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Identifying behavioral characteristics of high school principals providing leadership in reforming Iowa high schools

Nadene E. Davidson
University of Northern Iowa

IDENTIFYING BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF

HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS PROVIDING LEADERSHIP IN

REFORMING IOWA HIGH SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Approved:

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Dr. Greg Reed, Chair

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Dr. John Henning, Committee Member

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May 2007

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An Abstract of a Dissertation

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Approved:

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Dr. Greg Reed
Faculty Advisor

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ABSTRACT

Technological advances and the changing world have created new challenges in preparing our youth to lead satisfying lives in the twenty-first century. Current literature supports the case that change is needed in our high schools to move from the factory preparation model to become more personalized learning communities preparing students for life in a global community. This reinvented high school will require reinvented leadership to guide the process of high school reform. The purpose of this study was to identify behavioral characteristics of high school principals providing leadership in reforming Iowa high schools.

Interviews were conducted with educators from two Iowa schools that were implementing the nationally recognized reform programs, *High Schools That Work* (HSTW) and/or *Achieving Via Individual Determination* (AVID). Ten teachers and four administrators participated in individual semi-structured interviews. Constant Comparative Analysis method was used throughout the research project to analyze the data. Themes were confirmed, crosschecked, and tested for coding reliability as part of the ongoing analysis.

The themes that emerged from the data analysis led in the development of a visual model, *Key Elements of Leadership for the Effective 21st Century High School Principal.* The elements and sub-elements of the model are as follows: 1. Student Focused System, with sub-elements - student needs drive decisions, student-centered environment for each student, student voice, and student choice; 2. Culture of Learning, with sub-elements – facilitates a shared philosophy, supports collaboration, establishes high expectations,

nurtures parent partnerships, and encourages community engagement; and 3. Essential

Characteristics, with sub-elements – visionary, effective communicator, risk taker,

learner, decision-maker, and relationship builder. The *Key Elements for Leadership* are

interrelated and provide a multi-dimensional approach to leadership.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. Their love, patience, and support have encouraged me at every step of this journey. My husband, Gary, and children, Ben, Ashley and new son-in-law, Erik, have lovingly encouraged me throughout this adventure. I would also dedicate this dissertation to my mother and late father. They modeled and instilled in me the belief that learning was the way of life, long before it was popularly described in those terms. Thank you also goes to my sisters, brothers, nieces and nephews for their encouragement throughout the process.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation resulted from the support and encouragement of many individuals. First of all, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Greg Reed, for his mentoring and guidance throughout my program and writing this dissertation. His confidence and advice throughout have been very reinforcing in completing the work. I would also like to thank my other committee members, Dr. John Henning, Dr. Charles Johnson, Dr. Lynn Nielsen, and Dr. Jody Stone for sharing their individual expertise and coaching me throughout this research process.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Technological advances and the changing world have created new challenges in preparing our youth to lead satisfying lives in the twenty-first century. The demand for each student to be prepared with diverse skill sets, including higher order cognitive skills applied in real world settings, brings into question the effectiveness of current prek – 12 educational institutions. Data pointing to decreasing scores on various achievement assessments, increasing drop-out rates, increasing rates of remediation at institutions of higher education, and declining position on academic ratings with the international community all support the need for educational reform.

The call for reform is tied to changing political, social, economic, demographic, and technological issues. Thomas Friedman (2005), in his book, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century,* identified ten major events or innovations that have changed the world in which we live. These milestones included the fall of the Berlin Wall, Netscape going public, workflow software, open-sourcing, outsourcing, offshoring, supply-chaining, insourcing, in-forming and wireless. These actions have impacted the way people around the world communicate, work, socialize, and interact. No longer will students live in isolated communities in rural and urban America, but will interact and communicate instantaneously with friends and business colleagues in Chile, China, India, France or any other global connection. Students must be prepared to live satisfying lives in this twenty-first century world. The educational system must respond

to the question, "Is each student post-secondary ready to live a satisfying life in the twenty-first century?"

