

WEST, DEBORAH LYNN, Ed.D. *The Daily Lives of Principals: Twenty-one Principals in the 21ST Century*. (2010)
Directed by Dr. Ulrich C. Reitzug. 190 pp.

This is a qualitative dissertation study about the daily work lives of 21 school principals from 10 states across the nation. The study tells the story of the principals' work lives by featuring their voices. Since the inception of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the principalship has become a position with increased responsibilities and restricted control in an environment of persistent accountability (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). This study is a follow up to the previous study (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press) which revealed spiraling stress-loads in the daily work of 17 principals from one school district. This dissertation study identifies 6 characteristics that most describe principals' work lives. In addition, 5 contextual conditions are identified that principals say most impact their work. Finally, this dissertation describes how principals are impacted by stress in their daily work lives, but also notes the fulfillment principals said makes their work rewarding and worthwhile. All levels of K-12 education and racial and gender diversity are represented in the study sample. This study will help educators understand principal perspectives during the first decade of the 21st century--a time when many principals are leaving the principalship position.

THE DAILY LIVES OF PRINCIPALS: TWENTY-ONE
PRINCIPALS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

by

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

Greensboro
2010

Approved by

Committee Chair

To my husband, Mark, who has always shared my dreams,
believed in me, and provided endless love and support.

In memory of my brother, Dan, who through his passing
taught me that we are not promised tomorrow.

To my children, Brooke and Trey, who have shown
endless understanding throughout my educational journey.

To Jena, my undergraduate mentor and lifelong friend.

To Lily, Shelby and Gabrielle, who inspire me!

To Beverly, Audrey, Linda, Ron, Wanda, Rhonda, John, Jeremy, Kim, Cassidy, Rick A.,
Carolyn T., Danielle, Kate, Robin, Sherry, Marion, Peggy, Dan, Carolyn R., Jimmy,
Gayle, Boyd, Jane, Jennifer and DeNeele, who supported me!

To my colleagues, Christine, Amna, Naveed, and Brian,
who have each influenced me in some way.

Without all of you, my dissertation would not have been possible.

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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Date of Acceptance by Committee

Date of Final Oral Examination

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Ulrich C. Reitzug for mentoring me throughout my doctorate and guiding me through my dissertation! I believe that the most important factor attributing to my success as a doctoral student is to have been mentored by you. You taught me that research is fun. The support, patience, and excellent work ethic you demonstrated, encouraged me to work hard to complete my dissertation despite a few obstacles. Your impact while serving as my mentor, advisor, dissertation chair, and friend will surely live within me as I pursue a career in the professorate. I will certainly miss you!!

Second, I thank Dr. Carl Lashley for serving on my dissertation committee, as well as your support, good advice and positive feedback during my doctorate—many times subtle, yet so effective. Especially, thank you for your kind words at the onset of my dissertation defense—this moment was extremely encouraging!

Next, I thank Dr. Craig Peck for serving on my dissertation committee and for your support with my research. Your common research interests regarding the principalship provided me additional insights for further research. You are always quick to let me know that you are ready to help—so thank you!

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. C. P. Gause for serving on my dissertation committee, as well as preparing me for my dissertation by teaching me about inequities in communities and schools. These conversations have forever impacted my perspectives!

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This is a study about the daily work lives of 21 principals from ten states covering most geographical areas of the United States. I traveled 8800 miles across the nation over a three month period to listen to and record what principals had to say about their work during the *NCLB* high stakes, high accountability era. Since the inception of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*, the principalship has increasingly become a position characterized by extensive responsibilities and restricted control in an environment of persistent accountability (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). As a result, turnover among principals is increasing at an alarming rate (Cushing, K. S., Kerrins, J. A., & Johnstone, T., 2003). The principals interviewed for this study describe the contextual factors that influence principal practice--factors that make the work of principals more difficult as well as those that make their work more gratifying. In this study principals discuss the things that keep them in their positions, as well as the reasons they consider, at times, leaving the principalship. A previous study conducted in one southeastern school district which found that principals are overworked, frustrated, and stressed in their roles, provides the framework for this study (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press).

The principal participant's schools were all similar to other schools to some degree, but each faced their own unique contextual differences impacting the work of the

principals. During the interviews, the principals described such things as significant poverty, homelessness, hunger, discriminatory practices, threats of violence, neglect of children, the significance of history, community disasters, politics and *NCLB*—and the often devastating consequences of each on their work. In contrast, the principals also discussed those factors that brought them to the principalship and the positive circumstances that keep them committed to their positions, their work, and to the students. One of the most fascinating revelations was the significant degree that meeting the needs created by many of these contextual conditions absorb the principals' work time--not to mention the additional demands created by the accountability pressures of their superiors. One disturbing discovery in this study is the degree of discriminatory practices in schools, many times a direct result of *NCLB*. Almost all of the principals in this study said they feel stressed; one admitted he feels suicidal at times.

The Development of this Study

Early in my doctoral program at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, my mentor and I conducted a study of 17 principals in a southeastern school district that is--among the 50 largest school districts in the nation. The focus of our study was to discover how principals describe their work--specifically, we were interested in ways in which principals portrayed themselves as instructional leaders (Reitzug & West, 2007). According to the school district website, the district currently teaches 71,000 students in 120 schools with 69% of the students meeting AYP. Fifty percent of the students receive free and reduced lunch, 50% are nonwhite, and they represent 142 countries. Our

principal participants included a racially and ethnically diverse sample of 14 females and 3 males from all levels of K-12 education (i.e., elementary, middle, and high school).

I earned a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's in counselor education, and therefore, I had never worked in a school until this time. During my first few interviews with principals, the principal's office seemed foreign to me and interviewing felt awkward. But during the interviews I increasingly began to pay attention to something that *was* very familiar to me. As each principal described their daily work, portions of the interviews began to take on a therapeutic atmosphere—an environment that was fundamental during my years as counselor—as principals described their stressful and frustrating work lives. My initial perception of principals quickly dissolved from a feeling of awkwardness to that of compassion toward the over-worked principals in this school district. The level of accountability and job responsibilities for the interview participants--by their district office--were inconceivable and seemed appalling at times (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). Many of the female principals became emotional during the interviews and several cried as they described the pressures placed on them in this district. Cathy, a female principal—who is representative of others we interviewed—fervidly described her stressful work after we asked about her goals for the year.

This year? Make it through. [She looks down and begins to tear up, and then closes her office window blinds.] I know I'm not supposed to cry in this interview—sorry. [Crying] Making it through this year. It's really been a hard, hard year. Making it through, but I haven't quit, yet...You know, I never really have had [She begins to cry and her voice is inaudible on the tape]...Let me get myself together for just a second. [Pauses] I don't know. It's hard to know what

you want to do. I know I don't want to do this the rest of my life. I know that!..It's such a stressful job. (p. 9)

Just as with those individuals I once counseled, the principals seemed to find therapeutic relief in being heard as each described their daily lives in the principalship. I discovered that the principals began to speak with ease during the interviews once they sensed our compassion toward them and they seemed to enjoy the reciprocity—that is, the principals realized that they could trust us and therefore found a safe outlet to express their frustrations while we were gifted with priceless documentation about their work as principals.

During our data analysis, I increasingly became interested in learning more about the condition of the principalship. I wanted the *voices* of these principals to be heard by district, state and national education policy makers to hopefully bring improvements to the position. Thus, a new focus in my research evolved. From a review of the literature, I learned about the increasing shortage of principals (Buchanan, 2002; Howley, Andrianaivo, & Perry, 2005; Keli & Czerniak, 2003; NAESP, 2007; NASSP, 2000, 2004; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2003). While the shortage of principals is not central to this study, it may be a potential result of the work demands of principals. Although I learned that there are various factors (i.e., retirement) that contribute to the principal shortage (Buchanan, 2002; Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003), the principals revealed that one of the factors that causes them to leave the position is the increasing *stress* in the principalship (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). Just as I heard from those 17 principals interviewed, I learned from published works that many principals are exhausted from

escalating job demands (Buchanan, 2002; Cushing, Kerrins & Johnstone, 2003) created by those in power (i.e., local, state, and federal policy makers). Our principals indicated that a great deal of their stress escalated as a result of their limited control in their positions, extensive responsibilities, and increasing accountability placed upon them to increase test scores. Cathy, like most of the principals interviewed, (West, Peck, & Reitzug, in-press) attributed the spiraling stress in her work as a consequence of the mandated reforms resulting from *NCLB*.

It's the bureaucracy that is getting in the way of it. It's *No Child Left Behind* and the pressures of that. That's been a huge piece of the pressure. That legislation is just unmanageable because it's unfunded. One of my stressors is the fact that children come from Jones Elementary with no money, and they're all performing below grade level. I didn't get the money that came with them. We didn't have books until yesterday--for 13 weeks into school we're still getting supplies for all the children that we need because we were...over enrollment. (p. 25)

I began to think about the future of the principalship, and wondered how prolonged stress was affecting principals like those in this study. My concerns led me to further inquiry revealing potentially disastrous outcomes that prolonged pressures can have on the physical and mental health of the human body (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003; West, Peck, & Reitzug, in-press).

Additionally, I was surprised to hear so many of the principal participants confess that they would not remain much longer in the principalship because of the spiraling pressures placed on them (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press)—again, their leaving is an implication of the extensive work load of principals. Principal Cathy explains:

I'm really looking more and more to leave our district to find something to get out of the principalship because it is so stressful, because it's so lonely...I never ever thought that I'd be looking and searching like I am, but I am...Just talking to other people who have worked in other districts, it's [our district], and they're killing us one by one. There's just so much pressure to achieve, and there's so little support...There are very few principals left in our district--especially after December--that have more experience than me. That is scary. (p. 25)

Since those data were collected, one-third of the principals interviewed for that study have left the principalship, with only 6 of the 17 principals interviewed remaining in their same positions (West, Peck, & Reitzug, in-press).

Many of the 17 principals interviewed (West, Peck, Reitzug; in-press) felt that those who had never been a principal have little concept about what it is like to be in the position. One principal described it in this way.

It's emotionally draining. I say this to my husband all the time, "You can't fully understand"—I say this to my intern too—"There is no way to fully understand the principalship until you sit in the big black chair...There is absolutely no way you can understand this job until you are the one who's accountable for the lives of these children." (p. 15)

Problem Statement

The high-stakes environment of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* has ratcheted up the pressure on schools and everyone associated with them. *NCLB* accountability is a source of stress and pressure for principals across the U.S. (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003; McGhee & Nelson, 2005; NAESP, 2007; Nelson, McGhee, & Meno, 2007; Perlstein, 2007). Perlstein (2007), in her year-long study of one school, describes the impact of the high-stakes *No Child Left Behind* environment on students, teachers, and the principal—who spends the day prior to the release of her school's test scores,

vomiting, very possibly the result of stress associated with the upcoming release of her student's scores. Principals are aware that they will ultimately be held responsible for increased test scores or there will be professional consequences—including the loss of their jobs (NAESP, 2007; Perlstein, 2007; Weber, Weltle, & Lederer, 2005). Some researchers have found that after a few years in the position, many principals are developing “health issues such as high blood pressure and weight gain” due to the stressful work conditions (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003, p. 29).

There is an increasing shortage of principals in schools (Buchanan, 2002; Howley, Andrianaivo, & Perry, 2005; Keli & Czerniak, 2003; NAESP, 2007; NASSP, 2000, 2004; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2003; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). Although there are various factors that are contributing to the principal shortage (Buchanan, 2002; Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003), the stress of the principalship may well be one of those factors—as cited by some of the principals in the previous study (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). Many principals are exhausted from job demands (Cushing, Kerrins & Johnstone, 2003; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press) created by those in power (i.e., local, state, and federal policy makers). In this study, I am interested in learning how contextual circumstances may be impacting the principalship. Through the principals' descriptions, this inquiry will also examine the health consequences of stress on the human body and psyche. In addition, this study will provide a descriptive portrait of the intensity of the work lives of principals (Buchanan, 2002). Lastly, this study will examine what can be done to help principals cope with stress and maintain a healthier existence.

The literature is scarce as it pertains to what principals have to say regarding their daily work and the demands that are associated with *NCLB*. Publications in which we hear the voices of principals describing their daily work are rare. There are also limited publications that address the consequences of continued stress in the principalship and what it may mean to the principal's position. Perlstein's study (2007) focuses on the tremendous stress mandated testing place on teachers and students, but only lightly touches on the impact of testing on the principal (e.g., the principal vomits the night before the return of her school's test scores). There are reports of unexpected deaths of principals in their 40s and 50s due to heart-attacks, disease, and suicide (Alongi, 2008; Landis, 2007; Mauer, Tsong, & Gay, 2004; NewsRecord.com, 2008)---deaths which may or may not be directly related to stress in the principalship.

As I considered my dissertation focus, I instinctively began to speculate whether the 17 stressed principals studied in the one school district were representative of principals in other school districts and other geographical areas of the United States. Initially, I wanted to know if principals in other areas are as stressed and ready to leave the principalship as several of the principals from the first study (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). I decided to study principals in several states to listen to and learn from them about their work and to understand more fully what it is like to be a principal. I learned that stress is a result of contextual factors –contextual factors that have some commonality across schools, but that often differ from school to school, principal to principal. I also thought about the importance of sharing the results of my analysis of principal work lives' with others who make the policies and create the mandates in

education—especially those among them who never or rarely step into schools (Perlstein, 2007). By sharing the results of this study, I want to provide an opportunity for individuals to “sit in the big black chair” (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press, p. 15) as one principal stated, and help them understand how their decisions impact the principalship. After a literature review, I discovered there were no similar comprehensive studies where principals described their work.

My dissertation study is an exploration of the daily lives of principals and those contextual differences that affect their work. This study explores the impact of *NCLB* and other mandates and contextual factors on the principalship. The objective of this dissertation study is to listen to principals describe their daily work and to learn more about those factors that affect their work (e.g., that prompt principals to begin thinking of leaving the principalship)--during an era when principals have extensive responsibilities, persistent accountability, and restricted control (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). The presence of daily stress felt by many principals—that can lead to what Kraft (2006) terms as “burnout syndrome”—will also be examined to understand why some principals seem to cope better than others. The contextual and analytical differences between the previous 17 principals studied (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press) and the data from this 10 state study will be compared.

Further rationale for this study is that it became apparent during the literature review that there are countless publications written *about* principals, but few that actually capture what principals are thinking or saying about their work. There was a great deal of interest in the quoted sections of the transcripts from those who attended our conference

paper presentations about the earlier study (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). I wondered if the interest in what principals are saying is because principals are isolated in their positions (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press) and many educators have not had the opportunity to read comprehensive data *from* principals about their work. Hopefully, this study will provide those educators greater insights about the work of principals. Instead of another study *about* principals, my dissertation is a study that listens to what principals from across the country are saying about their work in the era of *NCLB*.

Research Questions

1. How do principals describe their work lives?
2. What are the contextual conditions that influence principals' work lives?
 - a. How have their work lives been impacted by contextual conditions?
3. What is the degree and significance of stress in the principals' work lives?
 - a. What are the effects of stress on principals' health and work?
4. What has been the impact of *NCLB* on the work of principals?

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This review of the literature is designed to provide an understanding of each aspect of principals' work lives in the *NCLB* era. The review is organized around the key components of my study. The focus will be on the principal's work life—how are the work lives of principals today different than the principal's work lives of the past? Next, I focus on *NCLB* and other contextual influences on the work lives of principal. I will discuss the hidden curriculum and the side effects of reducing knowledge production to standardization. Then I include a discussion of the sociopolitical and intellectual consequences to a society only prepared to bubble in the right answers on tests. I also incorporate a section on the changes in standards. After that, the effects of stress in the principalship and how stress can affect the health of principals are discussed. Finally, the literature review concludes with a section on the shortage of principals and possible motives for this shortage. In summary, the literature review is divided into the following sections:

Principal Work Life

NCLB and Other Contextual Influences on the Principal

- The influence of *NCLB* on the principal
- The hidden curriculum and its side effects

- Sociopolitical and intellectual consequences to a society only prepared to bubble in the right answer

Standard Changes and Democracy for Students; Moral Purpose

Stress in the principalship

The Principal Shortage

Conclusion

Principal Work Life

According to Lovely (2004, p. 7), “The bygone era of authoritarian and aloof school management has paved the way for the emergence of a more culturally conscious leader.” A great revolution has occurred in the principalship role (Williamson & Blackburn, 2009) since the days Wolcott (1973) wrote his ethnography of *The Man in the Principal’s Office*. The administrative principal from thirty or so years ago was given the freedom to manage and run the school with autonomy from the central office. The principal managed the property, the finances, was the human resource manager for faculty and staff, facilitated meetings with teachers and parents, and served as the authority and disciplinarian for the teachers and children. He was removed from what was happening in classes, and left the *socializing* (p. 228-229) of new teachers in the hands of the more experienced teachers. The principal was expected to be a civic leader to the community as well (Beck & Murphy, 1993). While growing up during the 60s and 70s, I attended a total of eight different schools. From a student’s perspective, I remembered the school principal as unapproachable, and as the person in authority that student’s feared and teachers respected. Some principals carried a paddle which would

make echoing sounds down the school hallways when striking misbehaving students several times on the behind—a sound that reminded me to follow rules.

The *restyled* school principals' role for the first decade of the twenty-first century is full of complexities and uncertainties swathed in a high-stakes environment (Williamson & Blackburn, 2009). Before *NCLB* was mandated, Pierce (2000) described the transitioning of the principalship role in this way.

According to a 1998 report published by the *National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)*, the typical elementary school principal a decade ago was a 45-year-old white male who worked 40 hours a week with most of the summer off, had authority for 17 percent of his budget, and belonged to a principal's association or union. He spent little time in the classroom, functioning more as a manager, and aspired to ascend the career ladder (para. 1).

Today's principal works longer hours, is less appreciated, has greater accountability, and has little time to learn or think about how to manage competing demands and constituencies, according to the *NAESP* report. While still white and male, the typical principal is now 50 years old, with an annual salary of \$61,000. He works ten hours a day at school and another eight hours on weekends or evenings. He controls 26 percent of the school's budget. Most of his time is spent in three areas: staff supervision, interaction with students, and discipline/student management. This principal can retire at age 57 and--eager to be relieved of work that was once rewarding--probably will. (para. 1).

Fast forwarding to the second half of the first decade of the twenty-first century—after the implementation of *NCLB*, the more savvy principal (Rinder, 2007) is now expected to become a *change agent* (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Rinder, 2007) who builds *capacity* (Lambert, 1998; 2003; Rinder, 2007) by:

- Creating a shared learning environment as an instructional leader who focuses on improved instruction, (Lambert, 1998; 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Rinder, 2007; Williamson & Blackburn, 2009), knows the value of involving

teachers in shared learning (Lambert, 1998) and challenges the “status quo” in schools (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 42).

- Identifying and transitioning the school culture to what is valued in the school-- for example, high expectations, celebrating student achievement and graduation, or involving parents in special activities (Williamson & Blackburn, 2009).
- Facilitating well-planned-out meetings with clear goals that utilize the valued time of others as well as themselves (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).
- Driving data and engaging in statistical analysis to determine student learning, then focusing on resetting goals that can create improved student performance (Williamson & Blackburn, 2009).
- Generating school rules, behavioral expectations and disciplinary actions, and then making sure these expectations are well communicated throughout their school community (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Williamson & Blackburn, 2009).
- Interviewing potential faculty and staff--employing those who reflect the beliefs and values of the school community (Rinder, 2007; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Williamson & Blackburn, 2009).
- Providing teachers with necessary teaching resources and participating in continued learning with faculty (Lambert, 1998; 2003; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Rinder, 2007; Williamson & Blackburn, 2009).

- Advocating with students a shared vision and goals toward improved performance (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005), and making sure faculty believes that all students can learn (Rinder, 2007).
- Monitoring teachers and evaluating them to make sure student learning is taking place in the classroom by spending time in each classroom themselves (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Rinder, 2007; Williamson & Blackburn, 2009) as well as being a visible leader.
- Demonstrating great flexibility in a work life filled with constant interruptions (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).
- Embracing a willingness to step-in when necessary (Rinder, 2007) (e.g., emptying garbage, teaching, or sweeping floors when necessary).
- Being energetic and fueling the school community with excitement (Rinder, 2007) about student success.
- Constantly analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the school (Williamson & Blackburn, 2009).
- Becoming a well-spoken public relations representative (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) who knows what to say and what not to say to the media.
- Managing schedules for school events such as book fairs, open house, parent-teacher nights, and PTA meetings (Williamson & Blackburn, 2009).
- Juggling daily finances and making decisions on how best to stretch shrinking budgets to achieve federal mandates (Perlstein, 2007).

- Knowing and following school law (Williamson & Blackburn, 2009) and executing the rights of students such as those pertaining to: students with disabilities; NCLB; religious rights; race, culture; gender; English as a Second Language and linguistic minorities; homelessness; safety; student privacy; equality; bullying; and sexual harassment.
- Implementing national, state and district policies—which includes completing an increasing load of paperwork—reports, evaluations, and statistical analysis--that demonstrates they are satisfying the required policies.

***NCLB* and Other Contextual Influences on the Principal**

The work of the principal is directly affected by the contextual influences of the school (Goldring, Huff, May, & Camburn, 2008). “Contingency theories emphasize the important role that context plays in determining the success of a leader” (p. 334). The work of Goldring and colleagues closely studied but could not determine if a principal’s success is contingent upon their ability to adjust personal behaviors with their contextual work environments. Certainly there are many determinants nested in the context of the school environment (e.g., high levels of poverty, parents, homelessness, violence, *NCLB*) which have a direct effect on the principal’s ability to effectively lead.

The influence of *NCLB* on the principalship. The changing role of principals (Bech & Murphy, 1993; Buchanan, 2002; Cushing, Kerrins & Johnstone, 2003; Keil & Czerniak, 2003; NAESP, 2007; NASSP,⁷ 2000, 2004; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2003, West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press) has increased their job responsibilities and the high-stakes environment of *No Child Left Behind* has ratcheted up the pressure on them

(Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002; Lindle, 2004; Perlstein, 2007; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). In 1973, Wolcott described a principal whose daily work was a continuum of jumping from one task to the next. While the work of the 2010 principal continues to jump from one task to the next (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press), the principal's success is assessed by her ability to be an instructional leader (Rinder, 2007; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). The instructional leader principal "shape[s] the environment in which teachers and students succeed or fail, and instructional leaders must be able to coach, teach, and develop the teachers in their schools" (National Staff Development Council, 2000, p.1). Principals are increasingly pressured to *build capacity* (Lambert, 1998; 2003; Rinder, 2007) in schools. Expanding their knowledge to become effective instructional leaders has become central to the principalship of the twenty-first century. The principal who builds capacity creates a shared set of goals within the school community and becomes a visionary leader with increased expectations for teachers, students and parents. As a capacity builder, s/he must focus on classroom instruction with daily teacher observation.

The high-stakes environment of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* has ratcheted up the pressure on schools and everyone associated with them (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003; McGhee & Nelson, 2005; NAESP, 2007; Nelson, McGhee, & Meno, 2007; Perlstein, 2007; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). Principals are pressured by potential professional consequences when they fail to increase test scores (NAESP, 2007; Perlstein, 2007; Weber, Weltle, & Lederer, 2005; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). Low-performing school principals are particularly subject to the relentless demands of *NCLB*

to create test score growth each year (Sunderman, Orfield & Kim, 2006). Since the inception *NCLB*, Ladd (1999), found that principal turnover in Dallas, TX spiraled from 4.7 percent to 28.5 percent.

Teachers and other licensed educators, who make up the bulk of the pool of potential principals, are backing away from the position after witnessing the workload and stress of their principal colleagues (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002; Lindle, 2004; Perlstein, 2007; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). Research indicates that the increasing job demands of principals is a nationwide phenomenon (Buchanan, 2002; Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003; Howley, Andrianaivo, & Perry, 2005; NAESP, 2007; NASSP, 2000, 2004; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2003). The decreasing numbers of principals leaving the principal position (Buchanan, 2002; Gates, Ringel, Dantibanez, Guarino, Ghosh-Dastidar, & Brown, 2006; NAESP, 2007; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2003), is making it more and more difficult to fill principal vacancies (Howley, Andrianaivo & Perry, 2005).

While most would agree that there should be some measure of “accountability” in schools to discern that effective pedagogy is occurring, and that educational leaders are leading and students are learning, it appears that *No Child Left Behind* has sent stress into an upward spiral, as educators race to improve student performance (Perlstein, 2007). The *NCLB* legislation reflects assumptions and expectations that every child is equipped with the psychological, cultural, and socioeconomic background to achieve comparable outcomes on standardized tests (Fine, 2004). Many students are increasingly disengaged as the achievement gap widens (Cawthon, 2007; Fine, 2004; Perlstein, 2007), and

curriculum that is not related to the standardized test continues to be eliminated (Carlson, 2007), despite the logic that student needs should be considered, and despite student/teacher input as to how best to engage students. Perlstein's (2007) study reveals that many students do not understand the concepts that are taught to them, but instead are trained to regurgitate what their teachers have rehearsed with them with some teachers cheating and teaching students the test itself (Rueter, 2005). Perlstein notes,

An honest airing would acknowledge how little the test tells us about students, and it would address the failure of accountability rules to do anything about some of the root causes of poor performance in schools: lack of preschool, lack of medical care, poor parent education, impoverished communities....There is no incentive to teach anything you know won't be on the test....Why are the students who choose to transfer out of a school that did not pass the test usually not the children farthest behind? (p. 4-5)

At the time he signed the *NCLB* bill, George Bush declared that educators are bound according to an accountability system and therefore, must meet the criteria to receive federal dollars (The White House, 2002). Yet, there seems to be little accountability for those in power who build these laws and policies--those who instruct teachers and principals to be accountable. Policy makers know very little about kids who struggle (Perlstein, 2007). Instead, they ask principals and teachers to do more than is humanly possible (Perlstein, 2007; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press).

