly. He knew his students by name, and he seemed to know their daily schedules. A parent who was visiting stated that Mr. Barley always made her feel as if she was a part of the school's team. The school's climate was warm and inviting. There was much student work on display, and it was evident that the students were a part of the decision-making process for the school. A new building was opened for the students at King Middle School during the time of this research. Mr. Barley worked hard to help with the transition of the opening, ensuring that the staff, students and parents had input on how to adjust to the new environment.

Dr. Turner attended Phifer High School and took pride in moving the school forward. On the day of my visit, she met with her administrative team in order to explain the procedures they would use for visiting classrooms. She listened to the team's discussion and ideas and implemented their suggestions. As she walked throughout the building, she greeted the staff and students by

name. Dr. Turner was approached by several staff members as she moved about the building. She answered their questions in a very knowledgeable manner. Like Ms. Songbird, she was very aware of the cleanliness of her building, picking up small pieces of paper from the hallways. She called the custodian when a student reported that “bad words” were written on the bathroom walls. When Dr. Turner caught students violating school rules, she reprimanded them without disrespecting them. She also did this with her staff members. For example when a teacher appeared to have a classroom of students off-task, Dr. Turner simply asked her, “What activity are they involved in at this time?”

Mr. James, a parent whose child attends Renn High School, discussed the fact that the principal, Ms. Ebony, is an outstanding leader. He stressed that he felt welcomed as soon as he entered the building. When I entered Renn on the day of my observation, I also felt very welcomed by everyone who greeted me. It appeared that Ms. Ebony had set a caring climate among all of the office staff. Ms. Ebony was very positive, and she affirmed the staff members as she passed them in the hallway. She listened intently to students and staff when they asked her questions and offered suggestions. It was obvious that Ms. Ebony works very closely with her assistant principal. During my meeting with Ms. Ebony, she discussed matters concerning a colleague in front of the assistant principal. She also showed a sense of humor during a discussion with a teacher; yet, she was very focused and ready to resolve the issue at hand. As we walked through the building, Ms. Ebony proudly shared with me the improvements she and her staff

members had made at the school over the past two years. Like the other leaders in this study, she knew her students well. She called them by name, and made comments that indicated that she knew their families and home situations. There was evidence throughout the building that Ms. Ebony was working on building a close working relationship with the parents and community leaders in the area.

School leaders make a tremendous impact on the quality of schools (Huges, 1994). Principals set the school climate as they influence the effectiveness of their staff and build support in the community. Principals who fail in school can often be traced back to flaws or gaps in the hiring process (Harwood, 2004). This study afforded me the opportunity to follow the lives of six principals who were identified as outstanding leaders by the central office staff who supervised them. In addition to meeting and talking to the principals, other participants included their teachers and representatives from their school communities.

It was revealed in this study that the role of the principal has changed. Prior to the twenty-first century, a school leader only needed to know how to manage a school, as compared to the many duties today's principals' face. Ms. Lynn shared the difference in her responsibilities as compared the principals during her schooling:

It's vastly different from when I was a teacher or even when I was in school, because that was a long time ago. But I think about when I started teaching, the principal was more like the keeper of the school or something. They sat in the office all day and I hate to say it, but they drank a lot of coffee, talked to parents, talked to the secretary, visited your room

on occasions for your formal observation which wasn't you, know complicated as it is today. I don't remember any principal I had being an instructional leader, being able to critique my teaching and telling me how to get better or what I should do to improve myself.

Ms. Songbird concurred when she stated, "I think its multi-faceted now and before, I think the role was more managerial." Monitoring instruction and focusing on state-mandated test scores were not a part of the school leader's role. The added responsibilities and accountability measures require a different kind of person to be in charge of our schools. Over the past two decades, change has crept into the Educational System (Lam, 2001). Mr. Barley also felt the change of the principal's role:

The principalship has changed from managerial to more of a leader position. My experiences with principals coming through school and having family members who have been principals, even interning under principals in years past, they appear to be more managers with handling the day to day routines in the planning of events and hiring and personnel issues. This position has transformed into an instructional leader position now . . .

In the Cuttino County Schools System, The Haberman Interview Screening process is being used to select principals. In the course of this study, I discovered that many principals in that district do not feel that they were chosen for their positions because of the selection tool. This was evident in the responses they gave which did not always correlate with the following functions on the Haberman Interview:

- Leadership
- Commitment to Student Learning
- Theory into Practice
- Role of the School Serving Students in Poverty
- Curriculum and Instructional Leadership
- Creating a Positive School Climate and Fighting Burnout
- Evaluation
- Decision-Making
- Fallibility
- Administrative Style
- Administrative Relations and Parents and Community (Haberman, 2003)

Although the themes above suggest titles that coincide with the themes that developed from this study, the questions associated with those titles do not clearly address the themes. For example, there is only one question that vaguely addresses curriculum and instructional leadership on the Haberman Star Principal Instrument. In fact, the instrument is composed of only 11 questions. This makes it difficult to truly glean an individual's beliefs and ability to perform in such an important role with limited questions.