The current educational system will be evaluated in regards to the question of student preparedness. Reforming America's high schools is at the heart of local, state, and national discussions. According to Tucker, "Virtually everyone familiar with this landscape [school reform] believes that our high schools are the most deeply troubled and most difficult to change of our public school institutions" (2003, p. 1). Current literature (Iowa Department of Education, 2002; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2004) supports the case that change is needed in our high schools to move from the factory preparation model to become more personalized learning communities preparing students for life in a global community. The reinvented high school will require reinvented leadership to guide the process. Just as schools are a continuation of the factory model, administrators have been prepared to work and carry on this authoritative, assembly line process of education.

For many years our schools have prepared students to meet the workforce needs of an industrialized society. The demands and opportunities of today's society are different and students must be prepared to live in a twenty-first century community. Legislative rules and bureaucratic mandates are one reason to change, philosophical beliefs and values of educators are a second reason, but the current data describing the lack of student success should provide the real driving force for high school reform. According to current statistics, only "...75 percent of the nation's 9th graders graduate from high school. Of those, close to 70 percent go on either two-year or four-year

colleges. But of those college-goers half do not earn a degree within six years. The result: only a fourth of entering 9th graders nationwide earn even a two-year college degree" (Tucker, 2003, p. 1).

As we look at the future for our children and think about their success in the workplace and life in general, consideration must be given to the skills needed for a satisfying and successful life. Jobs that in the past would have been available to someone with only a high school degree are drastically changing. A job today as a mechanic requires specialized training and usually requires the minimum of a two-year degree in a program that automobile dealers have helped design. The same is true for welding jobs and many others that have traditionally been considered good jobs that did not require post high school education. The idea that only 25 percent of our current ninth graders will have at least a two-year college degree will leave many young people undereducated for future jobs. This will leave them the options of low paying jobs and a life of constant economic struggle. High schools need to provide new approaches to high-level instruction for each student, preparing them for post secondary options.

"Today's high school students need a very different approach to education as they face the realities and demands of a technological and global society characterized by rapid change and unprecedented diversity" (Lachat, 2001, p. 10). Students recognize this changing society as the world in which they will live and see the need for schools to change. Community forums were held to gather data for the Iowa Department of Education's *Foundation for Change: Focusing on Iowa High Schools Report*. Through these forums, students expressed the following comments about high schools, "... 'stop

the cookie cutter approach . . . engage students in the change . . . don't be afraid to take risks!" (2002, p. i). Students recognize there is a need for change and are eager to participate in the process.

Many schools still follow the original high school model first established in the early 1900's. The Carnegie unit is used to determine graduation requirements and seat time is the measure of success. Educators are currently prepared to work in this outdated model while community members support this existing structure because this is the system in which they were educated. High schools must change to prepare students for life in the twenty-first century and highly qualified administrators are need to provide the leadership for reinventing the nation's high schools. It is essential then to identify the specific characteristics and behaviors needed to lead in the high school change process. As Fullan (2003) concludes, "there is no greater moral imperative than revamping the principal's role as part and parcel of changing the context within which teachers and students learn" (p. 11).

Current high schools were designed in response to different economic, social, and demographic conditions. Many high school programs are inadequate, especially for an institution that is vital to the transition of our students to the next stage in their lives. The need for high school reform should be clearly evident to all. A critical element in this reform discussion is the focus on defining leadership qualities important in creating learner-centered environments. The authors of *Breaking Ranks* summarize the need for high school reform when they stated, "The country is diminished to the extent that any

high school fails to provide all that it might for every student" (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1996, p. 4).

Statement of the Problem

It is time to reform American high schools. The challenge is to identify administrators prepared with the characteristics and skills necessary to lead and sustain this change process. Each high school needs an administrator with the necessary qualifications to lead the school community through this reform process. The problem is identifying specific behaviors and characteristics practiced by high school principals that are effective in implementing the reform initiatives.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was identifying behavioral characteristics of high school principals providing leadership in reforming Iowa high schools.