Although school teachers and principals are highly valued, they seem to have become the sacrificial lambs within the *No Child Left Behind* legislation when student performance fails to meet the standards of the states. Many times principals are encouraged to take positions at low performing schools where others before them have

failed, and the probability of their meeting *Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)* is slim (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002; Perlstein, 2007; West & Reitzug, 2007; 2008). Often the circumstances that produce student academic failure are beyond the control of the principal, yet they are held accountable and their careers are threatened. It is apparent that principals become someone to blame while the districts and states wash their hands of responsibility. Principals then begin to feel alone and isolated when they find themselves held responsible for failing schools--without the power or input to make change.

McGhee and Nelson (2005) report on a study of three principals in Texas who were viewed by their supervisors and colleagues as “stellar educators” (p. 366) and had acquired 60 years experience collectively. Despite their collection of accolades and the great admiration of other educators, as well as the community, all three principals were terminated strictly because of test scores. Although their performance yields various awards and honors--including one awarded statewide teacher of the year, and another recognized by the school board for increased test scores a few months before--their careers were stolen without warning. As principals leading schools with the greatest numbers of English-Language Learner student students of poverty, and students of color (schools where student achievement is typically lowest), the concerned principals routinely met with their school districts and devised plans of action in a concerted effort to improve scores—yet, it wasn’t enough according to new mandates resulting from *NCLB*. Two of the three principals dismissed were in a PhD program, two were published, all had successfully written grants that brought the school district more than a

million dollars. Yet with a wave of a hand these three principals were fired based solely on student performance instead of performance merit of the principals. Consequently, many principals are feeling pressure to meet endless mandates while lacking the necessary power to succeed.

Further adding to their pressures, principals must decide which stakeholders to *please* first (Cantano & Stronge, 2006). There is too-little-time in their daily drill to put out every fire with flames erupting from multiple directions. The chain of command becomes clouded and principals feel pressured as they make decisions that will satisfy state academic demands and expectations from the community and while attempting to do that which is in the best interest of their students. One school leader quoted by West, Peck and Reitzug (in-press; p. 20) concluded, “*No Child Left Behind* is a very good thing for some accountability, but it’s an unrealistic thing and forces people into some very hurtful decisions about the kids.” Principals have a repertoire of individuals that they must please--regardless of their personal leadership beliefs or moral arguments--in fear of losing their jobs (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002; Catano & Stronge, 2006; Perlstein, 2007; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). The principals from the West, Peck and Reitzug study (in-press) discussed at length their difficulty with pleasing their superiors and during their narratives it was these vignettes which created the majority of the emotional unraveling as they spoke. One principal addressed the endless demands and pleasing his superiors in this way, “Do this, do that, keep this record, keep that record....It’s accountability to the *n*th degree” (p. 18).

The hidden curriculum and its side effects. The rhetoric behind the *No Child Left Behind* slogan attempts to make us believe that every child has equal opportunity for success (West & Reitzug, 2007; 2008). The *NCLB* Act pressures schools to make sure every child is on grade level by 2014 or the school will pay the consequences. Schools will have no choice but to comply--therefore, making it seem to the nation that if children fail, it must be the fault of the teacher or principal. The mandate fails to acknowledge that all students are different individuals who each have their own goals and talents that will add to the workforce in ways the students will choose. The type of pressured learning associated with mandates that result from *NCLB* goes against the grain of what experts know about psychological learning and “threatens to turn schools into sweatshops” (Rueter, 2005, p.2), thus, failing to increase student performance. Instead, *NCLB* “focuses on punishment, negative labels, and threats” in an attempt to make children perform well on tests. Judging students by their test scores fails to consider social considerations that contribute to poor student performance when students are standardized. Mandates ignore critical factors that could promote student success if these criteria were addressed, such as listening to teachers to improve curriculum, reducing absenteeism, developing after school programs, increasing parental participation, and reducing class sizes.

Schools have become a form of political leverage and the federal government has begun to treat schools like corporations, while principals are given the roles and responsibilities of the CEO for these businesses (Perlstein, 2007; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). When schools fail to produce the desired results, political leaders and policy makers blame schools--and again, in some instances, principals and teachers are fired. All

the while, the nation's leaders absolve themselves for student failure even though principals and teachers have no control over many contextual circumstances that contribute to student failure—such as lack of needed funding, high poverty levels, cultural and socio-economic factors that interfere with student learning, language barriers, lack of parental involvement and student-support, and high attrition rates.

According to Ohanian (1999) it's not curriculum, (or the quality of the teacher) that is the number one determinate as to whether a student will get *left behind*. She believes that the best predictor of student success is parental success. Therefore, one would wonder if most students who are scoring the highest on tests are the children of those whose parents support *NCLB*. Ohanian maintains that *NCLB* is “irrelevant” (p. 33) to these parents, and “such standards let those who were born with the gold standards in their mouth off the hook of moral responsibility to be their brother's keeper” (p. 33). President Bush's *NCLB* bill became a new form of legally segregating the rich from the poor after he declared that parents have the right to move their children out of low-performing schools, sometimes at the expense of the school. After a year-long study in a low performing school, Perlstein (2007) observed this new legal separation of the poor and the rich, and as noted earlier in this chapter, she asked, “Why are the students who choose to transfer, out of a school that did not pass the test, usually not the children farthest behind?” (p. 203). Ohanian (1999) says families of high performing students feel no moral obligation when it comes to children who are low performers because they feel, “We offer everybody the same standards. It isn't our fault if you didn't pass calculus” (p. 33).

Title I schools have the bulk of the low performing and low income students and need money most of all (West & Reitzug, 2007). However, according to *NCLB*, when students fail to reach mandates, these are the schools that lose federal dollars due to poor performance. When the school loses the money and the good teachers along with it, the students are indirectly punished as well. Schools with the greatest numbers of minority and low-income students are most affected by the need to push the majority of curriculum aside (FairTest, 2008; Perlstein, 2007) while they spend much of their school year with a narrowed program of study, focusing on math and reading as they prepare for testing. According to *NCLB*, the tests are supposed to reflect the curriculum taught in classes. But with the pressures on teachers to increase math and reading scores, there are no incentives for teachers to teach anything but the essential tested materials to reach needed test scores to meet mandates. As a result, test scores only reflect that which students have been drilled to memorize (Perlstein, 2007), and many times students do not understand the concepts grounding what they have memorized--they only know which bubble to fill-in. *NCLB* assumes there is one way to evaluate student achievement (Rueter, 2005)--standardized methods.

Since *No Child left Behind* was signed into law, teachers and principals are pressured to prove their competency in the high stakes environment--as educators and leaders--of state mandated academic standards and measuring sticks such as “adequate yearly progress” (AYP). Although most educators want their students to do well academically, it is idealistic to think that *every* single child can read on grade level by 2014—the deadline for students to meet goals of the *No Child Left Behind* Act (Perlstein,

2007). This legislation embraces inequitable expectations of children—that all are able to perform the same--to reach equitable goals by using standardized testing (Fine, 2004).

In recent years, students have become more focused on whether something will be on a test or not before deciding if it is something they need to learn, and now this focus has transferred to the teachers (Labaree, 1997). If something will not be on the test, many teachers no longer feel they need to teach it. Instead, teachers teach to the test, or again, in many cases, teachers teach *the test* (Rakow, 2008). Schools are now spending more and more on instruction that trains teachers to stick to particular scripts, so as not to waste time on anything that will not improve test-scores, instead of training teachers in new curriculum as well as becoming better and more engaging instructors.

Sociopolitical and intellectual consequences to a society only prepared to bubble in the right answer. Most educators know that standardized tests are not a valid measure of student learning, yet *NCLB* governs our nation’s schools. Meier (1995) states,

They [standardized tests] capture neither essential intellectual competence nor the demonstrated capacity of our students to use their knowledge, to care for others, to imagine how others think and feel, and to be prepared to speak up and be heard. These skills are no less critical, no less rigorous (p. 369).

Meier and Schwartz (1995) talk about five questions that are “the habits of mind” (p. 30) which educators should teach students to ask themselves in their daily lives, to help them “live productive, socially useful, and personally satisfying lives” (Meier, 1995, p. 369). Questions such as:

- How do we know what we think we know? What's our evidence? How credible is it?

- Whose viewpoint are we hearing, reading, and seeing? What other viewpoints might there be if we changed our position--our perspective?
- How is one thing connected to another? Is there a pattern here?
- How else might it have been? What if? Supposing that?
- What difference does it make? Who cares?

The high-stakes era of NCLB does not allow most instructors the time to teach students with life-skills. Instead, schools are now spending an incredible amount of time preparing students for tests--especially those students who are disadvantaged, poor, and of color (FairTest, 2008; McReynold, 2006; Perlstein, 2007; Rueter, 2005)--narrowing their curriculum to allow time for endless and tiring test preparations. The *NCLB* Act that is supposed to narrow the range of scores is now creating a new gap (McReynolds, 2006). Schools with privileged students are able to spend time on a wide variety of courses—such as art, music, science, social studies, creative writing, and other subjects--while schools with disadvantaged students are punished as they spend their days focused on memorizing test materials in reading and math. Education in our country is increasingly becoming discriminatory and segregated. It is frightening to think what the future holds for those students who are not learning “the habits of mind” (Meier, 1995; Meier & Schwartz, 1995) and not learning to think for themselves. Instead, many students have become parrots who are being taught to mimic that which their teachers have taught them to repeat. Many disadvantaged students are not receiving needed skills for adulthood, and students may lose the ability to think for themselves, and to see through propaganda, as schools teach them to do whatever is dictated to them. Increasingly, students have little

motivation to even stay in school (Perlstein, 2007; Rueter, 2005) because they are unable to meet the test demands with pressured and abbreviated class instruction created by test mandates.

The use of multiple-choice answers on standardized tests has become a necessity as a result of *NCLB* due to the time limitations of grading these tests (McReynolds, 2006). The state of Connecticut, which has tested every other year since the 1980's, is known to have one of the best testing methods in the nation because Connecticut's exams allow students to explain their answers and use various methods of measuring student learning. The state attempted to keep their successful way of testing students after *NCLB*, but realized it would cost the state millions of dollars more each year because of additional test demands from new mandates. The state requested permission from the Secretary of Education that they are allowed to continue to test every other year so students could be tested in various ways. They were denied permission and were told they should use multiple-choice testing. It is these situations, of compromised student learning, that makes many question the motives behind *NCLB*. In conclusion, as Susan Ohanian (1999) observes, it is not the children who profit from *NCLB*, rather, it is the politicians and those who sell the tests.

Standard Changes and Democracy for Students; Moral Purpose

Since the 1990's, more than 40 states began to utilize the *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLLC)* as a guide for their "preparation, licensure, and evaluation programs for principals and superintendents" (Olson, 2008, ¶ 1). NC State Standards were aligned with these standards (although they were recently

revised) and named the *Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC2008*. These standards are also endorsed by the *National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA)* (Young, 2008). Recent revisions in the North Carolina standards resulted in a new set of standards for the state, the *North Carolina Standards for School Executives*. These standards created a new vision of principals—renaming them school *executives* instead of principals or educational leaders. Additional recent changes in standards were made by the *NC State Board of Education* (2008) in their Standards for School Executive Preparation Programs with a newly added mentorship/internship program.

Although there have been recent updates in these standards, little has changed in schools, (Olson, 2008). NC has redeveloped the principal's role as school executive (NC Standards for School Executives, 2008) who mirrors the functions of the nation's business industry. According to the NC standards, there is hope that this new image will pave the way for improved rapport with staff, creating a domino effect for systemic improvement in school and communities. Reflective of these changes, the section below is an evaluation of the revisioning of the principalship/school leadership standards. Also, there is an assessment of changes, as well as changes *not* included in the new standards—therefore, providing an analysis of how changes in standards may impact the building of democratic and transformative learning communities, or conversely re-inscribe the current dominating culture of public schools.

Before one can recognize true democracy, it is important to first make sure we are on the same page by defining democracy. According to Gause, Reitzug and Villaverde, (2007),

Democracy is not so much a condition that we achieve, as an ideal toward which we strive. It is more than a form of governance; indeed, it is a way of life...a way of living that requires the open and widespread flow and critique of ideas, with an overriding commitment to determining and pursuing the common good (p. 218).

Democracy is also “an embodied notion, something we enact and carry with us daily” (p. 219). As defined, I am curious as to how schools practice and communicate democracy in schools.

According to the *NC Standards for School Executives*, the “moral purpose of school leadership is to create schools in which all students learn” (2006, p.1). It is interesting that the word *moral* is used here by those who wrote the guidelines. Wikipedia (n.d.) defines *morality* as “basic guidelines for behavior intended to reduce suffering in living populations.” It is well documented that a consistent predictor of student success is parental socioeconomic status (SES) (English, 2002; Ohanian, 1999, Perlstein, 2007). It is not the principal’s lack of leadership, or the competence of the teacher, that most often predicts unsuccessful academic outcomes in schools (Ohanian, 1999), but whether a student is poor or privileged. Educators, politicians and society have known such predictions since the Thorndike studies in the 1950’s (as cited in English, 2002), yet politicians and those in power over schools continue to hold students, teachers and principals accountable for standardized test scores that are many times “socially deterministic” (English, 2002, p. 302). Even worse, children who are forced to be evaluated through test scores, especially those who are in poverty and of color, suffer from an ineffective standardized testing system—one that is an inaccurate measurement of student learning (Carlson, 2007; FairTest, 2008; Perlstein, 2007; Rueter, 2005).

Thus, a new form of legal segregation in our nation between the *haves* and *have nots* is escalating. Additionally, according to Jensen's study (as cited in English, 2002), testing is an "unnecessary stigmatizing practice, with absolutely no redeeming benefits to individual pupils or society" (p. 303), and fails to provide accurate data as to why schools are not improving (FairTest, 2008). Still, there is no mention in the standards that indicates any interest in promoting equity for students. It speaks volumes when the new *ISLLC-2008* and the *NC Standards for School Executives* expect school leaders to exercise "moral purpose" and "create schools in which all students learn" (2007, p.1), yet fail to address the pervasive inequities (i.e., *NCLB*) that continue to exist in schools. Thus, the standards are failing to "reduce suffering in living populations" (morality, n.d.) such as students who are forced to be assessed by their test scores.

In reading through the *Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards (ISLLC)*--the guide used for "preparation, licensure, and evaluation programs for principals and superintendents" (Olson, 2008, ¶ 2), the *NC Standards for School Executives*, (2006), and the recent changes from the *NC State Board of Education* (2008), there is nothing stated as to how schools will improve equity for students. NC addresses changes that "must" (2008, p. 2) address working conditions for teachers, institutional commitment, curriculum that will be aligned with standards, updating clinical standards, institutional agreements for recruiting and preparing administrators, partnerships of faculty for field based experiences, internships, and developing portfolios for the school executive preparation programs. But there is no mention in any of the documents that schools *must* address the growing problems in schools related to inequality, ethnicity,

(Carlson & Gause, 2007; Perlstein, 2007), or sexual orientation (Carlson & Gause, 2007). There is no mention of how schools should address differences in race, culture, socioeconomic status, disabilities, or language barriers to ensure a quality education and moral obligation to students. There is still nothing that resembles democracy for all students in the standards--just an abundance of rhetoric.

The NC Standards for School Executives state that their “moral purpose of school leadership is to create schools in which all students learn” (2006, p.1). Yet, the standards fail to explicitly outline how to create schools where all students can learn. In comparison, the standards have paid more attention to internships for school leaders and outlined details in the new standards (NC State Board of Education, 2008). Meanwhile, the high-stakes era of *NCLB* does not allow most instructors the time to teach students with life-skills (FairTest, 2008; McReynold, 2006; Perlstein, 2007; Rueter, 2005). Instead, schools spend an incredible amount of time preparing students for tests--especially those who are disadvantaged or of color, while reducing their curriculum to allow for endless and tiring test preparations. The *NCLB* Act that is supposed to narrow the range of scores between different populations of students is now creating a new gap (McReynolds, 2006). Schools with the privileged students are able to spend time on a wide variety of courses—such as art, music, science, social studies, creative writing, and other subjects--while schools with many disadvantaged students are punished as they spend their days focused on memorizing test materials in reading and math. Education in our country is increasingly becoming discriminatory and segregated. Professional organizations in education such as the *University Council for Educational Administration*

(UCEA) and the *American Educational Research Association (AERA)* are flooded with research papers and books, and research journals are filled with reports that standardizing testing is discriminatory, (FairTest, 2008; Perlstein, 2007; Rueter, 2005) and inequities in schools persist, yet the *NC State standards* failed to address these issues. There is only a brief mention hidden in the pages of the *NC Standards for School Executives*, (2006) about student differences, and these references are vague. Internships seem to be the priority in the *2008 NC Standards for School Executives*, rather than the importance of students. There is nothing in the standards that promotes democracy for all children in schools.

Stress in the Principalship

Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2002) conducted a seven year phenomenological study which focused on leadership *wounding* experiences as described by school leaders—one of the few publications I have found that includes the voices of principals. The study targeted school leader participants who were known to have had a crisis experience, then subsequently interviewed them to understand how each made meaning of these experiences. Their study discussed “how educational leadership preparation and professional development programs might better support their growth,” and “sought to understand the emotional dimensions of becoming a wounded leader” (p. 137). Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski found that school leaders who are impacted by disastrous experiences in their role can sometimes become more effective leaders as a result of these experiences. Just as I suspected during my first study, Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski point out the therapeutic benefits for principals in having others who

can listen to them and provide a professional support system. Increasingly, school districts, foundations, and universities are playing an important role in the mental health of principals by recognizing the need for school leaders to have outlets and forums where they can come together with other principals to “reflect on their practice” (p. 123). Interestingly, Augustine, Gonzalez, Ikemoto and colleagues (2009) found “a correlation between improved conditions for principals and their engagement in institutional practices” (xvii).

Researchers have found that after a few years in the position, many principals are developing “health issues such as high blood pressure and weight gain” due to the stressful work conditions (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003, p. 29). Kraft (2006) found that those who work long hours and/or under prolonged stress are probably not exercising, eating healthy diets, or spending time with family, and are isolating themselves from others. Eventually, job performance drops, adding additional stress. Some may turn to alcohol or drugs, or, in the worst cases, even suicide.

Increasing job demands in the principalship is a growing trend nationwide (Buchanan, 2002; Catano & Stronge, 2006; Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003; Howley, Andrianaivo, & Perry, 2005; NAESP, 2007; NASSP, 2000, 2004; Pounder & Merrill, 2001; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2003), and one wonders about the consequences of the unrelenting pressure and stress on the physical and psychological health of our nation’s educational leaders.

After a quick search, I was able to collect a list of 22 principals (listed below) who have passed away in their 40s and 50s since the inception of *NCLB*. Four principals

died as the result of a heart attack, one from an aneurysm, four from the flu, and five from cancer. There were four unknown causes of death from the list below, while four principals committed suicide—one of which is the only principal death I included who was over the age of 60. Interestingly, two principals worked at the same school, (one succeeded the other) and died within a few years of each other. I am in no way making the assumption that any of these deaths of principals were caused from their work or stress in their principalship position. However, since many of the principals I interviewed for this dissertation study described their health issues, including flu, heart attacks, strokes, and thoughts of suicide, while talking about the stress in their work life, it is worth mentioning. My intention in including the list below is to create awareness that there are many principals passing away at a fairly early age, and it bears mentioning in view of the stressful conditions of the principalship. One can only speculate the extent to which stress in the principalship played a role in these deaths.

- At 40 years of age, Pat Podvin, a principal in Anchorage Alaska, was found dead in a river from an apparent suicide (Mauer, Tsong, & Gay, 2004).
- In Guilford County, N.C., at 47 years-old, Leslie Dunn died of a heart attack while attending a principal's conference in June, 2007 (News & Record, 2007).
- In N.C., Michael Tylavsky, the well-loved 58 year-old principal of North Moore High School in the Fayetteville area died of cancer (Landis, 2007).
- Georgette Watson, a 46 year old principal died of a heart attack during a root canal December 17, 2007 (Shelton, Owen, Gerner, Schmadeke, et al, 2007).

- Derek Michael Drummond, an elementary school principal in Manassas, VA committed suicide at age 44 (Vargas, 2007).
- Lisa Waller, age 40, a principal at Harrisburg High School in PA died of cancer while juggling chemotherapy treatments and her principal position. Two years later, the new principal, Evangelene L. Kimber, 52, suddenly died after a short illness (Castelli, 2008).
- On February 10, 2008, without warning, John Hendricks, a Laurens, SC high school principal dropped dead on his treadmill of a heart attack at age 45 (Alongi, 2008).
- Valerie Collins, a Guilford County, N.C. principal suddenly passed away (New-record.com, 2008), with “flu like” symptoms on February 8, 2008 at age 52.
- Samuel Massie, age 54, a VA opportunity school principal was found dead of unknown causes (Magruder, 2008).
- Jay Ellis, age 43, a middle school principal in Redmond, WA suddenly died of a brain aneurysm (Decker, 2008).
- Earline Bridges, a New Orleans middle school principal, committed suicide at age 57 (Hurwitz, 2008).
- At age 55, Mitchell Wiener, a principal in the New York public school system, died of complications from swine flu. “Wiener had a history of medical problems, which might have put him at greater risk, according to health officials” (Ramirez, 2009, para 4).

- Principal Bobby Burton, age 55, died of leukemia in Jackson, Michigan (Cummings, 2009).
- Denise Simone, a principal in N.Y., suddenly died at age 50 of unknown causes (Phillips, 2009).
- Terry Mathis, age 49, a S.D. high school principal, died from pneumonia and the flu following a chemotherapy treatment (H1N1, 2009).
- Nathan Hardee, age 69, high school principal in Chesapeake, VA committed suicide (Wittmeyer, 2009).
- Leah Ann Overstreet, age 52, an elementary school principal in AL, died from flu complications (Peterson, 2009).
- Beverly Quesenberry, age 59, a VA elementary school principal died of a heart attack while running errands just after classes dismissed for the holidays (Guesenberry, 2009).
- Nicole LeBeauf, age 41, a principal at a LA elementary school died of cancer (Hirdes, 2009).
- Luther Johnson, age 39, a high school principal in NC died after a long illness (Hui, 2009).
- Steve Baker, a principal in Orange Beach, CA died at age 53 from cancer (Lanier, 2010).

Interestingly, Quick et al. (2006) notes, “Stress can be the spice of life . . . or the kiss of death. The real question. . . ‘Is it worth dying for?’” We are left to wonder if educators will begin to see an increase in principals with mental and physical health problems due to the increasing stress of the principalship as a result of *NCLB* and other mandates. Is it possible that when referring to school district supervisors, one principal (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press) was on target when she stated, “They’re killing us one by one” (p. 25)?

Gonzales (2007) found that long-term stress in the work-place can make individuals twice as likely to be depressed. He identified ten main workplace stressors as: lack of control over daily tasks, office politics, lack of communication, inconsistent or unreliable performance reviews, lack of appreciation (whether perceived or real), work/life conflicts, lack of company leadership or director, unclear job expectations, random interruptions and unreasonable workloads. The principals in my previous study (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press) cited numerous examples of many of these factors.

Kraft (2006) describes what happens when the human body is under relentless stress:

The adrenal glands secrete stress hormones, the heartbeat speeds up, and the blood pressure rises. If such tensions endure for weeks, months, or years, physical consequences arise inevitably. Chronic stress contributes to hypertension, heart problems and a weakened immune system, so that we get infections more often (p. 30).

Weber and Weltle (2005) suggest that principals are often essential in maintaining the well-being of teachers while their own health is sacrificed. When principals are over-

worked and stressed, their health is forfeited and their ability to perform effectively as principals declines.

According to Burger (1997), when some individuals feel massive degrees of emotional stress, they will find coping strategies to tolerate their distress—explaining why some principals may tolerate stress better than others. Some researchers have found that testosterone levels in the body play a part in the ability to *demonstrate* confidence (Booth, Granger, Mazur, & Kivlighan, 2006). Relatedly, psychologists believe that each gender is socialized to behave according to gender-role socialization (e.g., Burger, 1997). By the time boys enter school, they have been socialized to believe that it is gender inappropriate to cry publicly, and many times are teased for showing emotions, while girls have been socialized to believe that crying is an acceptable behavior for them. However, in a study conducted by Rokach (2001) on loneliness, there were no gender differences among the adult population who feel lonely. At the same time, younger women were found to cope with loneliness better than men which may be an effect of socializing women to express themselves more so than men. In my previous study, (West & Reitzug, 2007; 2008) men did not demonstrate their emotions, and again, one can only assume that male principals have been socially influenced not to allow themselves to be emotional as they talked at length about principalship stressors.