The data collected from the participants in this study reveal that the role of the principal has changed. It further suggests that different skills are needed to run schools in the twenty-first century. Since different skills are needed, new

processes and procedures should be developed in order to select qualified individuals.

The data generated from the interviews and observations in this study show that not only is the role of the principal an important one, but the duties assigned to this role are more and more encompassing. In the past, a principal's day did not include monitoring instruction or building relationships (Macmillan et al., 2001). The changes that have occurred over the past decades have made it more and more difficult to recruit and select effective principal candidates for our twenty-first century schools.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Many school districts today are finding it more and more difficult to unearth good principals (Roza, 2003). Improving the way principals are selected and placed in schools is a huge challenge. School administrators are the key to the effectiveness of a school staff and the support from the community. Huges (1994) argues that leadership is almost as important as good classroom instruction.

For decades, school districts across the country have used structured interview instruments. Many of these tools had questions that were designed to capture the feelings, beliefs, and values of an individual. Other instruments asked indirect questions with the idea that given answers might indicate an applicant's abilities. Scores were designed to predict an applicant's success or failure as a school administrator. Although many districts have relied heavily on these procedures, these same districts have ended up with principals who are not equipped to serve in their schools. In Cuttino County, for example, central office administrators spend hours interviewing and rating principal candidates, using the Haberman Star Principal Interview. Principals with very high scores are placed in schools with much confidence from school officials. Oftentimes, the confidence fades because many principals who score high on the interview

perform poorly in the schools. Unfortunately, this has happened frequently in the district. Although the Haberman instrument was selected to replace the Ventures tool, it did not alleviate this problem. Many of these principals were placed back in assistant principal or classroom teacher roles (see Table 6).

Table 7. Number of Principals Demoted Who Were Hired with the Ventures versus Haberman Instruments in Cuttino County, North Carolina

Number of Principals Demoted Who Were Hired Using Ventures	Number of Principals Demoted Who Were Hired Using Haberman
2002-2003 thru 2004-2005 27 Hired—17 Reassigned	2005-2006 thru 2008-2009 24 Hired—17 Reassigned

In viewing the table above, one would wonder how accurate the two instruments were in the selection of candidates. Rosse, Stecher, Miller, and Levin (1988) suggest that many tools designed to help select employees can allow the applicants to fake their responses. They refer to this as Response Distortion (RD). Neither of the instruments listed above ask direct questions. Since the questions are not directly related to the roles of principals, it is quite possible that an applicant could fake an answer or that the interviewer could misinterpret a given response. For example, one interviewer could give a low score to an item that another interviewer could rate very high. Whenever questions are not clear and direct, the interpretation of the answers is left solely to the interviewer. It is for this reason that both instruments require interviewing teams so that answers can be compared and discussed.

This study examined how districts select and place principals in school communities. The research was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What dispositions support the identification of successful principals in the twenty-first century schools?
2. How can a district's principal selection and placement process tools ensure a good fit between the principal and school community?

The answers to these research questions are outlined below.

What Dispositions Support the Identification of Successful Principals in the Twenty-First Century Schools?

The six principals who participated in this study were all considered to be outstanding principals. Each of them received high marks on their interviews. They arrived at school each day early, and they often stayed long after everyone else had gone home for the evening. Even though they were considered exceptional by the district officials and their school communities, they each felt that they were only doing their jobs. They did not sense that there was anything amazing about their performances. Four of the participants in this study had numerous years of education experience. Ms. Lynn had been a principal the longest. She also had experience in many different school settings. Dr. Turner had been a principal in an elementary, middle and high school setting. Both Ms. Lynn and Dr. Turner took the structured interview in order to get promotions. This happened after they had been administrators for several years. It is difficult to discern whether or not their high scores on the given instruments were due to

their prior experiences. It is also important to note that both principals had connections to the community in which they served.

Mrs. Songbird and Dr. Hamm also had a variety of experiences before going through the structured interview process. Mrs. Songbird served in the district as a math specialist and an academic coach. These positions afforded her the opportunity to work with principals and teachers on a broad spectrum. Dr. Hamm was a principal in innercity Chicago before moving to Cuttino County. She also had lived in different places throughout the United States.

Mr. Barley and Ms. Ebony were hired as administrators after limited experience as classroom teachers; yet, they were deemed successful.

The teachers and parents of the principals in this study believed their leaders were effective because they possessed the following characteristics:

- People skills and vision
- Understanding and use of data
- Strong organizational skills
- Understanding of the importance of community involvement
- Flexibility
- Empathy

Although the principals scored high on the interview instruments they were given before going in their role during the time of this study, neither instrument had questions that directly addressed the above characteristics. The Haberman Star Principal tool had one or two questions that could relate to understanding the

importance of community involvement and being empathetic. The Ventures screener had one question that could be related to an administrator's vision. It is important to note that none of the questions on either instrument had questions clearly related to any of the attributes above. No structured interview tool has questions that can help an interviewer determine whether or not an applicant has good people skills. Yet most of the teachers and parents felt that a leader possessing people skills was of utmost importance.