An administrator working to reshape the high school environment to better meet the future needs of students, must be prepared with the appropriate skill sets. This study analyzed the characteristics of principals that have implemented high school reform initiatives for a minimum of two years. This information provided base knowledge that could be valuable to various institutions. The preparation of future administrators could be guided by the findings of this study - characteristics of the effective twenty-first century principal. School Administrators of Iowa (SAI) could use this data in offering professional development opportunities for the SAI membership. SAI might also incorporate this data into the planning for the SAI Leadership Academy. Higher education could integrate this data into the administrator preparation programs. High

school principal search committees would use the information to guide the hiring process and clarify essential characteristics for principal candidates prepared to lead in high school reform. Practicing principals could use the data for self-analysis and personal goal setting for self-improvement. This data may also inform the overall change process in high school reform by identifying valuable characteristics for effective leadership.

<div align="center">Definition of Terms</div>

Administrator – an individual holding administrative licensure with the Iowa Department of Education and serving in a recognized administrative position in a school district.

Leadership – "is part of an interaction influence system within which the leader, acting alone, interacts with others in an effort to influence what they think and do." (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 172)

Traditional leadership – "emphasizes hierarchy, rules, and management protocols and rely on bureaucratic linkages to connect people to work by forcing them to respond as subordinates" (Sergiovanni, 1995, p. 115).

Traditional management theory – "suited to situations of practice that are characterized by linear conditions . . . that can be tightly structured . . . [and] the need exits to bring about a routine level of competence and performance" (Sergiovanni, 1995, p. 41)

<div align="center">Assumptions</div>

There were several assumptions made for the purpose of this study. In looking at a high school that was evolving through a change process, it was assumed that the principal provided significant leadership. While other educators within the school community also provided leadership, it was assumed that the high school principal

provided the most significant leadership behaviors for school reform. It was also assumed that the characteristics of the principal could be delineated. In analyzing the results of a change initiative it is often difficult to clearly define the forces and factors that were most instrumental in obtaining the resulting change. It was assumed that the characteristics of the high school principal played a significant role in the resulting change rather than situational influences. It was assumed that each participant openly and honestly responded in the interview. Another assumption was that the schools identified for analysis in this study were, in fact, institutions that have undergone significant change (reform) in the past two years.

<div align="center">Limitations</div>

Each research study has limitations. The research procedures for this study were face-to-face semi-structured interviews. These procedures may limit the generalizability of this study due to the interviewer effect. This study was limited to data collected in two high schools, focusing on characteristics of each high school principal. The number of principals and schools was a limitation to generalizing conclusions.

The size, location, socio-economic level, and minority population of the schools may also be a limitation to the transferability of the data. The schools were average size for Iowa, not especially small or an urban school.

The impact of teacher leaders on the reform process may also pose limitations on this study, as it may be difficult distinguishing the influence of the principal or the teacher leader.

Defining a school that was engaged in high school reform as using one of the federal comprehensive school reform (CSR) models, such as High Schools That Work™, may also be a limitation to the generalization of conclusions.

There was no comparison in this study based on gender of the principals.

Conclusions

Based on the literature, each educator should be asking the question, "Is each high school graduate from my school prepared to live a satisfying life in the twenty-first century?" Recent political, social, economic, and technology changes on the global level brings into question the effectiveness of current prek – 12 educational systems in preparing students for this new world. Data suggests change is needed in existing high schools to more fully prepare students with the skills, knowledge, and behaviors needed for their professional and personal lives of the twenty-first century. High school principals will need the skills, knowledge, and behaviors necessary to provide leadership in a changing educational climate. Defining the behavioral characteristics of principals providing leadership in reforming Iowa high school programs will provide data to develop and nurture this skill set with current and future administrators. Identifying characteristics of practicing principals that have been engaged in this reform process will prove valuable in building capacity in schools to meet the needs of students.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Arthur Levine described the current status of educational leadership when stating, "Profound economic, demographic, technological, and global changes have transformed the jobs of school leaders- principals and superintendents. No longer is their position one of school supervision, it is leading the redesign of their schools. It is moving schools from the past into the present" (2005, p. 10). Levine highlighted the current view of school administration when he described the changing role of principals. The world has drastically changed and the leadership in our educational institutions must also change to lead the reform process in reinventing our schools. Not only is the challenge to reform the schools, but it is also to build the capacity in our school leaders to lead the charge. School administrators need the skills, knowledge, and behaviors to engage schools in the change process. The challenge is to identify and clarify the characteristics school leaders need for the reinvention of our schools.