The Principal Shortage

Research shows that there is a critical shortage of principals across the United States (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002; Buchanan, 2002; Howley, Andrianaivo, & Perry, 2005; Keli & Czerniak, 2003; NAESP, 2007; NASSP, 2000, 2004; Rayfield &

Diamantes, 2003). With many principals nearing retirement age, (NASSP, 2000, 2004; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2003) the shortage of these school leaders is expected to continue. Yet in some states, those retiring from the principal position reflect only a small portion of the turnover (Gates, Ringel, Dantibanez, Guarino, Ghosh-Dastidar, & Brown, 2006). Cushing, Kerrins and Johnstone (2003) make a humorous reference as to why there is an ongoing shortage crisis among principals in the title of their article “Disappearing Principals: What is the Real Reason behind the Shortage of Applicants for Principal Positions across the State and Nation? It’s the Job, Stupid!” The article, however, is anything but amusing, as it blames the absence of school principal applicants on the “more work than a human can possibly do” job responsibilities and 60 plus hour work weeks (p. 28). Horng, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2009), speculate that turnover could be a result of school districts who hire principals according to the district needs instead of assigning principals to their *best-matched* schools. For example, Horng, Kalogrides, and Loeb found that principals with the least education and experience are, for the most part, assigned to schools with the highest minority enrollment and lowest test scores. Therefore, principal attrition rates are elevated while students in these schools are not provided an equitable education when compared to higher SES students and schools.

Conclusion

The literature research review in this chapter provides a foundation for the next three chapters about the work of principals--from the voices of principals. Discussions concerning contextual influences--such as *NCLB*, the hidden curriculum, standards, sociopolitical and intellectual consequences of testing, consequences of stress on the

principalship, as well as the current principal shortage--is designed to deliver a backdrop of our current understanding about the work lives of principals. When these reviewed topics are paired with the descriptions by principals about their work, they further advance our understanding and knowledge about the role of principals in the *NCLB* era.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter, the methodology and research design are discussed. In chapters one and two, an overview of the study and the literature review were provided to support the study's purpose which was to explore the daily lives of principals and those contextual differences that affect their work in the *NCLB* era. In addition, the study provides insight about stress in the principalship. The 21 principals interviewed for the study represented most geographical areas of the United States and provided more understanding about what it is like to be a school principal during the first decade of the 21st century.

Research Approach

According to Creswell, (1998) qualitative inquiry is a form of research design used frequently to explore a phenomenon or experience. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative methodology can focus on circumstances or people to acquire a complete understanding and interpretation of the experiences of individuals in “their natural settings” (p. 15). Creswell states, “The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 15).

I wanted to include Creswell's eight points of rationale for conducting a qualitative approach because it helped with my own rationale, as well as staying focused as a qualitative researcher. After each of Creswell's rationales, I provide my own motivation for this study.

First, Creswell explains,

Select a qualitative study because of the nature of the research question. In a qualitative study, the research question often starts with a *how* or a *what* so that initial forays into the topic describes what is going on. This is in contrast to quantitative questions that ask *why* and look for a comparison of groups (eg. Is Group 1 better at something than Group2?) or relationship between variables, with the intent of establishing an association, relationship, or cause and effect (e.g., Did Variable X explain what happened in Variable Y?) (p. 17).

The previous study about principals (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press) generated the questions that led to this dissertation study. As Creswell suggests, I am using a qualitative approach because I wanted to know *how* principals describe their work lives—specifically, *how* principals in other geographical areas are affected by contextual differences, (such as stress in the previous study) and *what* are these contextual conditions? I chose to study principals from several states to give me a more thorough perception about the daily work of principals in our nation.

Second, Creswell (1998) further explains reasons that conducting a qualitative study.

Choose a qualitative study because the topic needs to be *explored*. By this, I mean that variables cannot be easily identified, theories are not available to explain behavior of participants or their population of study, and theories need to be developed (p.17).

Understanding the work lives of principals is a complex process. It is not an inquiry with variables that are measureable. There are no theories about these principals to be investigated because this is a study about the principals' perspectives concerning their work and how circumstances or contextual differences affect their work—making a qualitative inquiry in this case essential.

The third consideration in deciding to perform a qualitative study, Creswell says to;

Use a qualitative study because of the need to present a *detailed view* of the topic. The wide-angled lens or the distant panoramic shot will not suffice to present answers to the problem, or the close-up view does not exist (p. 17).

By allowing principals to answer open-ended questions such as “Tell me what it is like to be a principal,” the study participants were able to give detailed descriptions that create a visual of their lived experience that quantitative research could not offer.

The fourth rationale for a qualitative study as described by Creswell is to;

Choose a qualitative approach in order to study individuals in their *natural setting*. This involves going out to the setting of field of study, gaining access, and gathering material. If participants are removed from their setting, it leads to contrived findings that are out of context (p. 17).

Following Creswell's suggestion, most of the interviews were conducted in the offices of the principals, in their “natural setting” (p. 17), where principals would feel the most comfortable. In three cases the principals asked to be interview in their homes where they would not be disturbed or for convenience sake.

Fifth, Creswell suggests; “Select a qualitative approach because of interest in *writing* in a literary style; the writer brings herself or himself into the study, the personal pronoun ‘I’ is used, or perhaps the writer engages a story telling form of narration” (p. 17-18).

The qualitative analysis for this study has been time-consuming as I brought the mass amount of data I collected together to create structure and meaning from what principals said about their work. Unlike quantitative reporting, qualitative methodology has allowed me to be creative in my written analysis while keeping the focus on my research questions about the work of principals.

In his sixth rationale for a qualitative study, Creswell remarks, “Employ a qualitative study because of *sufficient time and resources* to spend on extensive data selection in the field and detailed data analysis of ‘text’ information” (p. 18).

This study has been indeed a lengthy process. The 21 principal interviews for this study were conducted over a three month period, and took several additional months to transcribe several hundred pages of text. Subsequently, it took several more months to conduct the data analysis.

Creswell gives a seventh reason to conduct a qualitative study.

Select a qualitative approach because *Audiences are receptive* to qualitative research. This audience might be a graduate advisor or committee, a discipline inclusive of multiple research methodologies, or publication outlets with editors receptive to qualitative approaches (p. 18).

My advisor and dissertation committee were amenable to a qualitative dissertation study as it fit well for a study that focused on hearing what principals have to say about their work.

Finally, Creswell's eighth rationale for conducting a qualitative approach is to: "Emphasize the researchers role as an *active learner* who can tell the story from the participants view rather than as an "expert" who passes judgment on participants" (p. 18). This study allowed the principals to paint a vivid portrait of their work through their own words rather than allowing me to be the "expert" (p.18). Asking principals the open-ended question "Tell me what it is like to be a principal" allowed each interview participant the freedom to provide detailed accounts of their work from their perspectives and thus, provides a better understanding of their work lives. My requirement is only to relay their perspectives about their work to the reader of this study.

Research Questions

My research questions were generated as the result of my previous study of 17 principals from one southeastern school district. That study found most of the principals extremely stressed and many ready to leave their positions as principal. I designed my research questions for this study to advance my understanding about principals in many areas with diverse contextual conditions in the United States.

1. How do principals describe their work?
2. What are the contextual conditions that influence the principals' work?
 - a. How have their work lives been impacted by contextual conditions?
3. What is the degree and significance of stress in the principals' work lives?

- a. What are the effects of stress on principals' health and work?
4. What has been the impact of *NCLB* on the work of principals?

During the principal interviews, participants were allowed to “impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives” (Riessman, 1993, p. 2) without unnecessary researcher influences. Thus, after a few demographic questions, (listed below) principals were prompted to, “Tell me what it is like to be a principal.” Follow-up questions were used only when principals reached an impasse or were off-topic. Eventually, most principals answered all of the questions--as they described their daily work--without being prompted.

Demographic Questions

1. How long have you been a principal in this school?
2. How many years total experience have you been a principal?
3. How many years have you been at this school?
4. Were you also an assistant principal?
5. Tell me a little bit about the demographics of this school.

Follow-up Questions

6. Describe a typical day for me.
7. What do you see as your role?
8. What are you trying to accomplish?
9. What obstacles do you face?
10. What is most satisfying about your work?
11. What is most frustrating about your work?

12. Has the nature of principalship and your daily work as a principal changed since you became a principal? If so, how?
13. What are your beliefs and values as a principal?
 - a. Are they compromised because of other demands?
14. What difference do you make in this school?
15. Does stress play a part in your daily role as principals?
16. Is there anything else you can think of that would help me to understand your work as a principal?

Research Sample

My first intention for this study was to interview principals from one large southeastern public school district in a different state than my previous principal study. After approaching the school district, the research department encouraged me to expand my study to at least one or two other school districts since expanded data would give them additional useful information about principals. Since I was planning to visit family in several other states, I decided these planned trips would afford me the opportunity to ask principals in those states for an interview—giving me the additional interviews in other school districts that were requested by the original school district. Once I arrived in each town, my family or friends would call a local principal and set up the interview—explaining my dissertation study, and many times relying on their long time relationship with principals to acquire the appointment.

As I interviewed principals in each state, contextual differences began to emerge that were at times related to geographical influences, and other differences that were

associated with the culture or state policies—but nevertheless, intriguing. A few of the interviews in other states were scheduled by first selecting them at random from the county website in the areas I planned to visit--then calling the principal to ask for the interview. In addition, emails asking for interviews were sent to the principals in the school district I originally planned to study, and therefore, there were 7 of the 21 principals interviewed in that district. Amazingly, not a single principal declined the interview when I explained my study—although there were times when I sensed they were going to say no on the phone, and thus, began talking faster to pique their interest in order to, hopefully, persuade them.

It was difficult to *plan* for a diverse sampling. I preferred to have principals from all levels of k-12 public schools and a fairly balanced representation of gender and race. But many times it was necessary to schedule interviews with the first school that would answer the phone (since I collected my data during the summer months many school offices were closed). Amazingly, the sample reflects a fairly diverse group. There are 13 white, 5 African American, one Native American, one Hawaiian, and one Bohemian principal participant in this study. With regard to gender, there are 10 male and 11 female principals. In addition, the principals represent all level of K-12 schools with 13 elementary, 6 middle, and two high school principals.

Once the principals agreed to participate in the study, each was given an interview appointment time and date, and I either emailed or gave them two consent forms--one copy for the participant to keep and one signed copy for my study files. Included in the consent, each participant was assured confidentiality—and many times I had to reassure

them more than once or twice due to the sensitive nature of the conversation. I used pseudonyms for all the principal names, school names, school districts, and states. Included in the consent form there was a statement with an element of reciprocity. In return for volunteering for this study, principals were able to benefit from their participation by having the opportunity to talk about their work, and share their perspectives of their work during the *NCLB* era. As with the previous study, after the interview, every principal thanked me and said they enjoyed the interview. Some said they gained insights into their position as they spoke. Several principals said the interview encouraged them to think through topics to which they had never before paid attention, thus, giving them an opportunity to make improvements if necessary. In addition to the personal reciprocity, the principals' involvement in this study may be able to help improve the principalship by allowing others to understand the daily lives of principals.

Data Collection

Data were collected via in-depth, individual, one-to-two hour tape recorded interviews with each principal. Data collections were focused on gathering interviews with the principals describing their daily work. Most interviews were conducted in the office of the principals. Four of the interviews in other states were conducted in the homes of the principal. Each interview was transcribed and subsequently sent to the principals to check for accuracy.

Protecting the identity of the principals was a primary concern, thus, interview transcripts are stored in a locked file cabinet in my home for three years at which time everything will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted using the following steps:

1. Each transcript was read through once to provide insights and the mood of each principal utilizing the data analysis methodology developed by Colaizzi (as cited in Creswell, 1998).
2. Each transcript was read through a second time, making notes of recurring themes and contextual repetitions, as well as any other thoughts or comments.
3. A metaphorical analysis (Beck & Murphy, 1993) for each interview transcript was conducted (See Appendix A). This included copying and pasting portions of the principals' interview into my metaphorical analysis outline section that the narrative supported. Although this was a timely undertaking, it helped me to learn much more about the principals' perception about their work.
4. The metaphorical analysis produced several hundred pages, therefore, I created a contextual framework diagram of each principal's metaphorical analysis (See Appendix B) to generate a brief overview of the contextual influences as well as a profile of each principal.
5. The contextual frameworks helped me collate themes and patterns from the principal interviews which were recurrent and others that were less frequent or outliers. From this part of the analysis, I was able to collate and decide on the

themes using portions of the principals' narrative for supporting evidence of the phenomenon of principals' work lives from the principal's perspective. For example, descriptions that reference ways in which *NCLB* impacts the daily lives of principals--especially stress--were extracted.

The analysis resulted in a carefully formulated meaning creation of the ways in which principals' daily work lives have been impacted by *NCLB*; the degree and significance of stress in the principalship; the degree stress is related to *NCLB*; the impact stress has on principals' work lives; consequences of stress on principals' health; the impact of stress in the principals' interactions with teachers and students; the contextual conditions that contribute to (or minimize) stress in principals' work lives, (e.g., support, school size, school demographics, district leadership, cultural or gender factors).

Creswell (1998, p. 177) describes a "rhetorical structure" of the transcript where "short paragraphs" from some interviews may be used to demonstrate the "essence of the experience for the participants." This structure is used for this study to reveal first hand interpretations of daily lived experiences of principals in the *NCLB* era.

Researcher Subjectivity

Verification (Creswell, 1998) throughout the interviews and data analysis was a concern for me as I designed this dissertation study. As I thought through objectivity, subjectivity and positionality, I made an effort to design a study that could be as trustworthy as possible. I am cognizant of ways in which I may be influenced during this dissertation study due to my participation in the previous study where principals in a particular school district were found to be profoundly stressed—most blaming their

stressors as consequences from the *NCLB* era (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). Further investigations lead toward many inferences in the literature where principals were found to be under extreme and prolonged pressures as school leaders (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003; McGhee & Nelson, 2005; NAESP, 2007; Nelson, McGhee, & Meno, 2007; Perlstein, 2007)—further influencing my ability to be objective in another similar study. But our findings in the previous study sparked my interest to further investigate the principalship in other school districts and states to discover if excessive stress in the principals' daily work exists and to gain knowledge of other contextual influences in the work lives of principals and how these influences affect them.

Biases due to my positionality may have influenced the study due to my lack of many years experience working in schools and limited cultural experiences as a white woman who grew up in a predominantly conservative environment. First, I know that my upbringing as a white female in a conservative environment could conceivably lead to faulty perspectives of others who have culturally different experiences. But my cultural foundations studies in graduate school, my readings in cultural differences, as well as my nine trips of community service to assist with Hurricane Katrina relief, have given me a more global and sensitive view and an understanding of perspectives other than those that dominate the conservative area in which I live. I am cognizant of existing equity biases of those around me, which has further instilled an appreciative viewpoint of those who's racial, ethnic, gender, class, or sexual orientations are different than mine.

Second, my limited experience in schools may have influenced my subjectivity. Most of my teaching experiences came from my time as an adjunct psychology professor

at the college level. But I worked in the classroom with third graders last year where there was diversity among the students. This school year I have interned with a principal and worked in a school with a very diverse population. Every effort to understand the participants' perspectives has been made through clarifying any subjective information by way of member checking (Creswell, 2008), which gave me the opportunity to clarify any misunderstandings in my interpretations.

I think it is noteworthy that my undergraduate degree in psychology and master of education degree in counseling has afforded me skills as listener in various ways (i.e., demonstrating to participants that I am attending to what they say, paying attention to what others *do not* say, and paying attention to emotion and body language). This may explain the trust in me exhibited by principals to openly share their frustrations, even though many continued to ask for confidentiality affirmation. According to Corey (1996), having others attend to and hear us is powerful in resolving conflict, especially when we confirm to someone that we are empathetic, real, and understand what is being said. Eagan (2002) says that dialogue helps us work through complexities to create change. Verbalizing about their work could have positive benefits for principals.

Trustworthiness

Each principal was provided a copy of the transcript of their interview and asked to check it for accuracy--making any corrections in the dialogue where it was incorrectly transcribed. Subsequent to the initial draft of the research report, each principal was given a copy of the report for member checking (Creswell, 2007) giving them the opportunity to provide feedback regarding my interpretations, thus lessening the potential

researcher bias and subjectivity. Kleinman and Copp (1993) remind us that, “We must consider who we are and what we believe when we do fieldwork. Otherwise we might not see how we shape the story” (p. 13). Reflecting on my own feelings and thoughts while interviewing principals and working with the data has helped me guard against inserting my own views into the principal perspectives. Being mindful of my ethical responsibility of no anticipatory outcomes (e.g., those of the previous study where principals were found to be stressed) has been important to me in this study. My interest in learning more about the work of principals and its importance to the literature has helped me remain impartial to the outcomes.

Clearly noting my positionality (as explained above) in ways that researcher biases may impact this investigation, has helped me know that there are ways in which my assumptions could influence the findings in this inquiry. Another important aspect of this study that ensures trustworthiness is the approach of my findings. Using the narratives of the principals’ actual dialogue (embedded rhetorical structure) has accurately reflected their perspectives of the daily work of each. By using open-ended questions, the participants were allowed to “impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives” (Riessman, 1993, p. 2) without undue researcher influences. The subjectivity of the narrator is important to the outcomes of this study, as it gives rich detail of their experiences in the principalship—something closed ended questions could obstruct (Riessman, 1993). Creswell (2008) includes rich descriptions as a strategy of validation because it allows the reader to make the situation applicable to their own experiences. Hopefully, by including the *voices* of principals in

this dissertation study, their experiences can help other school leaders relate to their experiences and feelings, and in some cases may provide support when necessary.

Connection between Research and School Leadership Practices

The high-stakes environment of *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)* has increased the pressure on schools and everyone associated with them. The accountability created from *NCLB* and other mandates is a source of stress and pressure for principals (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003; McGhee & Nelson, 2005; NAESP, 2007; Nelson, McGhee, & Meno, 2007; Perlstein, 2007). When principals fail to meet the demands of *NCLB*, their careers are in jeopardy (NAESP, 2007; Perlstein, 2007; Weber, Weltle, & Lederer, 2005). As reported earlier in this dissertation, some researchers have found that after a few years in the position, many principals are developing “health issues such as high blood pressure and weight gain” due to the stressful work conditions (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003, p. 29).

The literature review in this study shows that there is a shortage of principals across the nation, (Buchanan, 2002; Howley, Andrianaivo, & Perry, 2005; Keli & Czerniak, 2003; NAESP, 2007; NASSP, 2000, 2004; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2003; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press), and that principals are tiring from pressures (Cushing, Kerrins & Johnstone, 2003) created by those in power (i.e., local, state, and federal policy makers). This study provides additional data to add to the literature regarding the contextual influences of the principalship in 21 schools as told by the principals, and how these contextual conditions influence their work and decisions to remain or leave their positions. In addition, the principals’ descriptions in this study of their physical and

mental health effects resulting from their work can add to the gap in previous literature, and help educators improve and maintain a healthier existence for principals.

When well-qualified principals resign from their positions as school leaders, who replaces them? With a looming principal shortage, will schools need to settle for less-qualified principals? My hope is that school administrators, as well as local, state and federal policy makers will read what these principals have to say about their work, and understand that unrealistic expectations and increased levels of stress, may indeed lead to a systemic collapse in the principalship. It is also important to learn from these principals what they love about their work and those factors that will keep them in their positions. Before there can be a reformation in the principalship that can provide healthier school leaders, educators and policy makers must first begin to listen to principals, and acknowledge that they have heard them. It is equally important to understand those factors that may improve the principal position in the high-stakes environment created by *NCLB* (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003; McGhee & Nelson, 2005; NAESP, 2007; Nelson, McGhee, & Meno, 2007; Perlstein, 2007), especially those environments where little stress exists in school leaders.

CHAPTER IV
SIX CHARACTERISTICS OF PRINCIPAL WORK LIFE

Throughout my study of the principalship, I often heard principals say something similar to “Until you sit in the *big black chair* of the principalship, you don’t really understand what it’s really like to be the principal!” Just as test scores have been used as a lens for student achievement, this chapter will use the *voices of principals* as a lens to gain insight into the daily work lives of principals in the *NCLB* era. Based on what principals chose to talk about in their interviews, the characteristics that most describe their work lives include:

- transition in the role of principal
- the increased significance of Instructional Leadership
- the extensive responsibilities in the principalship
- the inadequacy of School Finances
- the necessity of advocating for Students
- frustration with *NCLB* and other Standards and Policies

Transition in the Role of Principal

The principalship is a role in transition, (Pierce, 2000) especially since the inception of the *NCLB* legislation. Once a position that focused on management, principals are now expected to be Instructional leaders (Lambert, 2003; Rinder, 2007;

Williamson & Blackburn, 2009) as well. According to Hoy and Hoy (2006), principals are not solely responsible for instruction, but instead they are the facilitators for improving instruction. Principals are expected to be capacity builders (Lambert, 1998; 2003; Rinder, 2007; Williamson & Blackburn, 2009) who collaborate with teachers in building a research learning community. The principal is to work cohesively with teachers to drive test score data upward, to motivate students, and to keep the school safe. Principals must also know how to handle money in a tight economy (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). In addition, the principal is expected to know and follow mandates and policies set by federal, state and local politicians and leaders in education. Finally, the principal is expected to be super human, it seems. In this chapter, twenty-one principals in ten states describe five primary areas of their work lives.

Throughout the interviews with the 17 principals interviewed for the first principal study (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press) and again with the 21 principals in this current study, principals referred to themselves as managers, administrators, CEO's, and/or supervisors. Yet, all of the principals from both studies described themselves as Instructional Leaders. One can only assume that the conflicted descriptions are due to the extensive responsibilities of the principals (see Grubb & Flessa, 2006). In the section below, principals described their perspective of their role.

Principal Beverly, a Title I principal, explained how she viewed her role as principal.

The principalship has changed from management to leadership....Instructional leadership is where the rubber meets the road and its where truly you are enabled to infuse change into schools and to really ensure that kids are getting what they

deserve. Just knowing good strategy and good research that supports the strategies, is not enough either. You have to be adept at the interpersonal relationships that go along with working with a bunch of adults and a bunch of children....It has definitely changed from...from a position of authority to more of a position of a facilitator where the ideas and creativity may certainly be sparked from the leader, but also allowed to be sparked from others in the system. And no longer are the days that he or she with the largest ring of keys is the best administrator.

Principal Lisa's innovative preference of running her school many times conflicted with the district goals in years past. There were meaningless meetings that Lisa viewed as a waste of time—for things that could have been taken care of through an email. She explained how school district meetings have shifted from a management to instructional leadership focus for principals.

When I first started, all of our meetings...in the district were management issues—management, management, management....But over the years, our meetings have become more instructional best practices and what to look for in a classroom....I feel like now we are finally considering what I thought we should have to begin with--Instructional leaders not managers....I want my secretary to take care of that....“Tell me how much money we have left and I'll tell you what we can buy.”

Principal Lisa alleged that many other principals in her district—especially those near their retirement--complain about having to learn about instructional leadership and prefer the management part of their positions. But Principal Lisa said that she loves the transformation in her district and in her role.

That's the part I love...human development, brain research...I just thrive off of that....I want to do what will be best for the kids....Probably seven or eight years ago we started the portfolio processing--developing a vision for your school. We had a district vision that was very well stated and very well planned out....My staff enjoyed it, and we worked together through it....We have state standards,

and we have a strict curriculum guide or passing guide as to what should be taught when. As far as how they get it done and how they teach it, the teachers decide.

Principal Evelyn added,

At this point, I am more the facilitator. I'm also the cheerleader and I bring peace to the situation. So I root them on, and I constantly tell them I am your servant. If I keep my teachers happy, they keep my students happy. So that is just my role with them, a true support system.

Principal Elizabeth, a very rural elementary school principal from the southern region of the United States. Most of her students live in poverty where many of the parents are incarcerated or have previously been incarcerated. There have been many times when Principal Elizabeth or her teachers have been threatened by parents, which may have impacted her description of her role.

Well, I see myself as a filter for the teachers--I've *got* to filter things for them. They get enough stuff that comes in from home--they have their own lives too that brings their own baggage with them. The things that come in from downtown or all the extra stuff, I need to be that filter. I don't need to be their burden. I need to be their motivator, their encourager and their filter.

Another southern elementary school principal, Wilma, is from a geographical area described by Principal Wilma as "the *Black Belt*" portion of the nation. According to Wikipedia, the Black Belt was named for its thin layer of black soil that lies over a water impermeable chalky earth, and where cotton plantations once thrived. These plantations were once worked by African American slaves, whose descendents make up the largest

population of the Black Belt community. Principal Wilma described her typical work day.

[I spend my day doing] supervision, total instruction program, [I] visit classroom, the discipline, the cafeteria, whatever it takes. Supervision--that's what it's all about ...Fifty percent of the time is spent in the classroom--*should* be spent in the classrooms but sometimes I don't do it every day. And this week it's not done because now I'm trying to get everything organized, in place. So 50% to 75% of the time is spent in the classroom. It's so spaced out—we uh, pre-k through sixth, and 30, 32 [in a] classroom?