My principal always helps out and she relates to all types of parents. She always follows up and she treats you as a person, an individual but yet you're a teacher first. She treats everyone well. It doesn't matter whether it is a parent, teacher or child. She treats everyone with respect. (Ms. Melinda, Parent, Sann Elementary School, 2008)

It was apparent during this study that the principals' teachers' and parents' ideas of successful principals differed somewhat from most questions on the structured interview instruments. In addition to the attributes listed above, they also felt that a principal must know the curriculum. This is often left out of interview sessions. In the past, a principal did not have to be bothered with knowing the curriculum because a principal was not charged with monitoring instruction (Bertani, 2002; Macmillan et al., 2001; Mulford & Silins, 1998). Although the role of a principal has changed, the devices used to place them in their assignments have remained in the twentieth century.

Principals today are more involved in instruction than principals were in the past. State-wide testing and curriculum standards have a strong impact on

student achievement (Collard & Pascoe, 1995). These changes have designated the principal in a school as the instructional leader. All of the principals in this study except two were expected to lead a low-performing school. They were also held responsible for improving the test scores, and each of them was successful at these tasks. Although Mr. Barley was assigned to a school that was not considered low-performing, he, too, felt the responsibility of making growth and improvements in the scores.

This position has transformed into an instructional leader position now where as a principal, I want the school to view me as the primary instructional leader, the one who understands what's happening with curriculum. I think that is one of the major changes in that role. (Mr. Barley, King Middle School, 2008)

Mrs. Lynn, a veteran principal, concurred when she stated:

Today being a principal is more stressful because of the accountability of test scores on top of all of the other issues our children now face.

Researchers have argued that a principal is the key factor in a school's success (Leithwood et al., 2004; Owens, 2001; Prestine, 1993; Richardson & Lane, 1993). They even argue that a principal can have more impact on student achievement than good teachers. The principals are in charge of making sure their teachers are meeting the standards and developing lessons that will help increase student achievement (Drago-Severson, 2007).

Dr. Hamm was hired as the principal at Grass Elementary School after the school lost two principals in one academic year. The performance at the school

was so low that the state of North Carolina had taken the school over. Although none of the teachers left the first year that Dr. Hamm arrived, the school climate improved, and the achievement rate continued to climb.

The principal we have now cares about the students and she cares about us. She cares if students are doing well or not. Before she came, our school wasn't doing so well, but now we are doing fine. She gets in the trenches. She has turned our school around. (Ms. Alexia, Teacher, Grass Elementary, 2008)

Each of the principals in this school positively affected their student achievement rates.

Since school administrators have a strong impact on the success of students, it is crucial that interview instruments have questions that can help school districts determine these skills. Presently, the tools used in Cuttino County do not address the principals' knowledge of how to move a school forward.

How Can a District's Principal Selection and Placement Process Tools Ensure a Good Fit between the Principal and School Community?

As I have stated, the interview instruments used by most school districts are not asking questions to ensure that the best principals are placed in positions. No matter how much time is devoted to the interview, many administrators are the "wrong fit" for their schools. Mrs. Louise, a parent of a student at Valley Middle School, stated that she had worked with principals who apparently had not had any experience in working with diversity.

There were lots of subgroups in that school and she did not have any experience working with the LEP subgroup and the minority subgroup. I think a district should make it non-negotiable for candidates to have these skills. I think parents can provide lots of insight and help in selecting principals for our schools. We are very patient as many schools go through many principals in a short period of time. Many of the principals lack experience and the knowledge they need to run schools.

In order for districts to place principals in the right schools, they need a well defined interview process. Well defined selection processes are critical for building, and sustaining successful schools (Sammons et al., 1995). Selecting the right principal to serve in a given community can have a positive impact on effective school performance. As revealed in this study, the current structured interview instruments used in Cuttino County Schools do not ask all of the questions needed in order to determine a principals' success.

Although the teachers and parents in this study worked with outstanding leaders, several shared that they had negative experiences with principals in the past. Ms. Imani, a parent from Grass Elementary, stated:

The principal I worked with before did not care about the students. She never did anything and she didn't reach out to anybody. This principal cares and she just does what needs to be done. Our current principal is so different from the other principals who were assigned to this school. She is willing to listen and she doesn't have her mind already made up when she asks for your ideas. She is extremely organized and she knows her stuff. The teachers can't fool her. She knows as much about what the children should be learning as the teachers do. In some cases she knows more. I have seen her help teachers get better and she goes in their classrooms a lot of times to work with the children.