Historical Factors that Influence Educational Leadership

To fully understand the significance of examining qualities of educational leadership for the twenty-first century, it was important to analyze the current high school administrative model that has evolved due to key events in history. Analyzing social, political, and economic factors related to the development of secondary schools provided a foundation for understanding the evolving responsibilities of a high school principal and deeply seated traditions attached to this administrative position.

Many high schools of the twenty-first century share a number of common elements with secondary schools designed to meet the needs of students at the beginning of the twentieth century, yet, today's youth live in a world with dramatically different social, economic, political, and demographic conditions. It is imperative that communities understand the deeply seated traditions of secondary schools and participate in reinventing engaging programs that meet the twenty-first century learning needs of each student. Educational leaders with skill sets for facilitating and sustaining these reform activities are essential.

The expectations for school leadership are guided by the purposes of education as defined by the social, political, and economic climate of the specific period of time. The United States is no longer an agrarian or industrial based economy, yet the current secondary school system is very similar to the educational system that was initially implemented at the beginning of the twentieth century. The roles of high school principals must change as the expectations of schools change. As Levine explained, "Few of today's 250,000 school leaders are prepared to carry out this agenda. Neither they, nor the programs that prepared them should be faulted for this. Put simply, they were appointed to and educated for jobs that don't exist anymore" (2005, p. 10).

Reviewing historical highlights of the secondary education system provided an understanding of deeply seated role expectations for high school principals. The depth of tradition and expectation surrounding the principal's position increases the challenges for bringing change to this governance role. The need to reform high schools includes the

need to redefine the characteristics and skill sets needed by principals working in twenty-first century schools.

In 1892, the Committee of Ten on Secondary Studies of the National Education Association was formed with Charles Eliot, president of Harvard, as chair (Oakes, 1985, p. 17). The purpose of this group was to make recommendations for "standardizing both secondary schools' college-preparatory curricula and colleges' admission requirements" (Oakes, 1985, p. 17). The Committee of Ten "considered the goals of public education and asserted that all students in a democracy should have a broad and general education regardless of the adult roles they were likely to assume in society" (Wheelock, 1994, p. 5).

> The committee went on record as unequivocally opposing the separation of college-bound and non-college-bound students into different programs. Further, it was clearly opposed to viewing college preparation as the major function of secondary education. The proposed curriculum consisted of the learnings the committee saw as valuable in the process of becoming an educated person, regardless of future plans. (Oakes, 1985, p. 18)

This committee very clearly supported public schools providing a challenging, broad education program, as well as preparing each student with the option of attending college upon finishing high school. The vision of this committee included a non-tracked approach to schools and a clear message that the purpose of secondary schooling was to prepare an educated citizenry. Not all policy makers agreed with the recommendations of the Committee of Ten and the reality that would follow was quite different from the vision of the Committee of Ten.

The beginning of the twentieth century saw a large influx of students into the secondary school systems. "Rapid industrialization, urbanization, and immigration

placed incredible new demands on teachers and public schools" (Oakes & Lipton, 2003, p. 6). "An average of more than one new high school was built for each day of each year between 1890 and 1918" (Oakes, 1985, p.18). An efficient approach to educating all students was to group together students with like needs in small efficient classrooms. Teachers were assigned to work with these small groups in a similar manner "that factory managers would send steel through one machine for processing and rubber through another. Since each small homogeneous group has different needs, the structure allows educators to target, at least theoretically, instructional practice appropriately for each group" (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 65). This approach to addressing the problems of the bulging high school population was a direct reflection of the industrial revolution and economic times. High schools were designed to follow the assembly line approach of manufacturing by taking raw materials, fitting them into predetermined shapes, and producing a predetermined product. The leadership styles that corresponded to this time followed the autocratic model that was evident in the industrial segment. As Sousa described, "autocratic and bureaucratic styles were prominent in schools during the first half of the 20th century" (2003, p. 12). The principal was expected to mange this school environment by assigning teachers, scheduling students, and maintaining the school building.