It should be noted that Principal Wilma's school is in a town where there is little segregation among the town's people. Principal Wilma's school has one white student while all other students are African American children. Over 90% of the students live with their mothers in single parent families with as many as 14 or more children in the home. Caucasian students in this small and very rural town attend private school. According to Wilma, money is given to the private schools, accounting for the large classrooms in her public school.

The Increased Significance of Instructional Leadership

Reshaping the school environment. Just as described by Lambert (1998; 2003), many of the principals discussed ways in which they are changing the environment to improve student learning. Principal Beverly, a southeastern principal had just been transferred to a failing Title I school. She described how she has begun to collaborate with teachers to organize learning instruction.

What happened [before my coming to this school] was, we had developed just silos, and that's where the achievement gap comes from. Because if you're in Kindergarten in two different classes, two different teachers interpreting the

standards [two different ways]...and those children go to the same first grade teacher...you've got a mismatch. So, it's about systematizing what we're doing, while not making it a factory. We are not teaching widgets and certainly teachers have their own style and preferences. [I am] really being clear about where it is we're going.

Principal Beverly has challenged the “status quo” (p. 42) in her new school and opened up the type of communication between teachers that Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) described as “critical” (p. 46) for school leaders. Another principal, Charlie described how he also began to create a shared learning culture where teachers once had been “isolated, behind closed doors” in a school to which he has recently transferred. He talked about the importance of looking “as a team of adults how the students work, being able to utilize the talent that is in your building more readily.” He said,

You know, lots of different things have sort of spun off of that. We even went to a flex media schedule rather than a structured set schedule so that the media center becomes more of the hub of learning in the building and they are collaborating with the media specialists and so that when the kids come in they are doing things that are connected to what they are doing in the classroom instead of the teachers just sending them in for some media lesson.

By connecting curriculum lessons with media lessons, Principal Charlie's school has created an opportunity for the media center to reinforce the classroom curriculum. Finding ways to add time to instruction is especially important during an era when, in most schools, there are not enough teaching hours to improve test scores (Perlstein, 2007). Lisa, a southeastern principal who believes in innovative teaching styles,

collaborates and plans curriculum with both her curriculum leader and grade level teachers to overlap as much of the classroom curriculum as possible. Principal Lisa said,

We do a full novel study, from that they pull their vocabulary; they pull their comprehension skills, details, main idea, or whatever skills out of the novel study. And, we tried to combine—we'll either do social studies with SC history, and use that, or like with the history, with the time period, the fourth and fifth grade, we'll find novels that are either fictional history—historical fiction—to go along with what it is that they are studying in social studies. So they are mingling with two or trying to “kill two birds with one stone” so to speak. And their e writing goes along with it. You can get several grades for one thing—depending on what the rubric is and what the kids have been told.

As principals discussed reshaping their schools, several principals talked about the importance of technology in the classroom in reshaping their schools. As she rebuilt a public high school that has recently become a charter high school, Principal Marla, a Gulf Coast principal, explained how Hurricane Katrina highlighted the importance of technology for her students.

Technology was going to come to this school, but Katrina sped up a whole lot of stuff for us... We really need to move, we really need to change, we really need to help our kids to see that this is not the center of the universe. Some of these children have never even moved out from the area in which they live, so we need to expose them...to make sure that they know that there are opportunities elsewhere.

In a study on the impact new technology added to one school, Camp (2007) described the reaction from students.

Teachers say the technology has empowered students by challenging them and giving them opportunities to explore. Students are more self-directed and self-confident with having choices of ways to use technology to share knowledge. Students are more engaged now that technology has made learning more interactive. The biggest change in students seems to be in attitude. Teachers say that students are motivated to learn. They are happy and want to come to school (p. 104).

Principal Marla struggles to keep her students in school and away from drug dealers on the streets. She believes that if schools fail to keep-up with the technology that students need to prepare them for the life they face after they leave high school, then “we will lose them” [students]. She adds, “This year we have what they call model classrooms with the technology, the promethean board, the Elmo, the quick response system, like, you know, on the polling for the presidential election, the polling, we have those.”

All of the principals worked with teachers to be more accountable or to improve—sometimes in manipulative ways as illustrated by Principal Tracy. She laughed as she talked about her idea.

Todd Whittaker...writes about the 25 things that principals do....He has real practical ideas, and one was this thing called the “Friday focus.” So, every Friday I write a “Friday focus”—it’s a little newsletter. And in large part, it’s very manipulative because I write what I like that I’ve seen that week....If teachers know that you like that, they’re going to try to do that. Also, if I’ve just seen one teacher do it, it sounds like there’s ten people doing it--the way I write it. So they think, “Oh, if she’s doing that, maybe I should be doing that too.” [laughs] It works.

Another way that principals have reshaped their schools is through working to develop professional learning communities. Professional learning communities, have

been found to be effective vehicles for improving school curriculum and building trust among faculty and staff (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008; Schmoker, 2006; Williamson & Blackburn, 2009). Many researchers believe that attending expensive workshops and training are “ineffective” (Schmoker, 2006, p. 108). Dennis Sparks, the executive director of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) (in Schmoker, 2006, pp. 108-109) says, “Professional learning communities are indeed the best form of staff development.” Chris, a southeastern middle school principal, believes that it is his responsibility to build a professional learning community with his faculty and staff, as well as providing his school with the necessary resources.

We do a lot of sit down time together to make sure that the teachers have the right tools and strategies in the classroom—so I feel that that is an important role--also building teams and building that sense of community in working with [each other]—I inherited a situation where that wasn't necessarily the case. I think in middle school you truly have to have a teaming concept.

Emilee, a principal from the northwest, has just transferred from an elementary to a middle school. The previous principal before her arrival had reportedly only held one faculty meeting the previous semester and Principal Emilee told me how she has begun to bring the teachers together to collaborate in a school that had lacked unity.

We worked together to set some goals for the school. So I had 4th 5th and 6th [grade] teachers come up with working teams and come up with a writing goal, a reading goal, and a math goal through a series of staff meetings that we had, and I had them to post them all on boards that we had put up....So then we viewed all of it for great collegiality and great communication between all of the teachers....And so, as a staff, we wrote our goals for the year.

Facilitating and planning instructional goals. According to Hoy and Hoy (2006) planning and coordinating goals by administrators and teachers is critical to student learning. There is no model for school planning, but Hoy and Hoy say that it should be “flexible,” (p. 175). Planning and setting goals reduces ambiguity for teachers in the classroom. Many of the principals gave collaborative descriptions of ways in which they work in partnership with faculty and staff to plan goals. Principal Evelyn, a Gulf Coast elementary school principal, described how she prepares for planning meetings, and then works together as a team with her faculty to plan their goals.

We [teachers and principal] start off with average state lesson plans. You have to go through your framework for the state, your objectives--competencies. I'm...putting that in notebooks for my team meetings. And... like today I met with fourth, fifth and sixth grade. When...[teachers] come to the table in these meetings [I ask them to] “bring a copy of your assessment, bring your framework, and your guaranteed curriculum for this school. Let's sort through your objectives making sure you are getting it all.” From there, [we're] looking at any of our test data that comes in.

Principal Evelyn described her planning meetings with teachers as having a focus on meeting state guidelines and looking at data, while another principal, Emilee, described how she brings in a consultant to train her faculty in preparation for goal setting. She said,

I showed them how to set smart goals--which are specific, measurable, relevant--anyway, that's based on data. So we did some mock-ups on how we would do a goal, we did that as a staff. Then we designed our department's goal the same for all of us because I've [previously] brought [in] Penny Plavala who was a fabulous reading specialist. The year before I brought her in for reading...this year I brought her in for writing--so we looked at the 6 traits of writing.....She had all these lessons that they could do and they took it right back and applied to in their classroom.....Then we worked together to set some goals for the school...I

told...[my teachers]...this year, “You can come to me and tell me that your grades are low, or your test scores are low, but come with a plan--come with a plan, I’ll listen....But come with something.”

As she works with faculty in transitioning her school, Principal Beverly finds it necessary to facilitate planning by becoming firm with her faculty--who are not used to structure and goal setting--while maintaining support for them.

I put my foot down and stomped and said, “I will only accept a one team lesson plan for each grade level team.” You know, I did some things, I think had I have been a first time round principal I would have never done this the first year, but I knew they were things that had to happen. And there were some things that were just non-negotiable—just had to be in terms of upping the ante for instruction. At the same time, you know the philosophy is pressure and support, pressure and support.

As demonstrated by Principal Beverly, the principal who builds capacity creates a shared set of goals within the school community and becomes a visionary leader with increased expectations for teachers. As a capacity builder, principals must focus on classroom instruction (Lambert, 1998; 2003; Rinder, 2007). While it was necessary for Beverly to motivate her teachers to work as a team to create a shared vision, Principal Lisa’s teachers have been working with her for several years and have already established and built trust while working collaboratively together. She explained how they set their goals each spring.

I have an instructional coach who is incredible...When she came we really looked at our focus and what we wanted to do, and each year we’ve taken May to really look at what we’ve done throughout the year. You know, what we’ve seen with the growth of the kids, and what are our weaknesses—what do we feel like we need to work on based on test results and the way we see our kids performing. That’s when we develop what we’re going to do for the next year.

Expanding teacher knowledge. Schools should become professional learning communities (DuFour, Dufour & Eaker, 2008) who improve their teaching by continuing to study new literature. DuFour, DuFour and Eaker note that “If adults don’t learn then students won’t learn either” (p. 77). Although almost half of the principals I interviewed failed to provide descriptions of an instructional leader as part of their daily work, 16 of the 21 principals interviewed for this study could easily name or show me educational improvement literature that they had read or were reading (Appendix C)—and most said they conduct book studies with their faculty. Principal Emilee detailed a lengthy list of books she has been reading--sharing many with faculty through book studies.

This is one I’m almost finished reading, it’s called, *We Believe*, from the National Middle School Association, and it goes through traits of successful schools for young adolescents. It’s going to be a book that we read together as a learning community. Another one, *Classroom Instruction that Works*, by Marzano....There’s like 9 different strategies that are backed by research that will improve achievement in students. I organized the staff development for August for K-8 in our district, and I ordered books for the whole district, so every teacher will have one of these books.... And this is *How to Drive Your Colleagues Happy*, and this has everything to do with staff morale. Then I’ve read another one and I don’t know who it’s by because it’s on my desk at school, but it’s called *If You Don’t Feed the Teachers, They Eat the Students*. It’s a very good one; it really deals a lot with school climate.

Kristen, a southeastern middle school principal, explained how research becomes a part of continued learning for her and her faculty and staff.

We...have a book study that we do throughout the year...Kathleen Cotton, *Best Strategies that Work*....We were actually going to do *What Great Teachers Do Differently. The Schooling Practices That Matters Most* by Kathleen Cotton is a very short read but great strategies. *Reading and Writing and Content Learning* is what we are going to be doing next year.

And Principal Lisa described another type of learning experience which her school was selected to participate in.

Each year it's a three hour graduate course that would be throughout the year--this will be the first year that we've deviated from that. It's a State Department Program, it's called *All Kinds of Minds* by Mel Levine, we've started. And so we are excited about that because the State Department offered it, I think its ten schools, we fortunately got chosen as one of those.

Transitioning curriculum and instructional methods. Every principal participant that was interviewed said that they routinely visit classrooms to observe teaching and make certain that students are engaged and understanding what is being taught. At the minimum, they conduct three minute walk-throughs in classrooms—and many indicated that they do not get into the classroom as much as they should. When principals routinely supervise or observe teaching instruction to make sure students are being taught according to the standards, student learning will increase (Schmoker, 2006). Principal Tracy is a Middle Atlantic elementary school principal whose students are from middle to upper SES families and whose parents have high expectations of the school principal to provide an excellent education for their children. With extremely tight budgets, Tracy described how her school sacrifices material items to make certain each teacher is teaching according to the standards and that students continue to score well on tests.

We continue to write curriculum--all based on our [state] core content curriculum standards. And I have teams of teachers coming in over the summer to keep that going...We are able to afford new programs--we *don't* afford new furniture [the furniture looked very worn and outdated], we *can't* afford new furniture, we do

very little with technology, but we have put in a new math program, [and] we've put in a new reading program to try and stay current.

Instead of new programs, Principal Kristen explained that she relies on the proficiency of her teachers to develop better teaching models to improve curriculum.

I feel like a lot of times we are our best resource. We have so much expertise in this building....And being able to sit down and talk with each other and talk about what we do that works in the classroom....Every week our teachers who are on teams together plan together and then every month we have two sessions where we actually meet with each grade level and work on different strategies. We actually give them [teachers] homework... They have to go out into the classroom and practice and try these strategies and then we come back and we talk about them.

According to a commentary by Julie Sweetland, in *The Obama Education Plan* (2009), principals who place instruction observations as a priority and look for innovative teaching--in contrast to the monotonous check-off list—signify principals who are promoting progressive and excellent instruction. Lisa, an elementary school principal, described how her students are placed with the teachers who use a matched and appropriate teaching style for specific learning needs.

Our children are placed in classrooms according to learning styles. So if you have a child whose very global, and has very global tendencies, they are placed with a teacher who teaches mainly to that style....Every child in the classroom may be working on something different [at] any time you walk into the classroom....One of my teachers...[is] invariable on tests, she gets great test results because those global kids finally have a global teacher....We also have very analytical students place with teachers who are more analytical, who keep to a schedule, who have very much a ritual day in and day out, and that seems to work for those children. Then we have the flexible learners. And we stuff our in-services things that we're doing all going deeper into the learning styles and what the students need.... Our kids are up and down, their outside, they're with their writing notebooks, they're sitting on the nature trail, or they're out at the oak tree—they are all over the

place....And we have tables, we don't have any desks, well, I shouldn't say we don't have any—one of two per classroom. For or in case a child needs or requests time by themselves, then that's what we use them for, or if they need to be removed if they're not doing what they're supposed to be doing.

Engaging in classroom observation. All of the principals said they spend time in classrooms conducting walk-throughs or evaluations—although most admitted it was not as much time as they needed to be in classrooms due to other responsibilities. Principal Kristen described how she conducts classroom walk-throughs.

I have my walk through notes—I have a template that I have that is actually typed up....We look for student time on task engagement. I look for essential questions that are posted on the board. I also look for any kind of word activities that they may have posted on the walls—we are going to be focusing a lot on the vocabulary word list or word walls—I guess you call them learning walls.

Principal Lisa says she spends a lot of time in classrooms to monitor learning, as well as to learn more about instruction from the teachers. She explains,

I'm going to make sure I'm seeing what's going on with students—probably my biggest focus is the kids in the classroom and seeing what they're learning, and answering questions. And later, talking with the teachers and finding out “Why did you do this and why did you do that?” And “How are you using this? Where do we need to go?”....I didn't teach long enough to know a lot of it, so I get a lot of my insights from them.

Principal Evelyn explains to her teachers ahead of time those expectations and goals that she will be looking for during her classroom observations.

I've had to tell them, “I'm going to determine what you're doing by what the children are doing. If I come in I'm not looking at you, but your kids better know where to be because I can write down uh ‘little Bobby wasn't on it.’” [I'm looking to see if students] are able to keep up with what is being taught. If their able to

transfer the knowledge. I can come in, it can be chaos, but [as long as] there is learning taking place--and you'll know by what they are doing...That's ok, I can deal with either, and in chaos in learning and in quiet in learning. In the end it is learning...

All of these approaches were typical of what principals had to say about classroom observations.

Driven by data. Standardized Test scores have become especially critical to school leaders since the inception of *NCLB* (Hoy & Hoy, 2006; McGhee and Nelson, 2005; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). Schools are held accountable for student performance, and in some cases, principals have lost their jobs when poor student performance fails to improve (McGhee & Nelson, 2005). As a result, principals use data to drive instruction (Reitzug & West, 2008). Williamson and Blackburn (2009) suggest that data can help schools focus on areas of curriculum where scores are low. For example, when scores in Mathematics are low, teachers can make decisions on whether to spend more time on Mathematics, or focus on the nature of what is being taught and compare curriculum with standards. Most principals interviewed for this study talked about using test scores to improve curriculum in their school. Principal Beverly described how she displays student scores on the walls inside the teachers' conference room creating added pressure for teachers to improve the performance of their students rather than hiding scores away in a notebook.

I made magnets with every child's name on it and put it up on the wall. We have a data board that shows exactly where every child is according to our assessment. So you can see what the bell curve looks like, at their grade, you can see we assess the kids at the beginning, middle, and end of the year, the teachers can take those magnets down and leave them--or not move them--again, there's that

pressure, but the support was “we have other options for these kids that aren’t moving, what are we going to do about them?”

Many of the principals discussed their likes and dislike of NCLB, and several cited a similar positive feature. Principal Evelyn explained:

What it [NCLB] has done for principals is that it forces us to look at numbers, to look at data, and to have honest conversations with our teacher about teaching styles and strategies being effective, listening and looking at our students, and stop having an excuse.

Building trust with faculty. School climate influences the “motivation and behavior of teachers” (Hoy & Hoy, 2006, p. 312). Principals who are capacity builders embrace the willingness to step-in when necessary to help staff (Rinder, 2007), (e.g., emptying garbage, teaching, or sweeping floors when necessary). Principals who support their teachers build trust as Principal Charlie described.

The little things, like just being nice to people, like letting them leave early sometimes if they need to go out for something at two o’clock and not charge them a half a day of sick leave or annual leave or whatever. Doing those kinds of things I think the first several years established, I think, a sense of trust between the administration and faculty staff. So therefore, as I began to tinker a little bit more toward implementing a change I felt like they were much more willing to allow that and anticipating each other. And that continues—we are going to be doing some things different this year and they just have to get on board. And I don’t really sense a lot of resistance.

On the other hand, principals who are “directive” in their leadership style and demonstrate a task-oriented approach to management, rather than a caring approach, can sabotage communication between themselves and teachers (Hoy & Hoy, 2006). Lovely (2004, p. 7) states, “The bygone era of authoritarian and aloof school management has

paved the way for the emergence of a more culturally conscious leader.” David, a high school principal, who once held a position as county superintendent in another state, described his approach toward his faculty in a very different way than the other principals interviewed for this study.

Teachers need to dress like professionals—a value of presence [he points to the suit he is wearing]. I like to be able to tell who the teachers are....Some teachers really don’t want to be here, but I’ve gotten rid of most of them. The first speech that I gave a year ago about this time, in June when I was finally seated, the next day sixteen people resigned. Four never came back to education because they really didn’t want education, the other twelve I helped move on. They weren’t right.... But it’s amazing how you got to modulate some of these people.

The Extensive Responsibilities in the Principalship

While those who apply for the principalship positions know that it is a difficult job and that they will have limited personal time, (Pounder & Merrill, 2001) one would wonder what attracts principals to the position. According to Pounder and Merrill, many applicant principals are attracted to the positions because they want to impact schools or are interested in the monetary gains. One reason for entering the principalship that was given by all 21 principals in this study is that they wanted to help students and to make an impact in their lives. Before examining what principals say about their rigorous work lives, it is important to note their purpose for becoming a principal. Emilee explained her motivation this way:

I went into being an administrator because I felt like as a teacher I made a lot of difference in a lot of kids’ lives, and I wanted to have more of an impact on a whole school.....I think it’s really important to empower kids with confidence because that could be their one thing that makes a difference in their lives, especially if their home life is really terrible. You look at kids from poverty and

they have a whole different set of ideas and ways that they learn. I think it's important to teach kids to be accountable for their behavior and their academics, and be responsible....I think getting them ready for the world that they live in is really important. I think it's important to teach them to be honest, the importance of honesty and the importance of your word and work ethic.

When principals were asked to "Tell me what it's like to be a principal?" most would begin to describe a typical day similar to the way Principal Jesse described his.

[I] hit the cafeteria around 7:30 when our bus students get dropped off....[Then] I can be in the kindergarten move, I can be out the front, I can be in the office.... A lot of my time [is] in classrooms...[for] teacher observation, teacher evaluation.....If I have to sub, I sub..... I'm in the hallways a lot, I'm in the cafeteria a lot....First and foremost, I'm the instructional leader of the school....I monitor that, I'm at every team meeting every week....Ah, climate control, morale booster, dad, counselor, you name it and I am it. If a kid needs to get home, I give him a ride home, if her mom needs to get here I go and pick her up. If someone needs to eat, I take care of that.... Some days I think I wear [the counselor] hat more than anything....My primary responsibility is to implement district initiatives.

Instead of greeting her students at the door, Principal Marla greets her charter high school students at a gas station near the school where the city bus drops them off each morning. She is afraid that if she does not meet the bus to make certain students come to school, they will be influenced by individuals (drug dealers) on the street, then never make it to school. Principal Marla said,

My typical days, I get on down there and I greet the kids. I get here [to school], and some days I'm locked down, and then other days I'm out around the school, which I plan on doing more of [this year]. But many days I had [last year] been out trying to learn how to run an independent school. It's meeting after meeting and trying to get the best for the buck....I'm not only in charge of instruction, I'm also in charge of finding, then hiring, then, evaluating the personnel. I'm also in charge of financial to make sure we are financially solid. After the storm [Katrina] we became a Title I funded school, pre-Katrina we weren't...[Today] I have a

meeting at 3:30 this afternoon with the coaches, then at 4:30, I will have to leave from here for another meeting, across the river for budget and finance, and that is until 8:00. I may get home at 9:00....I leave home at 7:00 [AM] and I go home sometimes, usually, the building closes at 8:00 [PM], so most of the time I go home at 8:00. [We hear several sirens from passing emergency vehicles in the street just outside the principals' office]. [I'm] not [in the classroom] as much as I need to be—because of running a charter school.

In contrast to the other principals, Principal David sees his role as the director who is firm. He said,

I go to the analogy I'm not playing any of those instruments--all I'm doing is directing as a leader of the orchestra. Do I give them direction, do I give them expectations? Probably that's what I do, and do I back it up? Yeah. If a teacher misses a faculty meeting with no good reason, they're written up. I only had to do that twice. Tears, whining—nobody was ever reprimanded before I got here. I don't know what they did before I got here...But, I think that the direction, stubbornness, that I bring to the position is what I do...Am I walking the halls to make sure they're doing it? That's what I do....Engagement, respect, demeanor, dress, I think, is the main issues. If you sit behind your desk as a principal, that's about all you'll get out of it. It should be "Leadership by wandering." I find out more by wandering this building than I would ever find out sitting behind this desk. People are more prone to tell you if you're out there with them...Just call them in the office sometime and tell them why their coming into the office—I gotta see you about your personnel absence because you forgot to sign the form—and they're still worried when they come to the office. And it was the same thing as a superintendent.

The Inadequacy of School Finances

The impact of *NCLB*. Most all of the 21 principals interviewed for this study talked about their shrinking budget. Many blamed their shortage of finances on *NCLB* and other unfunded mandates, mirroring the words of a principal from my earlier study.

That legislation [*NCLB*] is just unmanageable because it's unfunded. One of my stressors is the fact that [40] children [who transferred in late] come from Jones

Elementary with no money, and they're all performing below grade level. I didn't get the money that came with them. (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press; p. 25).

Just as with Perlstein's study, (2007) principals are juggling daily finances and making decisions on how best to stretch shrinking budgets to achieve federal and state mandates. Principal Tamara, an elementary principal from the Deep South explained how hard her state had been hit by budget cuts. Her explanation is representative of most principals interviewed for this study.

I'm in my twenty-seventh year and I think this is the biggest cut that I have ever seen where there are so many different avenues that make you have to change the way you used to do things. Now you're having more of the responsibilities placed on the school, but you're not given additional support or help.... I think that the hardest hit for elementary was they took away music and art...I think that was one of the hardest hits that really affect the children, the staff and everyone else....We don't have the money so we lost ten teachers.

Principal Marla added,

Being a [former] Special Ed teacher, [*NCLB*] didn't change much from what I expected. But it put a lot of pressure [principals]—*NCLB* is an unfunded mandate, and it put a lot of pressure [on schools]—it seems like everybody that deals with education—they--the business public--don't put their money where their mouth is. "We want this, we want that, schools need to change." But where are the resources coming from? You want everything to change, but the buildings are still very old, the textbooks are outdated.

Several principals said that since budgets were tight, they were forced to find other creative ways to save money. But several principals are finding that district policies are firm and unforgiving when principals bend budget rules--even when it saves the district money. Irritated, Principal Carl said,

We...get our hands slapped from the finance department...If you see a need and you're trying to save money, you can only do it one way...where if I go over here and find it cheaper, "Well, they're not one of our businesses, or they're not one of our vendors." It's cheaper, it's the same product, but it's cheaper, but you can't do that. You know, so you end up spending more money...Particularly with our computers being networked the way they are with our money and our scheduling, big brother is watching.

Principal Lisa echoes,

They were promethean boards and they were \$3500 a piece, and it was buy one get one...I purchased those on May 30, because that was the deadline...so it was 30 days before I was allowed to purchase it with that pocket of money...Yeah, I'm on probation for two years for that. You know, it was worth it...I went through seven months of almost pure-t-hell waiting on the board to decide whether they were going to fire me or not. And you...go, "Okay, but my kids learn from having access to all of the information through the promethean board.