Because of Ms. Imani's experiences with other principals, she suggested that school districts should ask principal candidates questions to determine whether or not they had experience working with students. She also stated that principals needed to "know what they were getting into" before they accepted the position. Ms. Imani's comments are not surprising in that her school had four principals within a four-year period. She felt that previous principals at her school should not have been hired:

I think they need to weed the bad people out. This school needed someone who understands children and who had experience teaching. How can you help a teacher if you don't know how? This district needed to hire someone who had been an excellent teacher.

Like Ms. Imani, Ms. Keishanda a parent from King Middle School, felt that administrators needed to know how to teach or know the curriculum.

Some schools need a lot of help. When people are looking for principals, they need to ask the right questions. They need to take the time to meet with the person one-on-one. They need to know what that principal values and they need to know what that principal thinks about the school, the teachers the children and the parents. They need to ask questions to make sure the person is a flexible person and they need to make sure that person has people skills.

At King Middle School, Mr. Barley collected lesson plans on a weekly basis, and he worked very closely with the curriculum facilitator to examine instruction. It was apparent by Ms. Keishanda's statements that his school community viewed him as the instructional leader.

Mr. James, a parent from Renn High School, felt that what a person values might indicate what kind of leader that individual is:

I think you need to get the opinions of the community before hiring principals. We can help the schools decide what the person values, do they value the teachers? Do they value the children? Do they value the parents? There is probably a lot of homework involved in finding principals. But you need to know their credentials. How much experience do they have? We had a principal once that was probably chosen wrong. She didn't have any experience. This is a big school district, but I don't have a problem with our district hiring outside as long as we get the right people. I am sure principals are thrown into a lot of difficult situations, but that principal did not know how to handle anything. She was mean to teachers, students and parents. She stayed in her office and many students didn't even know her.

Mr. Clark, a teacher at Phifer High School, felt that interviewers should ask principal candidates questions about how they lead and get along with people:

I equate the principalship as being a coach, having coached myself. Very similar you have a lot of things to do. Before a principal is hired, you need to find out if they have people skills, you need to know if they have experience and if they can communicate in order to get across their ideas to their staff. It doesn't matter if they are male or female; it only matters if they are able to work well with others. It is also important that they have teaching experience.

Other parents suggested that questions be posed to determine whether or not the leaders have administration experience, as well as whether they possess the ability to work well with the community.

The suggestions from the teacher participants were very much in line with the responses from the parents. Ms. Morgan, a teacher at Sann Elementary, made the following suggestions:

I guess the first thing a district needs to know is something about their backgrounds. Can they talk to people? Do they work well with the students, teachers and the community? Do they value their parents? I would want to meet the people and not do interviews over the telephone. I think the most important thing is get an idea of what it is like, where they are coming from. Talk to their former teachers, the staff, the custodians and everybody involved in making the school where they come from. You need someone that going to take charge and is willing to stand up for what they know is best for the school, even though the majority may disagree, but if it's best for the school and the children, then they're willing to stand up for what they believe in.

Ms. Mary, a teacher at Renn High School, felt that districts needed to develop questions that will help determine how a candidate might feel about the culture of the school:

Knowing and understanding the culture of a school is very important and I would prefer to have an administrator in this school who has worked in maybe other schools, not exactly the same, but a similar culture. It could be a similar socioeconomic background or urban area or whatever location. I also need someone who understands how it feels to be a teacher and can help teachers. It makes your day as a teacher when you have a bad day and the principal knows what you are going through.

Another teacher at Renn High School stressed the importance of an administrator being compassionate:

You really need to ask questions to find out if the principal has compassion. This is very important. Being compassionate but strong at the same time can really help a school. You also need to find out if a

principal is well organized. They need to be organized in order to keep up with everything they have to do. Today's principals also need to know how to use data and be able to help teachers move the school forward.

Ms. Repete, a teacher at King Middle School, made the following recommendations:

I guess I think it's important for that particular person in that leadership role to be open and honest and be willing to be approached. I think I would ask the staff to give me a list of characteristics about what they would like to see, keeping in mind that we can't make everybody happy with every little thing, but I think it would be important that the staff have some input, not necessarily on the person themselves but on what they would like in a principal. Then if I was going to choose, what would I look for? Somebody who has a little bit of experience and also has some knowledge of middle school because middle school runs very differently than elementary and high school, so I'd like to see that person with some knowledge of middle school. I'd also like to see somebody who is organized and I think others should be too.

Mr. Steve, another teacher from King Middle School, concurred with Ms.

Repete:

I'd be upset if we had to pick another principal for my school because I really love my current principal. If I had that responsibility on me, I'd probably go back to a list. It would be tough for a new principal because they would want to come in and make sure that this is their school now and that would end up hurting things and not helping things. I would want someone who is willing to accept that the school already existed and had a momentum and they would want to come in and follow that. That's where the current principal did an excellent job. I would have to ask questions to make sure that the new principal is flexible and approachable. They would also have to have a clear vision of where we are going.