The "cold war" with Russia in the 1950's prompted debate on the purpose of schools and level of student preparation. There was a widely held belief that the educational system was critical in strengthening the United States' position on the international level. Following the Sputnik launch in 1957, there was increasing concern

that American students were not receiving an academically challenging curriculum in mathematics and science to prepare them to be competitive in an international society. As Cunningham and Cordeiro described, "The Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik in October 1957 opened the floodgates of seething criticism of the American educational system. . . . From all sides came demands for changes in the way Americans were schooled. . . . National security and defense were increasingly used as a justification for greater federal involvement in education" (2003, p. 34). Luvern L. Cunningham (as found in Cunningham and Cordeiro 2003) described the administrative responsibilities, "for the first forty years of the twentieth century, pencils, paper, blackboards, and chalk constituted technology; hectographs, mimeographs, typewriters, and A-V came later. Minimum credentials were required to be a principal or superintendent of schools" (p. 39).

Racial equality was a major focus of the 1960s. This was a continuation of the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. This landmark decision opened the doors for minorities to freely enter the public school systems (Alexander & Alexander, 2001). The idea of equal opportunities for all students to receive a free public education really introduced the federal government into education with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. The major focus of this legislation was "encouraging equality of educational opportunity . . [and] broad program of support to children from low-income families" (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2003, p. 35).

The overall turmoil of the 1970s influenced the political and social climate surrounding schools. Busing students to obtain racial balance seemed to overshadow all other educational issues. The idea of quality was lost in the goal of equality. Cunningham and Cordeiro summarized the 1970s by stating,

> perhaps most evident amidst the turmoil occurring in education since the 1950s was the minimum influence educational leaders were able to exert. They were constantly being whipsawed by political and judicial decisions and the social and economic conditions within their communities. They found themselves constantly reacting to political and community forums in which they were not partners (2003, p. 26).

The 1980s began with the release of the report, A National Risk, by the U.S. Secretary of Education's appointed National Commission of Excellence in Education in 1983. The report began "Our nation is at risk" (p.1) and continued to describe the lack of standards and quality in the American school system. As Cunningham and Cordeiro summarized, "American students compared unfavorably to foreign students and were weaker in inferential skills, science and math achievement had declined, and illiteracy was a huge national problem" (2003, p. 37). This report painted a rather bleak picture of the quality of education provided to American students. The result from this and other reports found politicians entering the educational arena working to impact the direction of education. Drake and Roe described this political climate,

> Public education became an important part of the national agenda in 1983, 1984, and 1985. Governors and legislators vied with each other to recommend legislative programs to do something about it [public education] . . . The broad message was that schools can and should be improved academically, particularly in regard to leadership, management, discipline, teaching, and learning (2003, p. 12).

The 1990s ushered in the era of accountability driven by political forces outside of the educational arena. As Drake and Roe described, "Time seems to speed up as world-

changing events occur at a dizzying pace" (2003, p. 12). National and international

events were changing the look of the world. The ethnic and racial populations in schools

were changing as well as the number of students with disabilities. "The Americans with

Disabilities Act, which took effect in 1992, and the concept of 'inclusion' for students

with disabilities continue to stress the human and monetary resources of local schools"

(Drake & Roe, p. 12, 2003). The expectations for schools were growing at exponential

rates. At the same time, the focus of the school leader was lost in the external pressures

to bring about standards based learning. As Fullan (2003) stated,

> The 1990s was a decade of neglect of school leadership. As problems of change
> became more complex, scant attention was paid to the development of leadership.
> . . . Leadership is to the current decade what standards were to the 1990s for those
> interested in large-scale reform. Standards, even when well implemented, can
> take us only part way to successful large-scale reform. It is only leadership that
> can take us all the way (p. 16).

In looking at the twenty-first century, "Attacks on the effectiveness of the public

schools have not abated" (Drake & Roe, p. 14, 2003). In addition to accountability for

students and educators, greater diversity in student's ethnic background and abilities,

discussions also encompass home schooling, voucher systems, charter schools, and

private entities contracting to run schools. As Drake & Roe (2003) described, "Even the

most astute movie hero would be stymied by today's chaos and complexity. School

leaders have a major task of seeing through the mirage of power projected by those who

would influence the schools" (p. 14). Our educational system is truly in a complex time.