The financial situation of rural schools. According to the rural school principals interviewed for this study, they face challenges that urban schools do not have to encounter. While urban schools often receive special attention and resources because of their well-known poverty, rural schools are often overlooked and ignored. Their biggest obstacle is the absence of money and resources enjoyed by urban schools. Principal Charlie explains.

I only have a half time assistant principal. I don't have a lead teacher. Stuart County...has only two lead teachers that go out into schools. We have two that go out—one in literacy and one in math...But that's two spread around seventeen schools...I don't feel like we have enough...resources, people, money, growth, whatever it is that we need to meet the needs of the kids the best that we can...There's just much more expected....I just need help with people who understand curricular instruction to come in be able to meet with those folks.

Principal Jeff describes financial resources as well as additional challenges of his rural school that make his position more difficult.

There is a lot of migrancy in our area, you know...and I think this town just became a majority minority school district just in the past year or so....We're doing the best with what we've got, and we keep a smile on our face, but we don't have the resources we need to do what we need to do. I'm speaking about financial resources, I'm talking about human capital resources...I am talking about facilities. We are out of space at our school. I actually have people here at this school where their office is a closet, and they actually have to share the closet....We don't have the resources we need....because we are low wealth county....With that [extra money] you buy people, you buy computer labs, you buy all kinds of stuff. You buy new schools, more classes, more classrooms to lower the class staff and all that....So there are some school systems where those kids are getting twice as much resources.... I would say that [lack of funding] is probably the most frustrating thing is that we don't have the resources to do the job.

Despite the frustrations driven by the absence of resources by rural schools—lack of money to fund full-time assistant principals, good teachers, curriculum leaders, and needed classrooms--principals said they enjoy the close knit community prompted by a small rural district. Principal Jeff described his community as an “Andy of Mayberry” type of town.

Financial aspects of Title I schools. According to Perlstein (2007), Title I money is a small percentage of the total money that funds public schools in the U.S. Nevertheless, public schools with poor student populations who qualify for these funds and are happy to receive them. Although Principal Lisa's school has high poverty, her school does not receive Title I monies. She explains,

Our poverty index is 64.5%, free and reduced lunch....[It is] a very proud community that doesn't want to apply for free and reduced lunch, which is very difficult because it's not a very wealthy community, but very proud and doesn't want to admit the poverty. So we don't receive Title I funding or anything. ...which is difficult.

While Principal Lisa runs her school without these funds--but would like to receive the extra support for her school--Jeff, a southeastern principal, receives these Title I funds, but vividly points out the downside of doing so.

I thought that education was supposed to be left up to state....I would rather see our state and our local school system give the federal government the finger and then us not take any federal monies, than to be held under the current accountability model that we are held under in the No Child Left Behind Act.

Related to Title I programs, Stan, a northwestern elementary school principal and part-time county administrator, explained that grants are very minimal and almost too much trouble.

The Title programs--we have these other federal grants that we apply for but because we have such low poverty, it's pittle the amount of money we get. We get like \$1200 for professional growth or something. That's the most we can ask for. And yet we have to fill out the same amount of paperwork that everyone else does in terms of how we're going to use this money.

Although her school is free of the Title I sanctions, Principal Tracy's state is feeling the sting of unfunded mandates. She confides,

The state is really looking to regionalize....The state wants to take these smaller districts, put them together, and then have only one superintendent, one director of child study team—you know, they're going to start cutting, and cutting, and cutting....In Florida, they have county schools with 30,000 kids in a county. And

that's what I'm saying is happening here in our state....We have no space, no space. We have shared classrooms.

The Necessity of Advocating for Students

Sixteen of the twenty-one principals described ways in which their work focuses on student advocacy. Many of the stories principals told heartbreaking stories about the home lives of students. Principal Wilma, the southern school principal in the Black Belt region of the nation said,

I'm not going to parent them, [use corporal punishment on students], I don't believe in it. Because, some are abused at home--so why would I come and add to it?....I don't believe in abusing a child, I really don't... I call [social services], they don't do too much about it [neglect and abuse] either. They don't take them out the home....When they take 'em out, they put 'em back. They don't care...It's like I said, I'm here for one reason and that's for the boys and girls to make a difference in their lives, and that's what I try to do. I try to be a role model for the one's that are here...I always tell them, "I'm here for you."

Principal Wilma talked about the parents of some of the children in her school-- a young, single, mother who has eight children—all by different fathers—with the eldest child not yet being eight years old. Another mother in her early 30's and has 14 children.

Principal Jeff believes that for many children school is their saving grace and the implications of this for the adults in the school, including principals. He explained,

I believe that schools are the last frontier to preserving the value system of society, and I believe that every other frontier, every other component has failed. I believe the family is failing, I believe that the school is that last bastion of hope....We are asked to teach character education....I take that responsibility very seriously....We as a school have the responsibility of being a positive influence....Create a good environment where kids can see this is how adults act, this is how citizens are supposed to be, this is what we are supposed to be about and this is what it means to be a productive member of society.

Many principals described how they carried out their student advocacy role.

Principal Jake gave an example of how he was able to see the outcome of mentoring a student. He said,

There is one particular kid...he was just in constant trouble. I thought all summer what can we do to change him....And I brought him in my office....He had this nickname [that gave him a negative image] and I just told him I'm going to refuse to call you by your nickname. He didn't like his real name so we settled on something that he liked....The new name gave him a new life....And so I worked with him on the proper social behavior. I became that person that he could come and talk to...this young man not only did he change behavior wise, his grades changed. He went on to eighth grade and became a stellar student. And now he's in the tenth grade and....he's college bound.

Similarly, Tom, a Midwest principal, described how he mentored students.

My role was to help the students feel loved and appreciated, and I think if they feel loved and appreciated then they will perform. And by perform, I mean do their best.... When a child would misbehave and come in the office, I would always sit there and talk to the children, helping them discover what they had done that was not acceptable. And helping them discover what they can do in the future to equate that behavior.....I think it is so important for the children to make that discovery, to have ownership and to realize that they themselves can self correct, and not rely on me to correct them.

Principal Beverly added,

I'm not here to make friends...I'm not here to save the teachers--I'm here to save the kids. It becomes a tough conversation to have...but, if you don't believe that our kids can do this, I don't want you here....A lot of times if kids are dirty, or if they don't have good supplies, or they don't write so neat, or their momma's don't get them to school on time...I think there are a lot of biases in how we identify kids for those kinds of services. So, really, the name of the game for me is relentlessly diagnosing and prescribing exactly—customizing instruction for every single child.

Frustration with *NCLB* and Other Standards and Policies

While most principals agreed that accountability in schools is a valid notion to confirm that students are learning in their classrooms, the principals interviewed for this inquiry believe that *NCLB* is unrealistic, adds unjustified pressures and stress on schools, and is inequitable for many students. Principal Beverly said,

You know, I know that if the school doesn't make mark improvement...than these sanctions [placed on her Title I school as a result of *NCLB*] will continue. The bottom line is it's the job on the line. I have no fear about that because I know it's going to happen, but at the same time, there's a time element, there's a time element as well. So that takes the wiggling out of it...I think, that the notion of *No Child Left Behind* is an excellent expectation goal. But I also know that the Bell Curve, curves in all of nature, and it certainly occurs in schools. So to automatically say that by 2014 there will no longer be a Bell Curve in terms of achievement is just ridiculous. And I think it's unfair to kids. I think it leads us to put too much emphasis on testing and not enough on development of a child and making sure that we are providing just the very best opportunities for them.

Albeit, it is veteran Principal Beverly's first year in her Title I school—which had previously been placed under sanctions--she knows that if her student test scores do not improve, she may lose her job, just as are other countless principals across the nation (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002; McGhee and Nelson, 2005; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). Regardless of the reality that tests may not be an accurate measure of what students have learned, as Perlstein noted (2007), Beverly and other principals are held accountable for test scores.

Principals interviewed in addition said they are frustrated with policies as they relate to testing. Principal Tracy questions the relevancy of the mandated test material in

her state, and wonders why schools are not more informed about test material expectations. She stated,

I believe that the learning has to be relevant, and I believe that the most motivating thing is a sense of purpose for a child....I mean the kids have to write the narrative—that's, I think, relative—when they have to interpret a poem, I think that's relative. I also think that's an 8th grade skill. To read the meaning behind a poem where they have to revise and edit a piece of writing, that's a 12th grade skill....That shouldn't be tested....We have state mandated testing on every grade level now... It's harder on us because we don't know exactly what they're looking for....Teachers want a good lead in that. They want to know, "add weather."

In contrast to testing students with material way beyond their grade level, Principal Stan is concerned with how the *NCLB* legislation is grouping low functioning Special Education students' test scores with higher functioning students and expecting proficient outcomes. He comments on the unrealistic expectations of EC students having the ability to meet mandates.

These are kids [Special Education students] that don't function right, and what does *NCLB* say? They will meet the same goals as all the other kids. Excuse me, but the reason they're there is because they can't--they're like 2 years behind--there's a problem there....We should be based on the progress individual students make, and we have the technology to follow students from year to year....But within a year if they've made a year and a half worth of growth, wouldn't that be something to celebrate?

Despite the inability of EC students to meet AYP, principals say they are held accountable for their EC students' failing scores—leaving them powerless for improvement. Principal Elizabeth explained that it makes more sense to look at a year's growth when assessing special education students, as well as high functioning students,

by using a “value-added program.” She went on to say that this program is being looked at by the government because it measures what students have learned in a school year. Principal Elizabeth said that even students who are proficient may lose a year’s growth unnoticed under the current system because they are smart enough to make AYP.

Principal Andy also feels powerless to improve test scores because of his limited control of his high school students, and sums up his frustration toward those who make policy as follows.

It’s just so much responsibility, you know, gee all your test scores. I can’t make you study at night. I can’t make you care about that test like somebody in a high SES district...you [those who make the policies] ought to care about it because most of the kids can’t tie into the [curriculum]—you know, even though a lot of the stuff counts now... I think that you [principals] just have so much responsibility for so many things you can’t control, and I think that would be the simple answer for that...I think the accountability factor, I think the accountability factor is the biggest difference [in the principalship].

Some policies seem hurt students more than they help them. For example, Principal Jeff said he is frustrated with policies that prevent him from knowing who his Free and Reduced students are since he is accountable for increasing the scores of these students. He explained,

The accountability model...My cafeteria manager...she is doing her job. She will not give me those names [of free and reduced lunch]...I mean, if my role as an instructional leader is to try to back these needs of the school, and I’m trying to strategically hit these subgroups within our schools, [then how do I know which students to help?]...All of the other subgroups that I have [I know who they are]...but not Free and Reduced lunch. I’m just going to wipe my hands of it and hope that it goes well? And then, when the school doesn’t make AYP because of one of these crazy areas, [I am held accountable].

It seems that principals are privy to all other personal information about students, except to know who qualifies for the Free and Reduced lunch program. According to principals, having this information would help schools know which students need added academic support. Areas such as Free and Reduced leave principals powerless to increase test scores.

National testing policies are not the only frustration for principals, but local policies as well. Principal Carl discusses a local district level policy that favors Gifted and Talented (GNT) while overcrowding the slow learner classes.

Our gifted and talented program is a great program, but...we are limited to 25 GNT's, kids per class...well those are the kids that don't need the small classes. It's our slow learners who are sitting in classes of 35 that need the smaller classes. So that is an upside-down situation to me. But there's nothing I can do about it.

Conclusion

According to the principals interviewed for this study, the principalship is a role in transition. Principals describe their most important role as instructional leader who facilitates research growth among the school staff, improves morale, and supervises instruction to confirm that meaningful instruction is occurring and students are engaged and learning. Principals gave evidence that an instructional leader reshapes the school to improve instruction for students by: making sure their staff has the proper tools (e.g., computers, instructional consultants); creating community and collaborating with their staff; improving communication; creating ways to improve the work of teachers; planning and transitioning instructional shared goals; creating classrooms where children can best learn; and expanding their research knowledge along with their staff. Principals

say they are driven by data, focusing on their students' scores to direct their decision-making. Advocating for students is important to principals because they have learned that they can impact student success. Finally, the success of principals and schools are impacted by federal, state and local mandates by: restricting classroom instruction; loading principals down with paperwork; failing to fund the mandates; creating inequitable testing practices for students; holding principals accountable while principals are powerless (e.g., overriding principal decisions on student disciplinary actions; holding principals accountable for EC student scores on tests designed for higher performing students). Hearing the voices of these principals can remove some of the ambiguity about the role of principals and produce a more transparent image about their daily practice.

CHAPTER V

THE FIVE CONTEXTUAL CONDITIONS THAT IMPACT PRINCIPALS

It seems reasonable that contextual conditions would certainly play a major role in the daily work of principals. In a study by Goldring, Huff and Camburn (2007) about the influences of contextual circumstances on the principalship, they conclude, “There are numerous aspects of the context within which leadership takes place that could influence that nature of leadership” (p. 348). While all principal participants in this inquiry agreed that they are expected to increase the time they spend as instructional leaders in order to boost student performance, most also described, often unique, contextual circumstances which greatly influenced their ability to impact instruction and increase test scores. This chapter centers on the contextual conditions described by the 21 principals interviewed.

- The Influence of *No Child Left Behind*
- Poverty and Title I School
- Inequity and Discrimination
- The Impact of Natural and Unnatural Disasters
- Relationship with the Superintendent

The Influence of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB)

The pressure on schools to meet the requirements of *No Child Left Behind* fuels effortless discussion among educational leaders. The principals interviewed for this study were no

exception as each principal had a plethora of experiences, opinions, and frustrations to convey about *NCLB*. What follows are contextual sketches from several of the principals that describe their ability to be more effective leaders concerning various aspects related to *NCLB*.

The affects of a *one-size fits all* assumption toward testing. Wilma is an African American principal who has worked in her school for over 30 years. Her school is located in a town where discriminatory practices are a community tradition—practices such as separating students by race in two different schools. The average per capita income in the rural small town is around \$14,000 annually, and local jobs are scarce. All of Wilma’s students receive free breakfast and lunch. Almost all students live with single, young mothers with as many as 14 children, and most fathers are absent and non-supportive. Wilma speaks to me in a deep southern drawl with a cadence that is indigenous to the rural dialect of many in the Black Belt section of the Nation. Wilma believes that standardized tests should not be a one-size-fits-all measure of students learning. Wilma said,

It’s not fair because there’s lot chil’ren I know do well, but they don’t do well on tests. And it’s just...the bottom line, it’s not fair, but what can you do about it? [The tests don’t reflect the students here] cause lot o’ chil’ren here, they never leave outta this county. They can’t take a test, ah, they hadn’t been exposed to, a lot of things they hadn’t been exposed to. Um hum....End up teaching to the test—that’s what it’s all about—that’s right. And test taking skills, I mean now, you got to start out from day one teaching a skill, and that child tries to master it. [Voice grows louder] I wouldn’t say master it, he tryin to pass it!...But you got to be exposed to these things [on the test]. As I said before, some chil’ren hadn’t never gone to a McDonalds, if there’s not a McDonalds in this town, then they haven’t gone. Some of these never been out of this town....Get in the classroom [is what politicians need to do]. They need to get in the classroom.

With the restricted resources from living in a small rural town where employment is limited for African Americans, students are left with little opportunity to be exposed to a world beyond the town limits. The limited resources for Wilma's students result in their inability to understand concepts and terminology on the tests.

Principals also often described the inequity of holding special education students accountable for poor test scores. As a result, the principals said that when special education students produce failing scores, they [the principals] are ultimately held accountable. Principal Emilee stated,

And to have a school...failing because they have a special ed population? That's what's killing people [principals] all across the U.S. You can't expect them [special ed students] to pass these tests. That's not a measure of progress--progress is measured through a series of progress over time, and having to look at where our students are at, and move them forward by whatever level or starting point they are at. If you have a 3rd grader functioning at a 1st grade level and the next year they're a 4th grader functioning at a 2nd grade level, that's progress.

Principal Tracy echoed, "And in terms of the No Child Left Behind, that's like—I don't know how that's going to happen--because you can't get those kids [special ed students] to pass the state tests." Principal Jesse also spoke about his concern for low IQ students whose test scores are compared to students with a higher IQ, leaving the schools accountable when they fail.

You know, we have students sitting in general education level classes at this school with IQ levels anywhere from 75 to 135. The goal is for that 75 IQ kid to continue to achieve and grow, but can't. But how that compares to the one 135 level kid is night and day. And that 75 IQ kid is not a kid very likely, a kid who won't receive special ed support because that is a numbers game.... And I think they can make consistent gains--that's what should be measured. Not whether they performed at the proficient level or not.

Principal Elizabeth also explained the challenges for her school to meet AYP due to scores of special education students--even though these students have made a year's progress in what they have learned. Most of her students are at poverty level and live in a very rural section of her district. Elizabeth expresses her frustrations.

We missed AYP by five kids in reading, and did great in math, but you know we had 26 students in our whole school that did not make AYP--nine of those are special Ed kids....We made an A in value added in reading, made an A in math, made an A Social Studies, made A in Science....But they didn't do well enough to be proficient....that's the stress of No Child Left Behind. It doesn't really measure the learning of the children and the teaching of the teachers the way that we are doing it now.

According to Jerald, (2009) by tracking value added data, schools can more accurately track student performance, as well as learn more about the effectiveness of instruction. Even though students make a year's progress in learning, schools are still penalized for not making AYP. Principal Stan alludes to additional views about testing—a view heard from many principals.

Probably the biggest thing at this point that is frustrating to me is the bureaucracy [of *NCLB*]....You can't show really how much you learn unless you demonstrate it in some way, unless you perform, unless you put it out there. Just because you are a good test taker doesn't mean you are a smart person. It's how can you put it together? I have known students who are not good test takers. They freeze up, it bugs them. Frankly, I'm not either.

The effects of renorming tests. Nearly all of the principals mentioned their future ability to achieve mandates if states keep increasing test expectations for students, including Principal Jeff, who believes there is a monetary motive involved that is not in the best interest of children.

Every time a test gets re-normed, it gets re-normed so that it's harder and harder to make the gain in that area...They keep raising the bar, raising the bar, raising the bar to squeeze people out....I really think that they...think that we're so stupid that we don't see them doing it. And so that's going to be fewer schools that make growth...So that's less money that they have to throw out. And somehow more money for the state budget, yes, that they don't have to give to education.

Principal Charlie agreed with Principal Jeff, and he added,

I could see that it was going to become harder and harder, more narrow and narrow and what's happening now...I went on and looked at the AYP results in the neighboring counties, and anywhere from 20-40% of the schools in every county around us...more and more schools are failing one or more target...And so to me it's just a matter of time when you start having your really high flying schools and all of the sudden they're not making their AYP targets and are being labeled as being schools that need improvement or failing schools and sanctions apply, then they are going to start hearing uproar. That's why a lot of people are calling to scrap the whole *No Child Left Behind*.

The effects of tying monies to test scores. Principal Emilee discussed her concern about coupling mandates with funding as a result of the terms of *NCLB*. Before coming to her current school, Principal Emilee was principal at Alaniz Island Elementary School--a small, higher SES school with about 90 students. She explains how her school was affected when a few parents decided to have their children opt out of standardized testing.

We ended up getting a failing school rating on the AYP, so we had a failing school rating, and then the second year the same thing...Even though 100% of the kids who took the test met [AYP]--I mean our scores were up there, but when you have a smaller population, and have two kids that are at 8%...you're a failing school. So the second year [when] we were a failing school the government threw \$12,500 at us to improve....So it was so ridiculous!

In contrast to Principal Emilee receiving money for poor performance, Principal Tracy says funding is contingent on meeting AYP standards for her school. She said,

According to *No Child Left Behind*, we don't get our funding if we don't make AYP—which to us is like a \$16,000 increase, which barely pays for two of our children. The cost per pupil is \$8000 or \$9000. They say we'll lose our funding, but we don't get a lot of funding.

Accountability pressures on schools. Principal Elizabeth's said that the accountability pressures associated with *NCLB* has made her work more stressful. Her descriptions of receiving overwhelming paperwork and meaningless reports from her district office are similar to the descriptions from other principals in this study, as well as the 17 principals (from the same district) interviewed in the West, Peck, and Reitzug (in press) study. Elizabeth lamented.

[In recent years] there is more paperwork, there is more stuff...Just constant things that you have to do, and turn in...everybody's wanting their piece of stuff. Like there's always a report, or an accountability piece, or somebody wants something from you to report on to give to somebody else to do something. You're like, "Good gosh, can you all talk to each other and get the same thing?" And it's overwhelming, and that's truly the same when I was at my previous school--the 1200 student school. The paperwork is no different when you are at a huge school or you're at a small school...I mean there are days when I can receive 60 and 70 emails, and then when the mail comes in on Tuesdays and Fridays...I mean you ought to see my bucket, I'll bring them home...It's just Ridiculous, it's like "Why do ya'll need all this?" It is a waste of time and paper. I mean reams and reams...And it's all coming from district. It all comes from nobody else...But it's just stuff to do that really has no bearing on instruction...I don't know, but it is just stupid stuff.

Principal Tom is from a small rural school hidden away in the mountains of a close-knit community. He also described his frustrations with the way accountability has created an overwhelming amount of paperwork and reports for him.

One of my biggest frustrations would be demands from the county and the state that are out of left field and seem so unnecessary....And you wonder, “Do they ever look at these things or do they just file them away somewhere? Are they afraid we are not staying busy?” We were always told that the state was working toward less paperwork, but that was totally the opposite of reality....Paperwork leads to meetings....I must have gone to a meeting at least once a week. Most of which were a total waste of time.

Principals believe that there should be accountability for schools, but they object to what they view as unnecessary and meaningless paperwork. Many believe that some of the reports required of them are never read. Principal Charlie expressed another common opinion regarding *NCLB* expressed by most principals interviewed for this study:

There’s not an educator I know that feels like we don’t need accountability—we do....But that plan [*NCLB*] is not the answer in my opinion and it’s been demoralizing to educators....I see principals and teachers getting more stressful about test results and about “What’s that going to do to our school, and what is the public going to think?” You know, I just don’t think it’s been very helpful.

The impact made by policymakers. Many principals in this study believe that there is disconnect between reforms created by policymakers to improve schools and the actual needs in the classroom to improve student learning. Principals say that policymakers are disengaged due to their lack of time spent in schools and classrooms in recent years as Principal Lisa described:

In our staff meetings, we say before they [policymakers] make any legislation, they need to spend a certain amount of time in a school. Come and visit. It's locally and nationally. The teachers make comments that they [policymakers] have no clue what goes on in a day-to-day basis. They still remember when they were in school what happened and what they did, and it is very different from when I went to school....They need to come in and go through a day of what goes on in a classroom because our parents, even our parents are amazed, even though they see it when the kids come home, they are amazed at what the kids can do. When they come in and spend time in a classroom, "How do you do all of this?"

Principal Jake had similar ideas about those who create laws and mandated tests.

When you talk about state leaders--there's a lot of different laws on mandates that's put in place and the people that's making these decisions, they really haven't spent time talking to, not only administrators--because sometimes they do talk to administrators--but talking to the teachers to hear their voices to hear what's going on.

Principal Stan said that his state created a better measure of student learning growth, but federal policy makers will not approve this measure, and as a result, the current system measures nothing. He said,

This state really started a neat initiative--they said, "Listen, we know our kids are making progress. We should be based on the progress individual students make, and we have the technology to follow students from year to year. So, if you have a Special Ed kid who makes a year's worth of growth, that's really good....But they're two years behind to begin with, so they aren't going to make their grade's threshold. But within a year if they've made a year and a half worth of growth, wouldn't that be something to celebrate? But under *NCLB*, they are based on a comparison of all the second grade scores and not from their class, but from the year before.....So this state said, "Let's track them, and if we aren't showing that kids are making the growth within their grade levels, then ok." And the federal government said, "No." So, what's that about? It's an oligarchy--it's an organization that's empowered to keep themselves in power--it doesn't do anything but to keep itself there. It doesn't provide anything.

Several of the principals talked about measuring student progress by measuring a year's growth for each individual student against the student's previous year. But according to the principals, policymakers are reluctant to change the current system of measuring student success, and continue to enforce expectations of a *one size fits all* classification. Each student is expected to meet the same standards set by state policy makers.

In addition, it also does not make sense to Principal Jeff that the federal government forbids schools from knowing which students are free and reduced—especially since principals are held accountable for their test scores. He said,

These brilliant people in Washington, or wherever...won't let us know who the free and reduced lunch kids are so we can strategically work with them and meet their needs so that they can show growth in testing and accountability. So you have schools that didn't make AYP in free and reduced lunch but we're not allowed to know who free and reduced lunch is.

While talking about their values, almost every principal said that they believe all children can learn, and above everything else, the students are most important to them--principals want children to learn. But many principals said that while they are being held accountable for student learning and test scores, they often do not have the power to meet mandates because of policymaker mandates such as those in this section

Poverty and Title I Schools

Principals who lead Title I schools have additional pressures and work that affect their leadership role. For two principals, leading a Title I school includes significant

contextual conditions that impact their work. Each chose to talk extensively about their experiences.

After serving in a Title I school, Principal Julie has recently been transferred to a non Title I school. She described the workload of her previous school in this way.