Ms. Fern, a teacher from Phifer High School, felt that being a curriculum leader was very important. Her feelings might have much to do with the fact that her school was considered a low-performing high school:

I'd look at their education level to see what degrees they have. I wouldn't want anyone with a business degree. A counseling or curriculum design degree would be good. We really need curriculum leadership to help us with selection of material and planning and what not. Principals today need to be educated in a different way. So I would look at their education. I would also look at the experience level. We have a good deal of people who think that their CPA degrees can be good enough for them to be principals.

Mr. Malachi, who was also a teacher at Phifer High School, stated similar ideas:

I'm familiar with a lot of the difficulties and challenges at this particular school, so I would want to bring the person in , put them in some situations and see how they handle them. When you look for principals, you want to find a leader who understands all the many parts that make a school run. I think they should get a panel of teachers just to see what the teachers think. The most important qualities I would be looking for are honesty, loyalty and consistency. They need to be flexible and they need to be organized.

Ms. Melinda and Ms. Louise felt that districts needed to know whether or not a principal knew the curriculum and if they had any prior teaching experience. Ms. Keishanda felt that in addition to teaching experience, the principal who leads her school should have administration experience. Ms. Alexia felt that teachers should serve on the selection committee, as she stated, "get a group of teachers on a committee and have them ask the future principals questions and

find out if they are able to build teams.” Ms. Lisa thought that questions should focus on the future leader’s flexibility, and Mrs. Lindsay had a similar suggestion, stating that interviewers needed to “find out if they seek input from their community and teachers.” Knowing that twenty-first century administrators need to devote many hours to their careers, Mrs. Morgan felt that it was important to ask candidates about their willingness to put in the extra hours required.

Most of the participants found it important to ask if the applicants knew how to use resources and school data to drive instruction. Mrs. Michelle stated that interviewers needed to determine “if they knew how to use the school’s money properly.” Mr. Malachi stated “ask questions about using data to improve and drive instruction.”

All of the suggestions made above were consistent with the themes that evolved in this study. Again, they are themes that are not currently included in depth in any structured interview instrument, although some suggest otherwise. For example, the Ventures for Excellence instrument is divided into the following areas: Purpose/Human Worth, Human Interaction/Relations; Human Development, and Practical Application/Resources Awareness, but the questions in these sections are vague and left open for several interpretations. This is also the case with the Haberman Star Principal Instrument.

School districts need a clear and transparent selection process that is well defined (Rosse et al., 1988). The questions need to be direct with little room for multiple interpretations. Questions need to be developed that will address not

only the candidates feelings and thoughts, but they should also touch upon the applicant's skill level. Questions on the instrument could include the following:

People Skills and Vision

All of the participants in this study suggested that twenty-first century administrators need people skills, and they need to understand how to convey their vision to their staffs and community in a manner that would help everyone feel connected and "a part of the team." The following questions could help gauge an applicant's skills in this important area:

1. What do you feel is the most important factor to remember when managing and leading adults?
2. What kind of relationship do you develop with your staff?
3. How do you determine teacher qualities that enhance student learning?
4. What do you consider to be the best way to get "buy-in" from your teachers and your school community?
5. As a twenty-first century leader, how do you see your role changing?
6. What skills describe the success or failure of school leaders?
7. What strategies would you use to build school and community relations?
8. How do you involve all of the stakeholders at your school?
9. What approaches do you use to maintain and increase staff morale?

10. You have just been appointed principal at the most prestigious high school in the district. On your first day at work; you demand that a parent leave the campus after a teacher informs you that the parent is out of control. You later discover that the teacher belittled the parent in front of students and other staff members without cause. How would you handle this situation?
11. Identify some specific methods that you would use to involve your parents and community in the school?
12. What is your vision of an effective school?
13. How would you convey your vision to your staff and school community?

Understanding and Use of Data

During the last decade, educators were convinced that using data can help them plan and implement procedures and strategies that can help drive instruction. This became apparent in the study when all participants felt that knowing how to use data to drive instruction is a needed skill for twenty-first century administrators. The questions below can help examine a future principal's views on using data:

1. You were assigned to a school that had an overall achievement rate of 40% mastery. What plan of action would you devise to improve these results?
2. How does a principal ensure the success of all students?

3. Describe the most effective ways you help teachers?
4. You are the new principal at a low-performing school. What are the first steps you would take?
5. What process would you use to develop your school improvement plan?
6. As an Instructional leader, how would you utilize data to monitor and improve instruction?

Strong Organizational Skills

Today's principals are no longer managers of a school building (Ervay, 2006). They are charged not only with managing the day-to-day operations, but they also have to serve as curriculum and instruction leaders (Mulford & Silins, 1998). In order to keep up with the numerous tasks before them, administrators must be well organized as mentioned by the participants in this research. The questions below address a potential principal's ability to organize and structure the school day:

1. Explain your idea of a typical school day for an administrator.
2. What procedures would you use to keep up with the day-to-day operation of your school?
3. Suppose you were assigned to a school with 100 teachers. What measures would you take to make sure that you provided the best assistance and resources to them?