In a Title I setting I spent a lot of time preparing for audits, working with Title I budgets....I worked with a budget almost close to a million because our Title I budget in it-self was \$649,000....We had a grant in itself that was approximately almost \$300,000 over a five year period....All of which accountability is tied to. So I spent a lot of time making sure that monies were spent correctly, while still having to monitor class instruction and professional development....My population was primarily African American...primarily the entire school was free and reduced....A Title I principal is one of the most stressed out administrators you will want to find...they are unbelievably stressed. I didn't know how much I was stressed under until I left....If I were to go back to a Title I school, I'd love it....The children, ultimately, I don't care what location you're in, that's why you're there....It was year around, I never took off....I never had a chance to take off. We ran all year.

Whereas Principal Julie's primary focused is on the legal and technical aspects of being a Title I school principal, Principal Elizabeth, also a Title I school principal, described her contextual challenges in working with her students. Ninety percent of her students are Free and Reduced students; many who live in poverty; are homeless; 30% are Hispanic and most speak little English; 30% have African American parents who are distrusting of Principal Elizabeth because she has white skin; and many students would go hungry if the school did not send food home in backpacks. Since Elizabeth does not have an assistant, she is solely responsible for performing the expected responsibilities of the principal with the additional tasks of working with the challenges of a Title I community. She explained the added challenges in serving her school.

We feed from 2 or 3 subsidized housing areas that are close by....We have a Hispanic population that have moved into the area that speak little to no English at home....A majority of our children, they live in single parent homes. We have a lot of children who have parents who are in jail or parents who've been given to the grandparents to raise, or to aunts or uncles. For a single parent mom...[who has] four or five kids at home, they may be working at night and expect the older child to watch the younger ones....And they have a one or two bedroom apartment with a family of eight living in it....One of our families last year were living in a house and we tried to talk to the mom about reading to her child, and she said, "But we have no doors...there are no doors on any of the inside rooms." There were...something like 12 or 15 people living in the house. We arranged for them to come into the school and have a room where she could read to the child after school....Definitely no place to study....We send a lot of food home with our kids. Backpacks on Friday with food for the weekend and holidays...We have had several cases of kids that are homeless. Interstate Hospitality network...rotates homeless families from church to church to church and the van to the different schools. The van has come to our school quite a bit with children that have moved from places....And we have many, many kids that are bunking or staying with their family members because they can't afford to even stay...[in] subsidized housing....We don't have parents that are engaged because they are not very trusting....The black parents don't trust me—and I understand that. I have to talk to them and eventually then they do. But...[when] their children get in trouble it becomes "I'm picking on them." And I have to get them to understand that "I want the best for them."...It's that getting over that bridge and making them feel comfortable--making sure that you are not using language they can't understand....Those are obstacles that you have to get over.

Although principals in Title I schools are faced with extra stress and pressures from the additional workload and budgets, as well as the added challenges that escort many students who are poor, principals say working with these students surmount these obstacles.

Inequity and Discrimination

Racial discriminatory practices within the school community were also described by principals. Although principals' descriptions were at times subtle, they were nevertheless flagrant acts of discrimination by the school district and community.

Principal Wilma, whose school is in the small southern rural town where there continues to be noticeable segregation (e.g., all white private schools, all black public schools, all black restaurants, all white gas station), talked about her frustrations with the school district, in this instance having to do with getting maintenance work completed in her school.

Most frustrating...I can't get what I want done on time....I request something three weeks ago and I still hadn't gotten it. So, my thing is, I'll get it done if I have to pay somebody to do it, so I have somebody gonna come in next week do what I want done....Mmmhmm. Mmmhmm. This is the low....Okay, you have private schools over there and you got a public school here. [There are] very few funding or very few people donating to the public school if you ask them. Most the whites have the business' here, and they not gonna give it to the public school the way they have supported the private school....Not many jobs around here....A lot of parents is on welfare—I mean they don't have no income, they can't afford it [to support the school]....So you just have to make due which you have—that's what I learned...We have computers, it has caused some problems too so we can get funds for that. Well, they [district office] say sometimes you can't get them because we don't have the funds....We have a lab...We saved to get that last year for funds....Very few [students have computers at home]. Very few. This is a black-belt county in a black-belt school.

Wilma went on to describe the attitude of some Caucasian individuals in her community toward African American's.

I would stop right down there every morning and I would get gas [at a white mans station]....But every time I'd give him my credit card, he'd throw it....And I called someone and they said, "You didn't know he was prejudice [against blacks]?"....Every time I would go, he would throw it [her credit card].

Wilma's earlier description of profound poverty among her students who are forced to take mandated tests that they do not always understand seems to be the first of many contextual conditions that affect Wilma's leadership. In addition, in a previous section of

this dissertation, Wilma described how white children will not attend public schools with African American students—with the exception of one--and in this vignette above she alleged the town's business leaders, who are Caucasians, fail to support education for African American children as they do for the white students. Her account of being ignored by her district office when she needs maintenance--forcing her to use her limited school funds—makes one wonder if this is an intentional withholding of services due her. It seems that the county would have been more supportive of Wilma's school in purchasing computers since students are grossly limited in accessing the world beyond this small community. The seemingly distaste toward African Americans from the white community results in a school and principal who neither have the resources or funds needed to offer students an education enjoyed by most students in this country. During the interview with Wilma, many times when speaking about things that she felt were wrong, would say, "But I don't know what we can do about it." It would be interesting to know if Wilma's failure to speak up is due to a feeling of powerlessness to authority in a town where white individuals seem to hold supremacy.

Principal Tamara also struggles with discriminatory practices by her county maintenance department. Her school is located in a very poor section of her city where drug dealers frequent the streets. Tamara said,

I had to call...for them to come cut the yard, the grass—this is the county. Grass is knee high. It hasn't been cut for two months, and they give excuses, "I'm behind" or "I'm at somebody's house" and "it's hard trying to" you know, "We're short." Which I understand that. I'm one that firmly believes that. And that's fine, but after two months? There's something you can do to call—I shouldn't have to call. The key is--and I found this out—on the Westside of town, that wouldn't have happened. That grass would have been cut....So...they come and cut. And

when they cut the grass...whatever paper and trash was down there, it was cut up with it and the paper just stayed down there.

Tamara told me that the difference between her school and the higher SES school is that at the other school, the more prominent parents would have spoken out, where in her school, the low SES parents either do not care or are too timid to speak out. Whereas the previous examples illustrated how community and school district-level discrimination impact schools and their principals, Principal David interview reflected a different type of discrimination—that cause by the sexist and subtly racist perspectives of the principal himself.

[What was wrong with this school before I arrived was the] lack of sustained leadership and consequence. The age old “Ladies are nurturers, mothers are nurturers, fathers are the bad guys. They [men] have the expectations. And that’s just the way it is in my estimation. It’s very difficult for women to be chronically mean or sustained persistence. They want to nurture children; they think that’s the way to bring them around....So there’s been prevalence, absence of leadership and consequential behavior....I looked at a larger city, and they wanted to hire me. I saw a preponderance of women.... I saw them decline in the last 15 years based on top down [female] leadership....Something happened there that has destroyed the fabric of leadership....They hired [it was between] a fellow and there was the interim lady who eventually got the job—probably destroyed the guy in the process.....Some ladies miss the--you know—they miss it when they think they are leaders. But uh, yeah, you’re probably going to see more males here [in this school district]....There were 120 Africans for my job, and I don’t know how I got it, to tell you the truth, I really don’t. I mean, I was up against some of the best in the county....If I’d known there were 120 African’s, I wouldn’t have applied. I would have thought I was wasting my time.

Although there are legal provision to protect students and schools from discriminatory practices, (Cambron-McCabe, McCarthy, & Thomas, 2004), none of the principals mentioned legal protection or taking action for such practices. While referring to some of

her frustrations, many times Principal Wilma stated to me, “I don’t know what we can do about it.”

The Impact of Natural and Unnatural Disasters

While describing their job responsibilities, many of the principals in this study spoke of the importance of making students feel *safe* to increase student learning in classrooms. Despite their efforts, several principals described how their work as principal has been impacted by horrific events that left the principals and their school communities feeling vulnerable to danger. In this section, principals will describe the effects of: the attack of the Twin Towers in New York City on September 11th, 2001; the extensive flooding in the Gulf caused from Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005; the impact of smaller tragedies.

Principal Tracy’s school is located near New York City where many family and friends of her school community work each day. The terrorist attack of the Twin Towers in New York City on September 11, 2001 (9-11) created endemic fear across the nation. Moreover, schools such as Principal Tracy’s suffered a personal insult of fear due to both their relationships with those who were in the City the day of the attack and the geographic intimacy between the City and Principal Tracy’s school. After the attack of 9-11, schools across the nation began to prepare for future terrorist attacks--adding further trauma to Principal Tracy’s students. She described the change in her school.

We had parents working in New York City--we all have escape routes now, and as principal, 9-11 was unbelievable! Having to work with the police to figure out an escape route to make sure that 380 kids could get out of here on my cue on the buses--you know, that was, that’s management is all. Yes, that was hard...We have codes, code red, code yellow, code blues—you know where they have to

hide in the corner, and lockdowns. And the kids would get very upset, very upset because they are so unsure. You know, I have a little girl who said, “Yeah, but what about Mr. Thomas—the custodian? Where is he going to go?” So you know everybody’s thinking, they’re thinking about it. So that has woven as a result of terrorism and 911.

As the result of 9-11, students in this school had to learn to prepare for another even such as the attack on the Twin towers in New York City creating additional fear in the elementary children in Principal Tracy’s school. Principal Tracy said her role as principal now includes counseling her students and faculty when necessary.

The schools of principals interviewed for this inquiry were tremendously impacted by Hurricane Katrina which has highly transformed their work. Principal Evelyn was transferred to her current school after Katrina left her old school in ruin. She said the psychological need for schools was most evident. Principal Evelyn described the impact the storm made on her school as well as other schools in that part of the country.

[After Hurricane Katrina, schools were] very pitiful, very pitiful. I was in the town of Wilson and my principal--we lost the school and she lost a home. I didn’t lose my home, but my grandmother’s home was destroyed, and that’s where my mother stayed. Everybody lost. I saw principals hold it together. I saw some come apart. I saw some superintendents hold it together, and some come apart....But in the end, I feel like we’re struggling together, we’re healing together. But, it was difficult....And I thought I had it together and I didn’t. I was suffering with pain and, “Where is this stress coming from.” But it was the ache of what was lost...[The student population] dwindled. We went from having 380 kids here to like 160. And then we saw kids trickle in slowly—but, it was a pretty sad day--truly...I think [psychologically] that everyone suffered and for awhile—this year we’re getting mental health counselors in, but for a while we would say, “What is the need in your school?” And people kept saying, “Mental health, mental health.” Not that anything was wrong with our students, but they needed someone else to talk to who could hear their woes. And for the first time it was...about the child. Everything was about the child and the child’s well-being....But it was tough to see. Oh my gosh! But we survived....We had a lot of.....a lot of group therapy—we would see them come through....But, we’ve kept a close eye on

them, we knew where they were living, if they were in trailers and their condition. And just, “What do you need, let us know.”... We were so impacted.

In another city, the devastation of Hurricane Katrina transitioned Marla’s students and school as well.

After the storm, I came here...as its principal....After Katrina, this school became a charter school....I guess we started on a wing and a prayer because the whole first floor was devastated.... We have a lot of prominent alumni, and...because of all the devastation and everything that was going on, this school was slated not to open....So a group of alumni and some of the teachers got together and decided we are going to open our school, and “either you open it, or we will.” And that’s what happened....The alumni has raised money and refurbished the auditorium. And we’re trying to open a health clinic in the custodial house....It’s a challenge right now because the longer we wait the more devastation it is because the bottom floor has now collapsed....Right now we are about 99% black....It’s becoming more black and suburbia is becoming more other. And we...used to be heavily Hispanic populated....After the storm, we...needed to reduce our pupil/teacher ratio because of all the emotional and psychological baggage....We have everything other than the health center right now. That we are still working on. We never had a health center before, but we were always very close to the hospitals....[which are] no longer there....The teachers got in on August 28—now, the place was a wreck. We had AC pumped in, the teachers came, we had garbage cans all over—the big dumpsters, and we were throwing out stuff, and everything else. We had a week to get ready on September 7 when we would be open for the kids. If we didn’t do it, we were losing kids because parents were getting antsy. We were losing teachers because teachers had decided--well, you know, other schools were getting more kids, well, they needed more staff....So, they were taking lots of our better staff, our more experienced staff, so we were losing all the way around. So, we had to hurry-up and open.... after the storm, a lot of these kids’ parents don’t even live here—unfortunately, they don’t. Some kids are homeless, and some still live in the streets and under bridges. We have a large homeless population, and we know we have a large homeless population.

The destruction caused from the floods as a result of Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005 devastated the students in Principals Evelyn’s and Marla’s school, as well as every school affected by the storm. The principals continue to help students with issues

such as psychological struggles, homelessness, and loss of family. The previous schools of both principals were destroyed. Principal Marla continues to struggle with rebuilding the devastated sections of her current school which was only opened after receiving support from alumni to form a charter school. Just as with Principal Tracy, Principals Evelyn and Marla continue to counsel students with their struggles since their horrific tragedies, and are vigilant about detecting students who continue to have psychological consequences from these devastating experiences. The natural disaster of Hurricane Katrina and the unnatural disaster of 9-11 are two examples of massive catastrophes that have impacted these three principals' work as well as the work of countless other principals' in this nation. In addition to these devastations, principals are impacted by smaller tragedies as well. For example, Principal Tracy's school suffered after the loss of a student. She said, "I've had to deal with a death of a child [student]....It was last year. To lead a community in a death of a child—that was tough." And Principal Lisa and her school felt the impact of a student with brain cancer. She said, "We had a child that had a brain tumor....[principal can hardly be heard while crying]....She's a bright sweet child, but [now struggles to be] below basic on tests." And the day that I interviewed Principal Beverly, she is grappling after the raped and strangled body of one of her students was found in an abandoned trailer just down from the school a few hours before. Principal Beverly tearfully described the impact on her from the death of this student that morning.

The News came here to talk to me, and the public probation's guy called and said I could make no comment because it's not connected to the school. And I understand that, but I don't want to be on the news saying, "No comment, No comment" because we care and I just told the mom that we couldn't make a

statement, but we are all, you know. It's such a tragic loss.... It's just frustrating, kids aren't safe.

Whether the tragedy is large or small, and whether disasters are natural or unnatural, each event is devastating and impacts the work of principals as well as their school community. Whether the tragedy is a tornado, a school shooting, a car accident, terrorist attack, or a hurricane with devastating consequences, principals indicated that they must lead their schools in its recovery while struggling with their own emotions.

Relationship with the Superintendent

According to Bottoms and Fry (2009, p. ii) schools who have good working relationships with their district offices have seen the most improvement. On the other hand, those schools that have had less improvement are in districts where “most reform initiatives were centralized in the district office” and where “the district was not concerned about empowering and building the capacity of school leaders to be real players in school reform”. In this study most of the principals said they are satisfied with their district office. For example, Principal Kristen has a fairly new superintendent and said,

My superintendent actually came and spent the entire day with me back in November...because my assistant principal was on maternity leave....He knows more about my school than most of the people—even the board members....They have not stepped foot in my building, not once.

It seems that with a little support, as with this previous example, superintendents can impact their principals by providing a little support, which seems to create a good

relationship between the principal and the superintendent. Principal Evelyn's superintendent also spends time in her school by mentoring her, as she described.

Last year, my superintendent decided he was going to mentor every brand new administrator, assistant principal or principal. So he would meet with me every Monday, and our meetings got shorter--so I knew I was on the right track....[The superintendants mentoring made] a very big difference.

Not only did Principal Evelyn's superintendent reinforcing better leadership skills with his principals, he is also building respect and a working relationship with each principal. Principal Tracy's superintendent finds personal benefits as well from building a good relationship. She said,

Fortunately for me, my superintendent is really good—so maybe he's the buffer....I just got a call from my superintendent who I have the kids of another superintendent from another district; he wants certain classes for his two grandchildren. No problem. You know, I mean I can do that.

Principal Jesse also said he felt incredible support from his district office.

I have a...tremendous supervisor—I'm very fortunate....I have worked in three districts as long as I have been in education, and I've always thought that they were great, and it gets better for me....I have never picked up the phone and not had someone on the other end to answer what I needed—even if it's 10:00 at night.

Knowing that they can call and find support at any hour impacts principals like Jesse. Having good communication between the principals and their district office allows them to feel free to seek help as needed. Principal Emilee *now* has a good superintendent, but previously, the interim superintendent was not supportive as she described.

We had an interim superintendent before him and I felt no support. I had worked really hard with the previous superintendent for a year in a half with documenting, and I wanted to put the teachers on a plan of assistance—a year and a half of documentation--and the interim principal would not support me on that and not back me up. He didn't want to bother.

By disregarding the effort Principal Emilee put into documenting a teacher who needed assistance with teaching, the superintendent lost her respect and left Principal Emilee feeling unsupported, not to mention a teacher who needs help was left to teach children.

Although Jeff feels supported by his district office, as well as feeling part of the districts "team," he is not always pleased with them.

Sometimes the county office gets in the way because they're accountable to their constituencies, the community, the county commissioners office, state, the federal government—so they kind of place some boundaries on you, and that's hard because sometimes those boundaries—they are well intentioned—but sometimes those boundaries actually block the way of the path that you need to take for your school. So sometimes the county office gets in the way.

During the interview, Principal Jeff elaborated on his comments by providing examples. One such example was that the district office--on several occasions—has overridden Principal Jeff's discipline decisions when students who are disciplined have influential parents in the community. He said it is a disservice to the child--disregarding the effects left on the child as a result of such biased decisions.

Principal David's perspective, while complimentary of the superintendent, carries with it racial and sexist implications. He described his female superintendent in this way.

I would say that, Dr. Smart is probably one of the best, she's probably top three superintendents I've ever met, and I don't see color [the superintendent's African American], I don't see gender when I look at her. She's just good. She has a

presence, a presentation, so absent of that, some ladies miss the--you know—they miss it when they think they are leaders. But uh, yeah, you're probably going to see more males here.

Conclusion

Although principals often lack the control over their context to meet accountability measures, they know they are still ultimately held responsible when students fail to produce expected test scores (NAESP, 2007; Perlstein, 2007; Weber, Weltle, & Lederer, 2005). Contextual conditions that significantly impact the principalship interfere with their ability to remain focused on expectations such as developing capacity in their schools (Lambert, 1998; 2003; Rinder, 2007; Williamson & Blackburn, 2009). For example, when events such as 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, or other local tragedies and disasters transform school communities, principals spend years diverted with safety, and building issues, as well as the psychological recovery of their students, staffs, and themselves. Those who lead Title I schools, such as Julie and Elizabeth, spend much of their time attending to either overwhelming paperwork or personal needs from a population with little resources. Politics and lack of funding in rural schools are factors that also make it difficult for principals to focus on developing and improving curriculum for students, yet despite these interferences, they are relentlessly held responsible for student performance outcomes (NAESP, 2007; Perlstein, 2007; Weber, Weltle, & Lederer, 2005). According to the principals interviewed for this study, contextual conditions can be deciding factors as to how principals will spend their work day. The ways in which principals spend their work days impacts teaching, teaching

impacts student performance, and student performance impacts test scores, which impacts financial awards and the job security for many teachers and principals.

CHAPTER VI

STRESS AND FULFILLMENT IN THE PRINCIPALSHIP

This chapter describes how principals are impacted by stress in their daily work lives, as well as discussed the fulfillment principals find in their work that makes it rewarding and worthwhile. Every principal mentioned they are plagued by stress to some degree, but the source of their stress is the result of a variety of different facets of the principalship. This chapter will include vignettes that most powerfully represent the various factors contributing to principal stress, and fulfillment.

Stress

Isolation and loneliness. In both my previous study with 17 principals from one southeastern school district (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press) and this study of 21 principals from eleven school districts in ten states, every principal asserted that the principalship is an isolated and lonely position. Loneliness is defined by Delisle (as cited in IZGAR, 2009, p. 248) “as the individual’s noticing his/her alienation to him/herself and to the outer world”. Delisle continues, saying that stress “is an emotional state which shows itself as a form of behavior or perception at any period of the life.” Horney (1945) believed that humans are afraid of being left alone. Those who feel lonely develop faulty perceptions of others which can lead to depression (Myers, 1999). Myers states, “Loneliness, whether chronic or temporary, is a painful awareness that our social

relationships are less numerous or meaningful than we desire” (p. 575). In a quantitative study focused on the depression and loneliness among school principals, IZGAR (2009) found that loneliness does predict depression—as the feelings of loneliness increase, depression increases as well. Thus, it is crucial to learn more from principals about their feelings of loneliness in an effort to understand those triggers of loneliness.

Will is a principal who has just been transferred to a new middle school. Although he said his position in his new school is a “utopia” compared to his previous position, he said he continues to feel stressed and lonely because he has no one with whom he can talk. During our interview, Will suddenly looked panicked as beads of sweat formed on his face and he became very flushed. He began reading over the consent form that he had previously read and signed before our interview and proceeded to offer only generalized descriptions of his work life.

Just as Myers (1999) described about those who feel loneliness, Principal Will later said he began to have faulty perceptions about my intentions for this interview. Much of Principal Will’s interview is off tape, but he granted permission to paraphrase the portion of his untapped narrative. He said he became uncomfortable speaking on tape about certain topics for fear he could get into trouble, and he even wondered during our taped interview if I could be a reporter. As soon as the tape was off, he began asking me about my background. To earn his trust, I disclosed my educational path after he asked me a few personal questions. I can only speculate that his inquiry was to determine if I had any journalism degrees or if my previous experiences included a career as a reporter. With my career path revealed and the tape-recorder off, he became considerably more

relaxed and talkative. Once we established trust, this principal gave me permission to paraphrase portions of his narrative which was unrecorded. To delineate the recorded from the paraphrased, I have italicized the paraphrased sections of Will's description.

Yeah, I think it can be very lonely [to be a principal]....I think I've smartened up over the years. I thought you really had to handle it and take it on yourself....So if I can share my problems and issues [speaking much quieter and sounds unsure of himself] because I'd always had an older principal or mentor that I could talk to and share things with...*A great deal of my pressure in the principalship is the problems that the children bring with them. Abuse in my student's homes is common. Sexual abuse is also a huge problem. Most principals are very reluctant to do anything about it...Most principals only last 13 months in this district, and divorce is high among principals because of the workload, long hours, and the stress. I'm on my second marriage now because I spend most of my time at school working and I'm always stressed. It's just a stressful position--and it's more stressful than I said in this interview on tape... Previous schools where I've been a principal were tremendously more stressful than this school--this new school is a utopia. The other schools were giving me so many more problems...If any principal says that they have not thought about suicide, they would be lying, because it is very, very stressful to be a principal.*

Principal Kristen also spoke about the loneliness and stress of the principalship. She stated,

Because most people don't understand what you have to do and what it entails to be a principal unless you've actually walked in it and done the job. So it's really important to be able to have somebody—especially somebody that's within the system who also knows the politics of the system and can help you deal with that as well. Just somebody to vent to—because sometimes your husband just isn't going to understand....The teachers...you can't pal around with them, you can't hang out with them, you can't talk with them about certain things and certain aspects of the jobs....It makes it hard. It can be very isolating.

Principal Jeff described his loneliness in terms of “standing alone on the watch tower” while bearing the accountability pressures from those in power. He said,

It's because we are carrying such an emotional burden that you get burnt out. And to be frank with you, I've got nineteen years left, nineteen years left to hit the thirty year mark, and there's no way on God's green earth that I'm going to last another nineteen years. Not because I don't want to. I want to....But I can't emotionally do nineteen more years of standing on the guard towers, standing on the watch tower, and fighting for the kids because I will tell you when the arrows start flying, and when the torches that are on fire start flying over the wall, the federal government just says, "Well, just handle it." The state government just says, "Well, handle it. Stand on that watch tower—we're going home." Sometimes the county office says, "Stand on that watch tower, we're going home." And so you're on the watch tower alone, and you don't have enough people to stand on that watch tower with you.

Principal Carl added,

I can't be friends with the staff. And there's some great people on my staff. But I can't go to lunch with them, I don't go out drinking with them, I don't go to parties....And too ...most of my peers are older than I am. And so I don't have those folks [to talk to]....It's very isolating....I guess about the only person I can be buddies with is my SRA—he doesn't work here. But even at that, I still take some direction with that. I don't go to his house, I don't go out drinking with him, but I can cut up with him a little bit. He takes his direction from his SGT.

Long hours. Just as with the principals in the previous study, the principals in this study acknowledge that they work long hours. The principal position has become too big for only one principal (Grubb & Flessa, 2006). Principals in both my previous study of principals and those interviewed for this study said that they work long hours to meet job demands. Principal Jeff described how the long hours of one of his colleagues has affected his family and his decision to make a career change.

I was talking to my friend that is a high school principal and he's a very, very good high school principal....He has a great rapport with the kids, he has high expectations for his school—he is just very professional. He has a doctorate. He's looking at getting out [of the principalship]. Not because he doesn't love the kids, not because he doesn't love his job and care about it. but it's taking an emotional

toll on him...and it's affecting his family. You spend a lot of time away from home...a lot of time away from home--and so all of the things that you can think of that would be attached with that with being absent from your spouse's and your kids lives, and then not having the financial return of that.

According to Pierce (2000) principals in 1999 made an average of \$61,000 and worked 10 hours a day. In one southeastern school district (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press) principals work an average of 65+ hours per week. Principal Lisa is also finding it difficult to juggle her family responsibilities with her unlimited expectations as principal. When I asked Principal Lisa if she ever feels stressed, she began to cry.

Oh my gosh. Yes. [Her eyes filled with tears]. To me, I think the hardest thing is juggling time between home and here. Because my children are young....I don't do any of those things at home that I am supposed to do—dinner doesn't get cooked....we go out to eat a lot....There are always one or two [staff] a year that go on—that's when it becomes lonely....My assistant principal, I do discuss several things with....Other than her, I really don't discuss those personnel issues with anybody. So that's where I think people [principals] feel lonely...it's your hinky on the line, not anybody else..... I don't feel as lonely...as some, because I hear people say that a lot [that they feel lonely]—"It's a lonely position."

As they described their daily work life, many described their typical work day hours.

- Principal Kristen said, "I am normally here around 7:00-7:15. The students start coming in around 7:25 and I will not leave here usually until 6:30 or 7:00 in the evening."
- Principal Emilee told me, "I usually get there between 7:30 and 8:00, and I usually leave between 5:30 and 6:30 at night."
- Principal Will explained,

I generally arrive around 6:45 in the morning and if there's not an activity or something going on, I'm usually leaving by 5:30 or so in the evening. And you know, obviously if we've got sports or other events sometimes it can be 8, 9, 10 or 11 o'clock at night...Periodically, not every day, [I take work home with me]. I've gotten better over the last 8-10 years. If I get my sixty hours in, I feel like there are some days I can go home and relax. I work off my computer a lot of times at home.

- Principal Evelyn said,

When my building clears out it is usually about 4:30 and I have worked until about 7:00, 7:30, 11:30 [PM]. I work until I'm finished, until I'm comfortable...I'll come on the weekends if I need to. I'm a workaholic, but I enjoy what I do, so I don't mind.

- Principal Jeff added,

I am spending sixty-five hours a week at school, and if I could have another AP for half time, then maybe we could do more. Maybe I could actually even get into some classrooms for a change. And then if we actually had a literacy, or present facilitator, or lead teacher for even part time much less half time, hey, then we could actually start doing some more stuff. But right now we are working on a skeleton staff.

- Principal Elizabeth said, "I get there at 6 in the morning, I leave [home] about 5:30 a.m., and I usually stay [at school] until about 6:00 pm. And then, I come home and I will work here until about probably...2 or 3 hours at home.
- Principal Tamara could only say she works,

Long hours. Very long hours. I was probably one of the last to leave and that was on a daily basis because that was just my work ethic. I believed in trying to get things done so that the next day I could start off fresh. And then with scheduling, I may be there till 7:00 at night or go up there on the weekends.

- Principal Wilma described her work hours.

I probably get here at 6 – 6:45, leave no later than 7 o'clock in the morning. And I can't get nothin' done some days because interruptions during the day--from going to visit the classroom and behavior problems. But I have a assistant and he help with discipline problem. And I leave here around--it varies, 6:30 p.m. or seven. It depend on what I need to do before I leave....It doesn't matter. Whatever it takes to get it done.

- Principal Emilee described her work hours.

Stress affects me big time! You hit the floor running when you get to work, and it doesn't stop. And so a lot of times that's why I worked from 4:00 p.m. when everyone leaves, I'd be there until 6:30 at night because that's when I'd be able to get things done without interruption.

Parents. Parents of students have a direct effect on the work lives of principals.

Many of the principals said that some parents make their work more difficult. Some have unreasonable expectations while others do not support their children's education. But Principal Elizabeth said that some of her student's parents make her afraid at times and influence her students in violent ways, causing her to be stressed.

Like I said, a lot of them [kids] have parents in jail for murder, and fighting is just a way of life...It's a very stressful job because you have to balance your values and your passion when it conflicts with what other people have...I have parents that are angry with me, or upset over decisions, or cussing me out, or threatening me, or whatever. I mean it happens all the time. I have to maintain calm....They can't see that I scared out of my mind because parents said they were going to kill me.

Like Principal Elizabeth, Principal Will also has parents who create stress by threatening him.

And that is very stressful...I guess just dealing with an angry and irrational parent...at school and almost to the point where they wanted to be physically threatening or verbally threatening...That's probably one of the more stressful things....You know, if I don't handle the nuances of your discipline case just right, or your dropping out of school or whatever our personal problem is, then I've got that high likelihood of hearing from your momma and if she's not happy she's going to the county office.

Several principals described situations where they attempted to discipline students whose parents were influential in the community. County administrators are often persuaded by the parents to override the decisions of the principals, leaving the principals without authority to punish students in accordance with school policies as Principal Kristen described.

A political issue with a student [creates stress]. Their parent's were pretty high up and I couldn't follow through with a consequence that needed to happen and I was basically told you need to let it go. I have had that happen a couple of times in administration and that is hard for me to swallow because I try to be fair to everybody but sometimes there are politics that you just have to bow down.... I see some politics with the school board. Some things that have happened there with particular students and parents that were forgiven for things where others were not. Just some inconsistencies there that make it frustrating for me as a principal because I feel like consistency is important.

Unrealistic expectations. With the *No Child Left Behind*, (*NCLB*) legislation comes increased pressure on schools (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003; McGhee & Nelson, 2005; NAESP, 2007; Nelson, McGhee, & Meno, 2007; Perlstein, 2007; West, Peck, & Reitzug, in-press) and more often than not, all conversations with the 21 principals in this inquiry led back to *NCLB* and the unrealistic expectations that accompany it. Principal Jeff's vignette is representative of what many principals had to say about the pressures of this legislation and the stress on them caused by it.

It's a really tough job, it's a really tough job. It's a burden.....And I think that the reason there's so much turnover in...administrators is because they want to invest their lives because they care about the kids, but there is this tug-o-war going on and it's so frustrating...[We] want in our souls...to meet these needs—[yet] not being able to because of these mandates, unfunded mandates, legislation and lack of resources. And so I think that some people just have to walk away because they feel like, you know, "I just can't do, I can't do it with what I've got." And you go home and it really does affect you in your personal life. It really, it really does....You hear the stuff about how principal turnover...is like every four-five years average, and I know the reason why. I mean, I can tell you right now the reason why. The reason why is not because these administrators...are lazy, or get tired, or they have to have a new challenge. All of that may be true to an extent, but it's because we get burnt out. That's why it is, it's because we get burnt out.

Health

Most of the principals talked about their health consequences from working: too many hours; under prolonged stress; and feeling isolated or lonely. Many principals said they have had weight gain from poor diet. Some principals reported illnesses such as a heart attacks or strokes, hair loss, and flu. Other principals reported that they have picked up minor effects from their stressful and long work schedules--such as nervous habits.

Principal Beverly explains her stress and how she is affected by stress.

Gol, so stressful—and I carry, a lot of times I carry weight on my shoulders. It is lonely, it's lonely to be the principal....There's not another person that you can relate to quite in the same way....We seldom take things off the plate, but we continuously add things on. So that's certainly a stress factor....I do carry it and I have gained five pounds this year, I mean, it's ridiculous. And I do this horrible thing with my finger, and I used to smoke—I don't smoke anymore, I quit doing that. But I definitely have had some unhealthy practices that I guess that I engage in that help remove the stress.

Principal Jesse described how his work life resulted in a heart attack.

My stress--a year ago November I ended up in the hospital all because of stress--all because of stress—a heart attack...I've changed my habits. I pretty much—I was up every morning by 3:00 AM, would work from 3:00 until 5:30--shower, get ready, get my middle child who comes to school with me in the car and here we came. Leave here at 5:30 [PM], and I'd be here two or three times [a week] at night. When I go home, I'm home. I don't come anymore, I try not to get out at night...I think just finding that balance, which is hard—it is hard.

Principal Evelyn also ended up in the hospital—after collapsing in a classroom.

I feel stress when I'm] meeting a deadline, yes. I am a brain surgery survivor. I had a seizure right here...One of the teacher's came over and found me. She thought I had choked. So, long story short had to have brain surgery...Left me paralyzed on the right side. Through rehabilitation I learned to walk again....And after that I suffered maybe two or three seizures. But the last one I had, I had gotten so upset, so mad about something, I could not control--it sparked it. And my neurologist said...."If you want to keep on stressing yourself out, go right ahead.

Principal Jeff admits how his work stress has affected his personal life.

I find that my fuse is a lot shorter than it used to be because my job is to handle problems all day long from every direction....So I find that my fuse is a lot shorter than it used to be--I don't have the patience that I used to have and that really concerns me. I don't like the person I'm turning into because of the stresses of the job. My wife has noticed it...but it's just very hard to not carry your concerns and your frustrations and, "somebody cussed you out and you're not allowed to cuss back."....So I feel like we don't have that support. Yeah, it creates stress...and it's just a big job.

Principal Andy also became sick during the school year--along with his assistant principal.

Whereas when the second semester started...I got sick...And when I say sick I wasn't deathly sick by any means. I was just so drained that I just could hardly--all I could do was handle the things that needed to be handled. I couldn't aggressively, you know, get ahead and that kind of thing. My other AP and I both

got sick at the same time and we were just--even though we just maintained, we still came to school--we were both out for a week at one time. I had not been out for a week [before], I've had three minor operations and I hadn't missed five days with all three of them put together in the past. So we were both dragging big time until about after Easter when we were both able to get a lot of rest.

Off tape, Principal Will also admitted that overworking had caused his divorce and that he has had a heart attack. He is also very overweight. Principal Evelyn told me, “[I do feel stressed.] I think that is why my hair is thin and everything else.” And Tamara said,

I've got a bald mark from the stress, but luckily, thank God hair grows back. A bald spot [showing me her head where there is hair missing] from stress...Well because I know right now what it's from [the principal was sick and had been coughing and sneezing during our interview].

Coping Strategies

Each principal had various coping strategies to help them relieve their stress.

Principal Beverly's strategy is like several others who said that the students relax her.

If I feel...[stressed]...all I have to do if I'm in this building is close what I am doing, and go walk into the classroom. I can just go and just sit and it doesn't matter—that takes that weight right off. The kids are just adorable....I had a lady come up to me at my other school and say, “You can't make chicken salad out of chicken shit.” And that mentality is “How can you possibly be in that place?”

Principal Carl described how he relieves his daily work stress.

I'll get out and ride—I've got a bike right here....And two, when I go home, it's twenty-five miles one way for me, it's through the country. And I'll put the windows open, or the bike if I'm riding it home....When I get home, I live out in the country, I try not to think about it because I have two kids of my own. I told the person who hired me [his name] I told him, “Look” I said, “This may disqualify me because I know you and how you are.” I said, “I'm going to tell you right now, those two I have at home are more important than the 800 in this

building.” He said, “I wouldn’t have it any other way.” So, I deal with stress this way.

Like Principal Carl, Principals Kristen and Emilee said they exercise to relive stress.

Principals Charlie, Jeff, Julia, Elizabeth, and Marla said they have colleagues or cohort groups that get together which provides support and helps them to relieve stress. Marla’s description is representative of the other principals.

We have a network of charter school principals. Sometimes we can pick up and talk to some of them who are in the same situation as us....But there are a few of them that are still around [after the hurricane] that I can pick-up, even retired principals I can pick-up the phone and say...And I think I am more blessed with that than a lot of the newer ones who have come to town and know no one. And, there are a few that call me because I’ve been around for awhile....And sometimes, when I just want someone to listen to, I call some of my old teaching friends who are no longer teaching. And say, “Look, I just need someone to listen. Just listen.”

Principal Kristen also finds relief from stress through her spiritual beliefs. She said,

I know for a fact that God has got me through so much, and has talked to me, and has led me in the right directions to where I’ve made the right decisions--and I’ve done pretty well in that. That’s who I talk to—that’s who I tell everything to.....I mean you can’t do it without faith. You may encounter obstacles, but there’s nothing that is going to be so bad you can’t get through it if your faith is strong.

And finally, Principal Jake said he relieves stress in the following way.

Make sure that you spend enough time at home with your family. I’m very family oriented....I say that my stress reliever is when I get out of here at a decent hour and I can go home and be daddy. That’s my stress reliever.....Another thing is making sure your health is in line. I try to go to the gym as much as I can....I made up my mind I’m not going to work seven days a week. I may do some work on a Sunday afternoon, but on Saturday, that’s my day....It’s lonely at the top....It’s almost like you’re on an island by yourself. But at the same time you need to

know who to call...develop some mentors. Even principals who's--they're in retirement....I talk to other principals.

Fulfillment

Every principal reported that they receive their fulfillment in the principalship from the students. Repeatedly, principals explained that they wanted to be a principal to make education better for children. Principal Kristen's vignette is representative of the accounts from other principals. She explained why she enjoys being a principal despite the stress, long hours, isolation, parents, and unrealistic expectations.

For me, I think that it is really seeing—walking into a classroom and seeing some of the strategies that we put in place and they are effective and our students are really kind of engaged and tuned into those lessons. That for me, being an instructional leader, is really rewarding and seeing our teachers really take off with those things. The empowerment of the teachers this year has really been rewarding for me because I did not come into a situations where they were empowered and some of the ideas that they have come up with and taken off with have just blown me away. We were able to present at the middle schools conference this year and it was all based on some of our teachers and the idea that they put in play and put into motion this year. So that is energizing. It really is!

Principal Charlie has another type of return from serving his school that provides him with great fulfillment. He explained,

There's lots of the rewards that are intangible but a lot of them are tangible too. Some of the things we've accomplished here in the six years I've been here I'm really proud about. This building next to us is an old building that was built in forty-two. When I came in here six years ago the county was going to demolish the building. We had a small group of folks here in [city] that had been meeting trying to establish pre-K classes but also more community services. Meeting with them, being a part of that advisory team over the years we started working with [town name] county partnership for children to help get some grants. We did lots

of fund raising and six years later we had raised about sixty-seventy thousand dollars and we restored that building. We call it the Karson childhood center.

Finally, after leaving the principalship because of the politics in his district office,

Principal Tom reflects on those aspects of the principaship that he misses most.

Now I do see things that I miss that I had taken for granted, and I think that's the way it goes with human nature--that we don't realize what we had until we lose it. I loved dealing with the families and the students...I just loved dealing with all the people, and I felt very good at it, and I felt very rewarded by it myself. So I do miss that. But when I see parents in stores or the post office, they are always so, you know, "Oh we miss you" and I get lots of hugs from the kids still, and the hugs are bitter sweet, I love them, but I think, "Man, I wish I could get this every day." I don't have any children of my own, never married, so they were like my children, pretty much so. I felt like that was my last mission at that school. And I really did feel like my time had come to a good conclusion.

Conclusion

During my previous study of 17 principals in one southeastern school district, (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press), I found them to be tremendously stressed—and many of the principals became emotional when they were interviewed. I noticed in many cases a sense of urgency develop in the principals to “download” narratives filled with great detail of the psychological stressors that exist for them and their feelings of powerlessness in their position. As a result, I identified sources of stress for these principals—such as; the impact of *No Child Left Behind*; district office demands; out-of-building meetings; political and bureaucratic demands; voluminous job responsibilities; the impact of technology on job demands; long hours; and inadequate emotional support.

There continues to be stress in the principalship. The 21 principals studied for this dissertation study cited similar stressors to the first study, but there was not the level of emotional distress in this dissertation study as displayed during the previous principal interviews. While most of the fourteen females in the previous study became emotional or cried, only a few principals in this study became emotional and only one actually cried while talking about stress during our interview. In both studies, principals regularly cited *NCLB* as a source of stress and frustration. For example, Principal Carol from the first study described how *NCLB* had affected principals in her district.

There are very few principals left in our district, especially after December, that have more experience than me...It's the bureaucracy that is getting in the way of it. It's *No Child Left Behind* and the pressures of that. That's been a huge piece of the pressure. That legislation is just unmanageable because it's unfunded...It's bureaucracy that's in the way (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press, p. 25).

The principals in this study made similar statements about the effects of *NCLB* on their daily work except principals from the first study stated that they were afraid they would lose their jobs if test scores did not meet mandates. Principal Carol reflects.

Your job depends on your progress. You get...a bonus check at the end of the year if your kids grow a certain pointage. If not, you could be eligible to be removed and transferred...there's so much pressure right now to just perform through your kids (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press, p.19).

Another area of agreement between principals in the first and second study is regarding long hours. The average time per week that principals say they work is 65+ hours.

There is one obvious area of disagreement between the two sets of principals pertaining to causes of stress in their work lives. In the first study, principals repeatedly

said their main source of stress was from those in their district office. One principal summarized the job demands from the county office in this way: “Do this, do that, keep this record, keep that record....It’s accountability to the *n*th degree” (West, Peck, & Reitzug, in-press, p.14). Principals in the first study time after time said that they did not feel supported by their district office, while most of the principals in the second study said they did feel supported. For example, I asked Principal Carol if she received support from her district office. Carol said,

I find I’m the support....I think that’s why this is such a tough year because I’m the support for so many others. I’m the mentor, and I’m the—Ann [another principal] calls me all the time. She says, ‘I’m so worried about you. I’m so worried about you.’ Because this has just been an atypical year, and it’s just awful, and emotionally I’m just a wreck (West & Reitzug, 2007, p. 8).

A final difference between factors that create stress among principals is unscheduled meetings by the district office. One principal in the previous study called it “being subpoenaed” (West & Reitzug, 2007, p. 20).

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I will summarize the characteristics that best describe the work of principals in the *NCLB* era—based on the descriptions principals chose to talk about during their interviews. In addition, this chapter will include additional comments and conclusions about the principalship during the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Characteristics of the Twenty-first Century Principal

According to the topics chosen for discussion by principals in this study, there are six primary ways to best describe their work:

- transition in the role of principal
- the increased significance of instructional leadership
- the extensive responsibilities in the principalship
- the inadequacy of school finance
- the necessity of advocating for students
- frustration with *NCLB* and other standards and policies

The principals in this study believe that their role is to reshape and improve schools and includes more than just management—principals are: instructional leaders who are responsible for leading their schools to improved instruction; facilitators who create a cohesive work environment among staff; leaders who encourage continued researched learning among their staff; enthusiastic encouragers for staff and students; supervisors of

instruction in the classroom to ensure students are engaged and learning; and finally, they are capacity builders who build student friendly and supportive safe environments conducive for learning.

Principals say that their workload continues to increase while budgets prevent additional staff to assist them in meeting required standards and policies. Most principals in this inquiry blamed *NCLB* and other standards and policies that some say are many times unfunded.

In contrast to the job demands and increasing responsibilities in the principaship, principals described positive changes in their schools during the first decade of this century. Some believe it is an opportunity to be creative leaders for improving instruction, and principals say they feel rewarded when they see their students excited about learning and test scores improve. Principals believe that new technology in schools engages students and facilitates in their learning, thus, principals described various ways in which they acquired funds to buy technology for their school: fund raising; going over budget to take advantage of a two for the price of one promethean board; and budgeting technology purchases before other school needs, such as furniture. Principals believe that they can impact students by modeling proper behavior, spending time counseling with them, and instilling a positive perspective in the students' belief about themselves. The principals say they receive their greatest reward in their jobs as principal when they can spend time with students. Whether they are talking to them during lunch periods, watching them in the classroom, or counseling with them, principals say time with

students is a reminder that they care about students and are passionate about improving education for them.

Conditions that Impact Principals

Principals in this study identified five contextual conditions that impact the principals' work life:

- the influence of *NCLB*
- poverty and Title I Schools
- inequity and Discrimination
- the impact of natural and unnatural disasters
- relationship with superintendent

All of the principals in this study said that they believe in accountability for schools in that there should be ways in which principals can show that their students are learning. However, most every principal stated that they believed the one-size fits all accountability statute of *NCLB* and other standards and policies are unjust and needs reforming. Principals believe that the influence of *NCLB* forces some schools to teach to tests while ignoring other important subjects that can better prepare students for life outside of school. Most all of the principals talked about the inequity of mandated testing toward their special education students, and the injustice of holding principals accountable for these scores. Several principals said that they are frustrated that tests continue to be renormed, making it more difficult to achieve AYP, and in many cases, these lower scores create an appearance to the community that many schools are failing to improve. Principals believe that classroom teaching could include innovative

instruction that they say is researched and documented to improve student learning--promoting greater student achievement--if the current restrictions of policies and mandates were modified. Principals believe that input by those who work in schools (administrators and staff) should be required when creating policies and mandates since these individuals are most familiar with student instruction and learning. Principals believe that currently they have no voice or authority because of their lack of input on policy and mandates and therefore, they have little authority to increase student test scores in some situations.

Other conditions that principals say impact their ability to be effective leaders and achieve accountability guidelines are those that consume much of their work life. Principals who lead schools where there is a great deal of poverty described additional responsibilities--such as those principals in Title I schools who are required to fill-out endless forms in order to receive the monies that are attached to the Title I guidelines. In addition, principals who are working with low SES students spend endless hours making sure personal student needs are filled such as food, shelter, transportation, healthcare, and counseling. Similarly, the work of principals whose schools have been victim to natural and unnatural disasters have been impacted in their recovery from such assaults on staff and student lives. As these schools recover, principals spend immeasurable hours to help their schools rebuild, practice new safety standards, counsel others, and secure personal needs such as those mentioned above for students who live in poverty. The principals studied for this study said their additional responsibilities create added work and pressure to their position, making it difficult to complete their responsibilities required of them.

Unlike the previous principal study (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press) of 17 principals who overall said they do not feel supported by their district office, the principals in this 10 state study described supportive relationships with their superintendents. In the previous study, principals demonstrated a great deal of emotions as they described their stress and frustrations in their work lives, while those in this current study did not show the same degree of emotion, with the exception of two who described less supportive relationships with their supervisors. One can only wonder if this difference suggests that principals who feel supported by their superiors have a more positive perspective about their work.

Impact on Health

In both the previous principal study and this current study, principals say they feel isolated and lonely in their principalship positions, and worked an average of 65+ hours a week. Additionally, many principals said that parents add a considerable amount of stress to their work lives. Interestingly, most principals in this study described ways in which they find support to relieve isolation and stress, and activities that relieve stress and promote better physical health—more so than in the previous study where principals cited lack of time as the reason they do not practice healthier life styles. Regardless, those principals interviewed for this study have suffered from heart attacks, stroke, severe flu, and thoughts of suicide. Each principal attributed these health issues to their long hours and prolonged stress.

The Importance of Listening to the Voices of Principals

Developing principals who are excellent instructional leaders and are capable of improving public schools across the nation are among central concerns for federal, state, and local governments (Augustine, Gonzalez, Ikemoto, et al., 2009). Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) found that the importance of principal leadership is second only to teacher instruction for student success. According to Horng, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2009, p.1) “effective principals influence a variety of school outcomes, including student achievement, through their recruitment and motivation of quality teachers”. However, without consistency among policies from state-to-state, some principals (in some states) are discovering that they have little authority over their schools (Augustine, Gonzalez, Ikemoto, et al., 2009; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). While many of the principals interviewed for this study described way in which they work earnestly to improve instruction in their schools, they find that they continue to be limited by policies and mandates.

Bottoms and Fry (2009) report that many school districts expect reform and school improvement, but fail to implement a strategic plan for such change in their schools—“including clear goals, research-based principles, supporting strategies and improvement-focused accountability. Instead, changes handed down to principals are “random improvement acts” (p. 15). In a study of principals conducted by Bottoms and Fry, only one principal out of 22 principals from 22 districts interviewed said that their school district had a cohesive plan or plan for school reform; yet, all the while, the principals and teachers said they were not privy to the planning or the plan itself. Just as

the principals in both my first and second studies, most principals in the Bottoms and Fry inquiry are held accountable for the improvement of their students' test scores without shared support and accountability from the school district. One of the Bottoms and Fry principals commented;

When I was hired for this position, I was informed by the assistant superintendent of schools that my job was to raise student achievement. When I asked how I was to do that, the answer was "I don't know, just do it." This same principal went on to explain that "most of the changes I thought I should make to raise student achievement were turned down by the district office" (p. 16).

Principals are reluctant to complain about such *wing it* instructions from their district office for fear it will be seen as not being a team player (West, Peck, & Reitzug, in-press). When principals feel stressed over accountability expectations and their lack of control over outcomes, they are reluctant to seek help. According to Lindle (2005) stress felt by principals is not a common topic as principals may appear to be incompetent and unprofessional. Instead, earlier works that focus on stress in schools has focused on teachers and students. Stress is a term that is commonly associated with the principals' position because of the increasing workload, but when principals feel stress to the point of becoming mentally incapacitated or depressed, then they may become traumatized (p. 379). Lindle points out that there is an absence in the literature regarding the consequences of principals who are under this kind of pressure (p. 380). This research void necessitates further studies on principal trauma.

Those in power over principal work conditions (e.g. school district superintendents) must recreate a more manageable and supportive principalship position

to lend a hand in creating better principals. If principals are to build capacity and produce better classroom instructors, it seems to be at the peril of school districts to ignore current work conditions for principals. Furthermore, those who are in schools working with students should be given more freedom and power to produce expected test results. Schools should be able to teach in ways that educators know will engage students and keep them focused and interested in staying in schools--rather than having policymakers--who are removed from schools--deciding how best to instruct students.