Understanding of the Importance of Community Involvement

The principals, teachers and parents felt that it was extremely important for twenty-first century principals to work well with the school community. The following questions help determine how a principal involves parents.

1. You have just been appointed principal at the most prestigious elementary school in the district. After examining the school's volunteer data, you notice that only your more affluent parents are serving the school. What steps would you take to make your school more inclusive of all parents?
2. Identify some specific methods that you would use to involve your parents and community in the school?
3. You were assigned to a school without an active PTA. What would you do to improve this situation?
4. What strategies would you use to build school and community relations?
5. You have been assigned to a school with a reputation of having severe discipline problems. What strategies would you implement to turn things around?

Flexibility

This study revealed that parents and teachers felt that an attribute of an effective leader is the leader's ability to be flexible. The questions below address this trait:

1. You are in a meeting discussing a new project and a teacher makes a recommendation that you believe would be detrimental to the project's successful completion. How would you proceed?
2. The district curriculum leaders require all kindergarten teachers to teach a given skill in a specific way. Your kindergarten staff meets with you and explains that they have a better technique. What would you do?
3. One of your students comes to school wearing the correct colors that are required in your standard mode of dress (SMOD). A teacher informs you that although the pants that the child is wearing are the correct color, they have one too many pockets. How would you handle this situation?
4. You require your teachers to turn in their lesson plans for review on Friday afternoons so that you can review them over the weekend. Your first grade teachers ask you if they can turn theirs in on Monday afternoons, so that they can plan on their weekly planning day (which is on Mondays). What would be your response to this request?

Empathy

In addition to serving as the manager, and curriculum and instructional leader of a school, twenty-first century principals also have to show empathy toward others. This topic is very broad and sometimes hard to measure. The questions below attempt to address this important characteristic:

1. What issues do children of poverty face in our schools? Given the issues, what is the role of the principal in addressing them?
2. You have a teacher who refuses to incorporate small group and collaborative instruction. What would you do about this situation?
3. Do you think it is important for a school administrator to have some type of teaching experience? Why or why not?
4. You have a teacher who continues to come to work late. What would you do about this situation?
5. How does a principal ensure that teachers meet individual students' needs?
6. You discover that a student who has been sent to your office on a frequent basis can't read. What steps would you take in addressing this issue?

Districts need to ask specific questions that capture the perspective administrator's feelings, beliefs and skills. Although the questions above are listed under specific themes, it is not uncommon to have a question cross several themes. For example, the question, "What skills describe the success or failure of school leaders?" can cross all six themes. Direct questions can help sort out the excellent candidates from the good or bad ones. Since fewer school educators are interested in becoming principals (Winter & Jaeger, 2002), it is important for districts to make sure that they get the most qualified candidates. Assorted interview processes are utilized by school districts in the selection of leaders for

their schools (Haberman, 1999; Evans, 2007). None of the current interviewing procedures include questions that cover all of the skills that one needs in order to lead a school.

Recommendations for Further Research

School district human resource administrators are charged with the task of finding outstanding administrator candidates. This job has grown more and more complex in the twenty-first century. As an Executive Director of Human Resources in Cuttino County, I understand this enormous challenge. Principals are the most important educators in our schools (Huges, 1994). They are also the individuals who are charged with the greatest responsibilities. The changes in our society have resulted in many changes in this important role. No longer can principals sit behind their desks and delegate the vast duties of leadership. They have to be directly involved in every aspect of the day to day operation. This includes not only knowing how to effectively manage a school, but becoming experts on curriculum and instruction, as well. These factors have made finding suitable candidates more and more difficult. Throughout my career, I have seen the number of principal vacancies grow and grow. In addition, I have witnessed the decline in viable candidates.

This study revealed the need to find an instrument that will help districts select qualified candidates. The school systems could also benefit from using tools that will help inform future leaders of what the job involves. Although this study reveals much on the subject of principal selection, much more research is

needed. Most of the successful principals selected for this research were experienced, and a few of them had ties to the community. Future research on young, inexperienced administrators could be very helpful as well. This could help district leaders provide staff development and training activities. More specifically, conducting the type of research that was performed in this study can help select principals who can serve as mentors for struggling principals. All of the principal participants had many ideas and suggestions that would be helpful to other leaders.

What I Learned from this Study

During this study, I learned that the leader of a school can positively affect student outcomes. The principal can also create a sense of community that spreads throughout a given neighborhood. All of the principals in this study were loved and respected by their teachers and school communities. Although the principals were selected to lead their schools after participating in a structured interview process, it is inconclusive as to whether or not that process predicted their success. In Cuttino, County, North Carolina, many principals have failed, in spite of scoring high on the interview instrument.