What Principals Say about their Work Lives

The principals' descriptions about their work indicates that every school has its own contextual uniqueness, yet principals say they these contextual differences are not considered when they are compared with all other schools through standardized testing. Schools who struggle with poverty and homelessness are held to the standards of the most affluent schools. While some principals' work includes tasks such acquiring food for students to take home (e.g., Principal Elizabeth) or spending time securing medical care for students (e.g., Principal Marla), other principals need only to focus on instruction. While some principals must attend to the psychological needs of students after major life-impacting events like Hurricane Katrina, (e.g., Principal Evelyn) or rise above inequitable practices (e.g., Principal Wilma), other principals (e.g., Principal Tracy) have students who easily meet AYP and are from middle to affluent families. Principals who lead Title I schools spend endless hours preparing paperwork in order to receive government support (e.g., Principal Julia) in addition to other job demands required of them. While some principals work 40 hours a week, work requirements

demand that other principals work 65+ hours, plus take work home with them to satisfy work demands. Just as with principals from my first principal inquiry, the principals interviewed for this study feel overwhelmed and stressed. Some principals say they will not remain in their positions because they say their work is negatively impacting their health, psychological well-being, or ability to attend to family responsibilities (e.g., Principals Tom, Will & Jeff). Albeit, the principals in this study did not display the extreme emotions shown by the principals in the first study, they nevertheless say they feel continuous stress. Many have had health consequences. Principals cite the demands from *NCLB* and the accountability associated with it as the largest source of stress and frustration in their position. Many said the position is or can be lonely, while most said they find some support from their colleagues. None of the principals provided any indication that the school district office provides services to help them prevent or deal with isolation, loneliness, stress, or feelings of burnout. None of the principals are provided with psychological support through their schools. All of the principals said that testing is an unfair method of finding out what students have learned. While all of the principals believe they should be held accountable, the present method is inadequate and inappropriate, and again, adds to their level of stress.

Recommendations

Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, and Gundlach, (2004) conducted a three year study of 21 principals in four states. Their study lacks the voices of principals, yet I discovered that the focus of their inquiry on the duties and responsibilities of principals

produced findings that are relevant to what principals said during my interviews with them about improving the principalship position.

1. District leaders should ensure that the authority and freedom of action they give principals matches the responsibilities they demand of them (p. 41).
2. States and school districts should prioritize effective leadership, rather than simply classroom experience, as the best indicator of potential effectiveness as a principal (p. 42).
3. School districts can improve their student achievement by providing a clear set of goals created collaboratively with principals, teachers and community.

Pounder and Merrill, (2001) suggest reassigning the principal's job responsibilities and spreading the workload (and pressures) between several assistants for principals who begin to feel overwhelmed. Cushing, Kerrins and Johnstone (2003) make similar suggestions about rethinking principal job responsibilities. However, in many schools, sharing the demands with assistants is not always an option. As one of the principals from the West and Reitzug study (2007) explained, "The school system does not fund an assistant principal even though we have 626 students and a lot of needs."

According to Saban and Wolfe, (2009) principals need a support system to help with the impact of their grueling workload, and believe a mentoring program provides the necessary support. In addition, principals who have been mentored are more likely to engage in leadership performance skills than those principals who have not been mentored. Mentors should be individuals who are experienced leaders and who can demonstrate leadership behaviors by modeling. Saban and Wolfe found that what

principals value most of all from mentors is the “opportunity for reflective conversations, emotional and moral support, and the affirmation that they are doing a good job” (p. 5).

The growing job responsibilities of the principalship require nonexistent “hero-principals” (Grubb & Flessa, 2006, p. 520). Grubb and Flessa studied 10 schools with an alternative school leadership structure. These models included:

1. Schools with two co-principals—three co-principals, in one case—that in turn fall into two subcategories: *divided schools* in which two co-principals each operate a school that is largely independent of the other and *integrated schools* in which two co-principals operate one integrated school.
2. An approach of a rotating principalship, in which an individual serves as principal for 3 years, training an incoming principal during this period and staying a 4th year to serve as a mentor.
3. A small school with no principal, where the teachers have divided the principal’s tasks among themselves. (p. 522).

Unconventional school leadership could serve as a deterrent for losing good principals who leave their positions after feeling overwhelmed. Sharing the responsibilities of the principal also allows the school leader more time to focus on instructional leadership and on improving teaching. Grubb and Flessa (2006) report that co-principals are more likely to succeed when both have shared goals and the personalities of the school leaders are compatible.

Corey, (1996) believes verbalizing about their work could have positive benefits for principals. Corey says that having others attend to and hear us is powerful in resolving

conflict, especially when we confide in someone who is empathetic, real and understands what is being said. Eagan (2002) suggests that dialogue helps us work through complexities to create change. Thus, interviews with principals, such as the ones conducted for this study, may offer principals, who feel lonely, frustrated, or stressed, an opportunity to be heard as they describe their daily work. Lindle (2004) believes that principals can receive both therapeutic and professional advantages from journaling the fragmented events from their work lives. Leadership programs, according to Lindle, would provide a healthier existence for principals by first recognizing the impending stress and trauma in the principalship role, then preparing students for these events, and finally, creating outlets for stressed and traumatized principals by providing ongoing professional support groups.

School Leader support programs, such as the *School Administration Manager (SAM)* project (Turnbull, Haslam, Arcaira, et al., 2009) have begun to surface to teach principals how to delegate their work to focus the use of time on instruction. According to *Southern Regional Education Board (SREB, 2009)* principals should be given the flexibility to improve instruction using innovative ideas from their district offices. In addition, principals need to have the freedom to build capacity within their schools instead of being managed by the district office. According to a study by SREB, high schools that enjoy the greatest progress are led by principals who say they have collaborative support with their district office. SREB states, “Even the most talented and best-trained principals will fail if their working conditions do not support their improvement efforts” (p. 2).

There have been pressures in the principalship for decades as described by Beck and Murphy (1993) who illustrated the changing role of the principalship during the twentieth century.

- Colleges of education should include complex tasks like diagnosis and planning in their principal preparation; preparation should continue even after principals begin working in schools (p. 43).
- Districts should place principals in jobs where they match the current needs of the school (p. 44).

While many may argue that these measures are in place, principals reported that they are nevertheless overwhelmed in their current positions because there is more work to do than is humanely possible.

The Bottoms and Fry study, (2009), which included 22 principals in 17 states, focused on improving the principalship. As with the Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, (2004) study, the principals in the Bottoms and Fry study express the need for better district support while allowing principals the freedom to make curriculum decisions to improve student learning in their schools. Principals see the curriculum needs in their schools and want to use new innovative teaching methods, but many times find they are restricted by the district office (West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). In both this southeastern principal study and this current study, principals repeatedly said that their jobs are or could be threatened by poor test scores, adding pressure and stress to their work lives. By all accounts, test scores should be used in the way they are intended—to improve student performance by alerting teachers and principals to the students who need

their focus and help. School districts who use test scores to measure principals' job performance may sabotage a healthy cohesive working relationship with principals, and thus, may actually lower test scores.

Implications

Revisioning the principalship—who benefits? There seems to be some conflict as to the revisioning of the principalship. Principals described their roles in different ways (e.g. manager; supervisor, instructional leader, and CEO). One of the principals interviewed for the first study of 17 principals (West & Reitzug, 2007) Reitzug expressed his dislike for renaming principals to CEO in North Carolina (NC Standards for School Executives, 2006).

They said at our meeting on Tuesday that we're no longer considered principals. We are CEO's. And I think that's bad....I don't consider myself a CEO....I am a part of this school. I'm not a CEO that sits behind this desk and pushes papers all day long and talk to legislators about this is what needs to be going on.

This principal seems to suggest that being named CEO (aka, school executive) is a negative and political charged transformation for him. One can only wonder if this principal's statement that he is "a part of this school" may suggest that CEO's are distant from others in the corporation. It does seem with increased test score demands schools have become a pawn for politicians, as private testing company's race to profit from such federal mandates. According to Perlstein, (2007) there are 2 billion dollars a year spent on testing and test-prep materials. Perlstein reports,

As several people involved in the crafting of *No Child Left Behind* told me, lobbyists for testing and school improvement business had a far greater role in the law's

creation than did associations representing actual educators. And since the law passed, many of the people appointed to evaluate states' applications for reading grants have had their own business interests in the industry (pp. 193-194).

It seemed more than a coincidence that Neil Bush, the brother of President George W. Bush, was profiting from Title I money by selling educational software to schools (Perlstein, 2007). It also seemed to be a conflict of interest that the owner of the World's largest curriculum and test provider company—McGraw-Hill—is also a close friend to the Bush family. When factoring in these associations between the previous President and his associations with those who monetarily profited from *NCLB*, one would wonder if the nation has been misled with the assurance that children are the benefactors of this legislation.

According to the *NC Standards for School Executives*, (2006) the intention of renaming school principals “*executives*” and modeling schools to be like businesses is to “create schools as organizations that can learn and change quickly if they are to improve performance” (p. 1). The assumption is that corporate America is successful and schools can learn from them. Yet, on any given day in the last several years the newspapers have been filled with the decline of large corporations as they lose money or file for bankruptcy (i.e., see NY Times, April 29, 2008).

According to *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language* (n.d.), a CEO is “the highest-ranking executive in a company or organization, responsible for carrying out the policies of the board of directors on a day-to-day basis.” This definition seems to describe an *executive* who dominates over people while carrying out

those policies of stakeholders in a non-negotiating approach. One wonders if this renaming is an intentional shift toward such duties. For many, a CEO title in the principalship will not stimulate images of a transformational leader. Sergiovanni (as cited in Marion, 2002) describes a transformational leader as “a relationship of mutual stimulation and evaluation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents” (p. 242). Renaming principals as *transformative leader* would surely send a more positive message regarding the intent of school leaders to create institutions where equity is a crucial objective. Could it be that this type of a “symbiotic relationship” between principals, teachers and students may not fit into the politics of state educational leaders who demand that principals “carry out their policies” and produce mandated results? Principals repeatedly noted that legislators know little about what is needed in schools, and therefore, should not be asking principals to “carry out their policies.”

Changing the name of principals does little to improve schools. Instead of focusing on a new name for principals, it seems there should be an effort to improve equity among students and better ways to measure student learning. Standards should focus on a commitment to understanding that all students are different individuals and each has a different history and needs, as well as goals and talents. In addition, every school has their own contextual uniqueness making it difficult to compare schools with one another.

It seems incredulous that state leaders in education allow new facets of political power to regulate education (e.g., allowing federal government increased power in education) by not challenging the linking of Title I money to test scores (FairTest, 2008;

Perlstein, 2007). Changes, such as renaming principals as CEOs (NC Standards for School Executives, 2006) seem to have additional political undertones. Linking federal funding to test scores and changing schools to look like the business world further embed the pressure-packed learning environments created by *NCLB* mandates. This goes against the grain of what experts know about psychological learning, and “threatens to turn schools into sweatshops” (Rueter, 2005, ¶ 8), thus, failing to achieve their desired results—student performance. It makes no sense for schools to imitate a failing (i.e., see NY Times, April 29, 2008) business world model by calling school principals *School Executives*, or *CEOs*, and using terms in the sixth standard of the NC Standards for School Executives such as community “stockholders” who have “investments of resources” (2006, p. 6). There seems to be no redeeming value in the standard changes: teachers are still teaching to tests, (e.g., Principal Wilma’s school), there is still inequality for the *have nots*, privileges for the *haves*, and politicians and their business associates with their pockets full (Perlstein, 2007). All the while, principals are left accountable when students fail to meet mandates.

Standard Changes and Meaning for Educational Leadership Programs.

Since *NCLB* was implemented in 2002, there has been little indication that schools are improving (Apple, 2007; Perlstein, 2007) in reading and math scores—the focused curriculum of *NCLB*. The “*one size fits all*” (FairTest, 2008, p. 1) expectations of *NCLB* assumes that all students have equal opportunity for academic success that will close the gap between those above grade level and those below grade level (Apple, 2007; Carlson, 2007; FairTest, 2008; Perlstein, 2007). Curriculum has become *data driven* to meet the

high-stakes environment created from mandates associated with *NCLB* (FairTest, 2008; Perlstein, 2007; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press), consequently, producing a “drill and grill” (Rueter, 2005, p.1) classroom environment. As a result of *NCLB*, stress levels are spiraling among educators (Cushing, Kerrins, & Johnstone, 2003; Perlstein, 2007; Rueter, 2005; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press), students, (McReynolds, 2006; Perlstein, 2007, Rueter, 2005), student learning is hindered (Perlstein, 2007; Rueter, 2005), many students are dropping out, (Rueter, 2005), and cheating has been encouraged to meet test demands (Rueter, 2005). Many believe that children seem to be the biggest losers of the *NCLB* mandates, (FairTest, 2008; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press), while politicians (Perlstein, 2007) and those associated with the multimillion-dollar school improvement industry benefit (Carlson, 2007; FairTest, 2008; Perlstein, 2007; Rueter, 2005). Yet, there is no mention of change for students in recent revisions for the 2006 North Carolina Standards for School Executives, (2006). *NCLB* continues to be the guiding force in schools. There will be little effect in focus regardless of higher education preparation for school leaders--mandated testing will still be the powerhouse, thus, perpetuating the status quo.

As a result, schools will continue to be inequitable for many students, which may result in increased dropout rates. Those students who are privileged will still be privileged, and those who come from low SES backgrounds, or are African-American, Latino, disabled, or have language barriers, will continue to endure discriminatory practices. Until there is an “overriding commitment to determining and pursuing the common good” (Gause, Reitzug & Villaverde, 2007), democracy will never exist in schools. Unless these barriers are specifically addressed by states and the federal

government, and Title I monies are not attached to student performance, there is no morality in the leadership of schools. Until politicians, lobbyists, and the testing industry put aside personal gain, engaging and relevant education for students will be shortchanged. Until there is an environment where “*all students learn*” (NC Standards for School Executives, 2006, p.1), schools will not be truly moral places.

Forcing schools to teach to the tests. Despite Principal Wilma’s concerns that her students cannot relate or understand information on the test due to the student’s absence of exposure to conditions enjoyed by higher SES students in other areas, Wilma proudly told me that her students continue to meet AYP. It seems that if it is true that the best predictor of student success is parental success (Ohanian, 1999) then Wilma’s school—which is among the poorest in the nation--should be a struggling school. During our interview I asked Wilma how her teachers stay current with curriculum, and Wilma showed me a set of what appeared to be old and outdated books in a wooden rack that someone had given her. She told me that she was using this library of about 10 books as a resource for continued learning. Wilma said there is not enough money in her budget for more current publications. Given these circumstances, I wondered how Wilma’s students scored so well on mandated tests. Since she admitted that her teachers were teaching to the test, I couldn’t help but wonder if her teachers are teaching *the test*. It seems that the principalship accountability pressures for schools to meet mandates could promote cheating on tests to safeguard the jobs of teachers and principals. Thus, one can understand why principals encourage teachers to teach to the test.

This inquiry comes during a time when our country has a critical principalship shortage (Buchanan, 2002; Howley, Andrianaivo, & Perry, 2005; Keli & Czerniak, 2003; NAESP, 2007; NASSP, 2000, 2004; Rayfield & Diamantes, 2003; West, Peck & Reitzug, in-press). This study supports the notion that the principalship is a multi-faceted position that is quickly changing, and these changes are not always in the best interests of children (e.g., reports and paperwork that wastes the time of principals), nor are they in the best interest of the principals (e.g., adding more work to the already overworked principal). The literature has previously been scarce as it pertains to what principals have to say regarding their daily work and the influences that are associated with *NCLB*. In addition, there have been limited studies that address the impact on principals' work of influences such as standards, curriculum, and politics. There has previously been a gap in the literature on the effects of contextual differences and how they influence principals' work lives that this dissertation can begin to fill. Although there is no known proof that the work of principals creates health risks, the recent reports--included in this study--of unexpected deaths in principals in their forties and fifties due to heart-attacks, disease, and suicide add to the importance of this study. It is my hope and belief that this study will add to these areas of inquiry and help us better understand the work of the principalship in the *NCLB* era.

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APPENDIX A:

PRINCIPAL METAPHORICAL ANALYSIS

This metaphorical analysis was used with each interview as an interpretive tool in understanding the meaning of what principals were saying, to provide insights, and used as an approach to help me reflect in different ways during the analysis.

Dominant Metaphorical Theme of Principal's Role

The principal is a change-agent--resetting the school culture to improve student performance.

Inserted supporting narrative from principal

Dominant Tone of Metaphor:

- **Transforming School Climate**

Insert supporting narrative from principal

Principal's Dominant Values:

- **Belief in Student Performance**

Insert supporting narrative from principal

Relationship to Others:

- **To Superintendents, the Principal is an Autonomous Vehicle for Improving School Performance**

Insert supporting narrative from principal

- **To Teachers the Principal is the Instructional Leader**

Insert supporting narrative from principal

- **To Students the Principal is an Advocate**

Insert supporting narrative from principal

Standards for Evaluation of the Principal's Work

- **Multiple Assessments**

Insert supporting narrative from principal

Contextual Conditions that Influence Principals' Work Lives

- **A Change in Community Demographics,**
- **911**
- **Principals regard for self**
- **Culture, SES,**

Insert supporting narrative from principal

Stress in the Principalship

- **Impact of NCLB in the Principalship**

Insert supporting narrative from principal

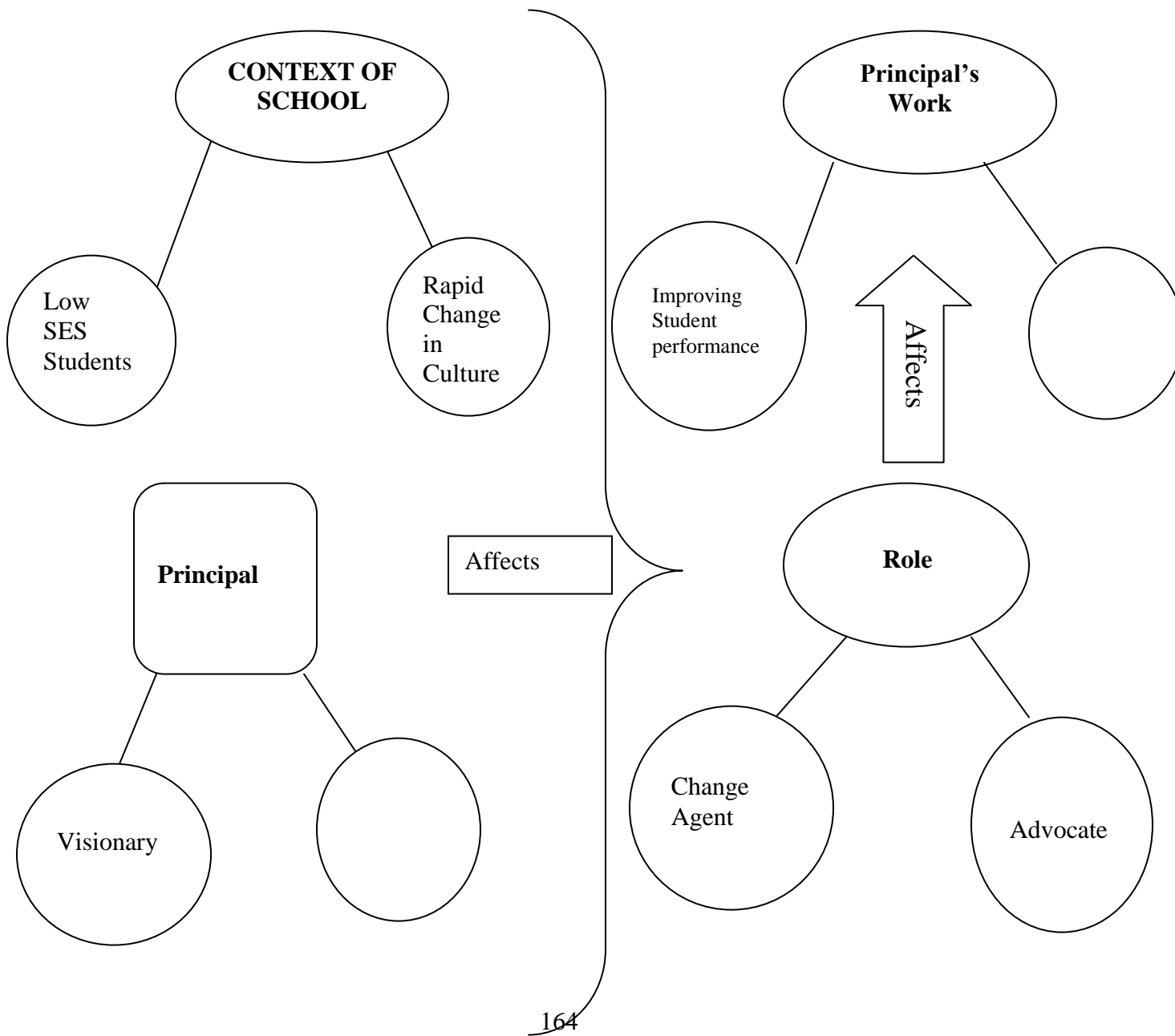
- **The Effects of Stress on the Principals' Health and Work**

Insert supporting narrative from principal

APPENDIX B

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

A contextual framework was completed from each metaphorical analysis to provide an abbreviated diagram outline of principal descriptions. For Example:



APPENDIX C

BOOKS PRINCIPALS SAY INFLUENCE THEIR LEADERSHIP

1. Albom, M. *The Five People you Meet in Heaven*
2. Albom, M. *Tuesday's with Mourie*
3. Bennis, W. *Why Leaders Can't Lead*
4. Brinkman, R., & Kirschner, R. *Dealing with People you can't Stand*
5. Cameron-McCabe, N. H., McCarthy, M. M., & Thomas, S. B. *Public School Law: Teachers' and Students' Rights*
6. Collins, J. *From Good to Great*
7. Connors, N. A. *If You Don't Feed the Teachers, They Eat the Students: A Guide to Success*
8. Cotton, K. *The Schooling Practices that Matters Most*
9. Davis, S., Jenkins, G., Hunt, R., & Page, L. F. *The Pact: Three Young Men Make a Promise and Fulfill a Dream*
10. Dufour, Richard, Dufour, Rebecca, & Eaker, R. *On Common Ground*, Edited
11. Erb, T., & The National Middle School Association. *This We Believe and Now We Must Act*
12. Fullan, M. *What's Worth Fighting for in the Principalship?*
13. Gill, V. *The 11 Commandments of Good Teaching*
14. Glickman, C. D. *Leadership for Learning*
15. Glickman, C. D. *Renewing America's Schools*
16. Gray, D. *Energy of Truth*

17. Gurian, M. *The Mind of Boys*
18. Harvey, S. *Strategies that Work*
19. Hodges, D. *Looking Forward to More Monday Mornings: How to Drive Your Colleagues Happy*
20. Hoy, A. W., & Hoy, W. K. *Instructional Leadership: A research Based Guide to Learning in Schools*
21. Johnson, S. *Who Moved My Cheese*
22. Keith, K., & Johnson, S. *The Paradoxical Commandments*
23. Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. *The Leadership Challenge*
24. Lambert, L. *Building Leadership Capacity in Schools*
25. Levine, M., & Tate, M. A. *Mind at a Time*
26. Marzano, R. J. *Classroom Instruction that Works*
27. Marzano, R. J. *School Leadership that Works: From Research to Result*
28. Marzano, R. J., & Kelehear, Z. *The Art of Leadership*
29. Maxwell, J. C. *Attitude 101: What Every Leader Needs to Know*
30. Maxwell, J. C. *Developing the Leader Within You*
31. Maxwell, J. C. *Developing the Leaders around You*
32. Maxwell, J. C. *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You*
33. Perlstein, L. *Tested: One American School Struggles to Make the Grade*
34. Peters, S. *Do You Know Enough about Me to Teach Me?*
35. Peters, S. *Inspired to Learn*

36. Schmoker, M. *Results*
37. Schmoker, M. *Results Now*
38. Schmoker, M. *Results Now: How We Can Achieve Unprecedented Improvements in Teaching and Learning*
39. Scott, S. *Fierce Conversations*
40. Shapiro, Ed. *Ethical Leadership and Decision Making in Education*
41. Slocumb., P. D. *Hear Our Cries: Boys in Crisis*
42. Slocumb, P. D., & Payne, Ruby K. *Removing the Mask: Giftedness in Poverty*
43. Smiley, T. *What I Know for Sure*
44. Taylor, R. T. *Improving Reading and Writing and Content Learning for Students in Grades 4-12*
45. The Bible
46. The National Middle School Association. *Tips for Principals*
47. The National Middle School Association. *We Believe*
48. The Tao
49. Tzu, Sun. *The Art of War*
50. Whittaker, T. *What Great Principals Do Differently: 15 Things that Matter Most*
51. Whittaker, T. *What Great Teachers Do Differently*
52. Whyte, D. *You Can't Teach a Class That You Can't Manage*
53. Wong, H., & Wong, R. *The First Day of School*
54. Wong, H., & Wong, R. *The Effective School*