Conclusion

Unlike many school districts in the United States, Cuttino County Schools has invested lots of time and resources in principal selections instruments. In addition, numerous training and staff development activities have provided district leaders with ideas and knowledge on how to select good school

administrators. In spite of all of these efforts, many administrators struggle in the leadership roles. Although the world has changed and the role of the administrator has changed, it is difficult to find twenty-first century educators who are capable of moving today schools forward. As the Executive Director of Human Resources for a school system, this study was very revealing to me. This research supports the need for school districts to use an instrument that contains questions that are not open to different interpretations and meanings. This study showed that the administrators in Cuttino County who were considered the best administrators by their supervisors shared the same characteristics and traits.

These traits were in the common set of themes:

- People skills and vision
- Understanding and use of data
- Strong organizational skills
- Understanding of the importance of community involvement
- Flexibility
- Empathy

These themes are not often found in most interview questions.

Administrative candidates need to answer direct questions related to the jobs that they are expected to perform. A clear and direct interviewing tool would not only be helpful to the school districts, but it would also help the candidates understand what is expected of them when they take over the role. However, this would only be phase one in the needed process.

After all of the interviews and visits to the schools, I learned that the way Cuttino County Schools currently selects and places administrators should be changed in order to make a positive impact on a school's operation and student achievement. The changes that they employ would also help their building level administrators become more and more effective. Currently, they have a high number of administrators failing in spite of the high ratings they might achieve during the hiring process. With the changes in our world that were ushered in during the 21st Century, school districts can no longer limit their procedures to simply asking perspective candidates a series of questions and rating them on their responses. Selecting capable leaders should be a process that involves not only asking clear and direct questions, but the candidates must also be given opportunities to "demonstrate what they know." This could be accomplished by taking the future administrative candidate on "a tour" of the school and community where vacancies presently occur or have recently occurred. While on this tour, the candidate should be asked to give feedback on what s/he is witnessing in the settings. The interviewer/observer can determine how the administrative candidate relates to the staff, community and students. The interviewer/observer can also note the types of questions that the applicant asks. For example, does the perspective administrator want to know about the school's academic record? Does the leader notice the types of academic programs that the school uses, or does s/he have questions related to this issue? If the

applicant points out a problem during the tour, does s/he offer suggestions on how to remedy it?

Educators are quick to state that teachers must learn to teach today's children and youth differently. Although this statement is true, one must not forget that teachers and schools alone cannot do all that needs to be done in the 21st Century. District level administrators must also take some responsibility in this needed change. We must look at how we can select school administrators differently. We must work even harder than before to ensure that the right leader is placed in a school to ensure that all students get what they need and to help teachers be the best educators they can be.

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Appendix

Data Collection Protocols

Interview Questions

I will begin my interviews with the following in order to help the session flow:

- 1) Tell me a little bit about yourself. Where did you grow up? Why did you become an administrator? *What do you like about your work? What are your greatest challenges?*

I am especially interested in understanding how you were selected to become an administrator.

- 2) Why do you think you were chosen for this position?

As you know, the leader is the key factor in the success of a school. So I'd like to ask you some questions about your own experiences and thoughts regarding school leadership. Please try to be as honest as possible. Clearly, I am considered a part of the district's leadership, but I don't want that to stop you from saying anything that's on your mind. I won't judge anything you say.

I will follow the introductory questions by conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews by asking the following probes as necessary to ensure that the themes I am studying will be covered in the interviews.

Changing Role of School Leaders

1. How is the role of a principal different today?
2. Do you think principals today have the same challenges that principals had when you were in school? What are the differences? What are the similarities?
3. What preparation in your administrator training helped you face these challenges?
4. What traits must leaders possess to be successful in today's time of high accountability expectations? Why?

Principal Shortage

1. Why do you think there is a principal shortage today?
2. What strategies could a district use to keep competent principals?

Structure Interview Process

1. How were you selected for your current position?
2. Do you think the interview process clearly captures your leadership traits and abilities? How?
3. If a district was interested in hiring you as an administrator, what would you propose they do in order to know all of your strengths?

School Administrator Selection and Placement

1. Why do you think you were placed at your school?
2. Tell me about your school, including students, staff and community.
3. How do you view yourself as a part of your school community?
4. How do you believe your school community (students, staff, parents) views you as a leader?
5. How do you think your leadership traits align with your school community?

Questions for Members of the School Community

(Teachers)

1. Tell me a little about yourself.
2. How long have you been in the education field? How many different schools have you worked in during your career?
3. How many principals have you worked with at this school? What characteristics (do) did they have that worked well in this school? What things (do) did they do that didn't work well for this school?

4. If you were in charge of selecting the next principal for your school how would you go about doing it, and what qualities and characteristics would you look for?

(Parents)

1. Tell me a little about yourself.
2. How long have you been an active member of this school community?
3. How many principals have you worked with at this school? What characteristics (do) did they have that worked well in this school? What things (do) did they do that didn't work well for this school community?
4. If you were in charge of selecting the next principal for your school how would you go about doing it and what qualities and characteristics would you look for?

Review of Participant's Personnel File

I will review the following data in each participant's personnel file:

1. Pre-employment data (application for employment; resume and any selection criteria used by district)
2. Record of participation in professional development

Review of Participant's School Data

I will review the following data for each participant's school:

1. Historical achievement data (ABC and AYP)
2. Quarterly Benchmark

Proposed Principals Selection Interview

Name: _____

Interviewer(s): _____

Licensure Areas: _____

Position Desired: _____ Date: _____

Tell Something About Yourself

Work Experience (Include working with children)

Questions	Responses	Rating
1. What do you feel is the most important factor to remember when managing and leading adults?		
2. What kind of relationship do you develop with your staff?		
3. What do you consider to be the best way to get by in from teachers and your school community?		

Questions	Responses	Rating
4. How do you ensure the success of your students?		
5. As a 21 st century leader, how do you see your role changing?		
6. What skills explain the success or failure of school leaders?		
7. How do you involve all of the stakeholders at your school?		
8. What strategies would you use to build school and community relations?		
9. What approaches do you use to maintain and increase staff morale?		
10. Describe the most effective ways you help teachers.		

Questions	Responses	Rating
11. How do you determine teacher qualities that enhance student learning?		
12. Do you think it is important for a school administrator to have some type of teaching experience? Why or why not?		
13. You have just been appointed principal at the most prestigious high school in the district, on your first day at work, you demand that a parent leave the campus after a teacher informs you that he is out of control. You later discover that the teacher without cause had belittled the given parent in front of students and other staff members. How would you handle this situation?		
14. Explain your idea of a typical school day for an administrator.		
15. You have been assigned to a school with a reputation of having severe discipline problems. What strategies would you implement to turn things around?		

Questions	Responses	Rating
16. You are the new principal at a low performing school. What are the first steps you would take?		
17. Identify some specific methods that you would use to involve your parents and community in the school?		
18. What process would you use to develop your school improvement plan?		
19. As an instructional leader how would you utilize data to monitor and improve instruction?		
20. What is your vision of an effective school?		
21. What issues do children of poverty face in our schools? Given the issues, what is the role of the principal in addressing them?		

Questions	Responses	Rating
22. How does a principal ensure that teachers meet individual students' needs?		
23. You are assigned to a school that had an overall achievement rate of 40% mastery. What plan of action would you devise to improve these results?		
24. You have a teacher who refuses to incorporate small group and collaborate instruction in his/her lessons. What would you do about this situation?		
25. You are in a meeting discussing a new project and a teacher makes a recommendation that you believe would be detrimental to the project's successful completion. How would you proceed?		
26. Identify some specific methods that you would use to involve your parents and community in the school?		
27. What procedures would you use to keep up with the day to day operation of your school?		

Questions	Responses	Rating
28. The district curriculum leaders require all kindergarten teachers to teach a given skill in a specific way. Your kindergarten staff meets with you and explains that they have a better technique. What would you do?		
29. You have a teacher who continues to come to work late. What would you do about this situation?		
30. How would you convey your vision to your staff and school community?		
31. Suppose you were assigned to a school with 100 teachers. What measures would you take to make sure that you provided the best assistance and resources to them?		
32. You are assigned to a school without an active PTA. What would you do to improve this situation?		

Questions	Responses	Rating
<p>33. You require your teachers to turn in their lesson plans for review on Friday afternoons so that you can review them over the weekend. Your first grade teachers ask you if they can turn theirs in on Monday afternoons so that they can plan on their weekly planning day (which is on Mondays). What would be your response to this request?</p>		
<p>34. What strategies would you use to build school and community relations?</p>		
<p>35. One of your students comes to school wearing the correct colors that are required in your standard mode of dress (SMOD). A teacher informs you that although the pants that the child is wearing are the correct color, they have one too many pockets. How would you handle this situation?</p>		
<p>36. You discover that a student who has been sent to your office on a frequent basis can't read. What steps would you take in addressing this issue?</p>		

Rating Scale

5	4	3	2	1
Exceptional	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Unsatisfactory

**Proposed Selection Interview
Candidate Summary Sheet**

Candidate Name: _____

Interviewer (s): _____

Date: _____

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being very below and 5 being very high:

- _____ Candidate can articulate a vision for schools.
- _____ Candidate understands instruction and can provide insights on how to improve schools.
- _____ Candidate can prove implementation strategies to improve schools.
- _____ Candidate can describe strategies and steps to sustain or improve the culture of a school.
- _____ Candidate can articulate ways to help teachers improve their craft.
- _____ Candidate understands issues of poverty and can identify strategies to address all children in the school communities.