It will take a leader who will pierce the "illusion of leadership" (Goens, 2000, p. 32) to

move forward. Goens (2000) described leadership, "Illusions about leadership delude

and distract from the real work of helping people find meaning and purpose. Leaders

unite people through the power of ideas and values. That is how challenges become victories" (p. 32). Fullan (1998) summarized, "The walls of the school have come tumbling down, metaphorically speaking. 'Out there' is now 'in here' as government policy, parent and community demands, corporate interests, and ubiquitous technology have all stormed the walls of the school. The relentless pressures of today's complex environments have intensified overlaod" (p. 6).

This brief historical perspective on high schools and influences on secondary principals identified a sampling of social, political and economic circumstances that have impacted school leadership. These points in history have placed great demands on the educational system and educational leadership, pulling it in many directions by multiple points of power. Most of these occurrences resulted in additional layering of responsibilities and expectations of individuals in traditional leadership positions with little, if any, reduction of workload. Fullan (2003) summarized the status of principal's responsibilities when stating, "when so many demands are placed on the principalship, it is not just the sheer amount of work that is the problem, but it is also the inconsistent and ambiguous messages. Take control, but follow central directives; make improvements, but run a smooth ship . . ." (p. 22). When referring to twenty-first century principals, Pierce (2003) described the high school principal's position by stating, "the job is becoming more difficult, the hours are getting longer, and we cannot expect people to sacrifice their personal lives so that they can spend as many as 80 hours a week in school. The high-end pay for a principal is about $90,000. You do the math" (p. 6). Role expectations for the high school principal are becoming increasingly demanding and

complex. It is time to focus on the essential responsibilities of the principal and define the characteristics needed to achieve the defined priorities and vision.

Traditional Model of Leadership

The historical overview identified several descriptors of the traditional high school and responsibilities of the high school principal. As DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran summarized, "Being an effective building manager was once sufficient to be considered an effective principal. Until recently, principals' jobs were quite clearly, albeit narrowly, defined. Essentially, principals served as building managers and student disciplinarians" (2003, p. 44). The traditional high school environment was organized by content specific teacher groupings and, as with the assembly line approach, each different teacher taught his or her content specific curriculum in isolation from other areas. The principal was expected to provide a barrier to the outside world so the teachers could focus on the teaching. The courses were defined by the Carnegie unit or course credits, which equated to minutes of seat time for a set number of days comprised of a set number of blocks of time. The educational institution remained constant, bending only to political, social, and economic pressures rather than focusing on the individual needs of students.

The list of characteristics for the traditional principal was fairly short. As Cunningham and Cordeiro stated earlier in this chapter, few credentials were needed to become a high school principal (2003). The principal was expected to manage the building by hiring teachers with appropriate credentials, balance the budget, and discipline the students to maintain an orderly high school.

Elmore (2000) summarized the state of leadership in the traditional school when he stated,

> Administration in education, then, has come to mean not the management of instruction but the management of the structures and processes around instruction. That which cannot be directly managed must, in this view, be protected from external scrutiny. Buffering consists of creating structures and procedures around the technical core of teaching that, at the same time, (1) protect teachers from outside intrusions in their highly uncertain and murky work, and (2) create the appearance of rational management of the technical core. (p. 6)

A traditional view of educational leadership can be summarized in the model provided in Diagram 1. As Elmore (2000) described, the administration managed structures or institutions. This was placed at the center of the diagram as the focus of the work of the principal. The next ring of the diagram that included the hierarchal structures, bureaucratic rules, and traditional content-specific teaching arrangements protected the institution. The principal characteristics were identified in the outer ring of the diagram. The principal was expected to hold all the pieces together around the core of the institution. As Cunningham and Cordeiro (2003) and DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) stated, the list of principal characteristics for the traditional principal was short. It included manager, disciplinarian, and implementer of mandates.

The visual model in Diagram 1 was based on the historical overview to show the common elements for the traditional high school principal. The traditional principal served as a step in the chain of command to implement policy for the institution. The principal's work was to maintain the Institution Focused System.

Diagram 1.

Key Elements of Administration for the Traditional High School Principal
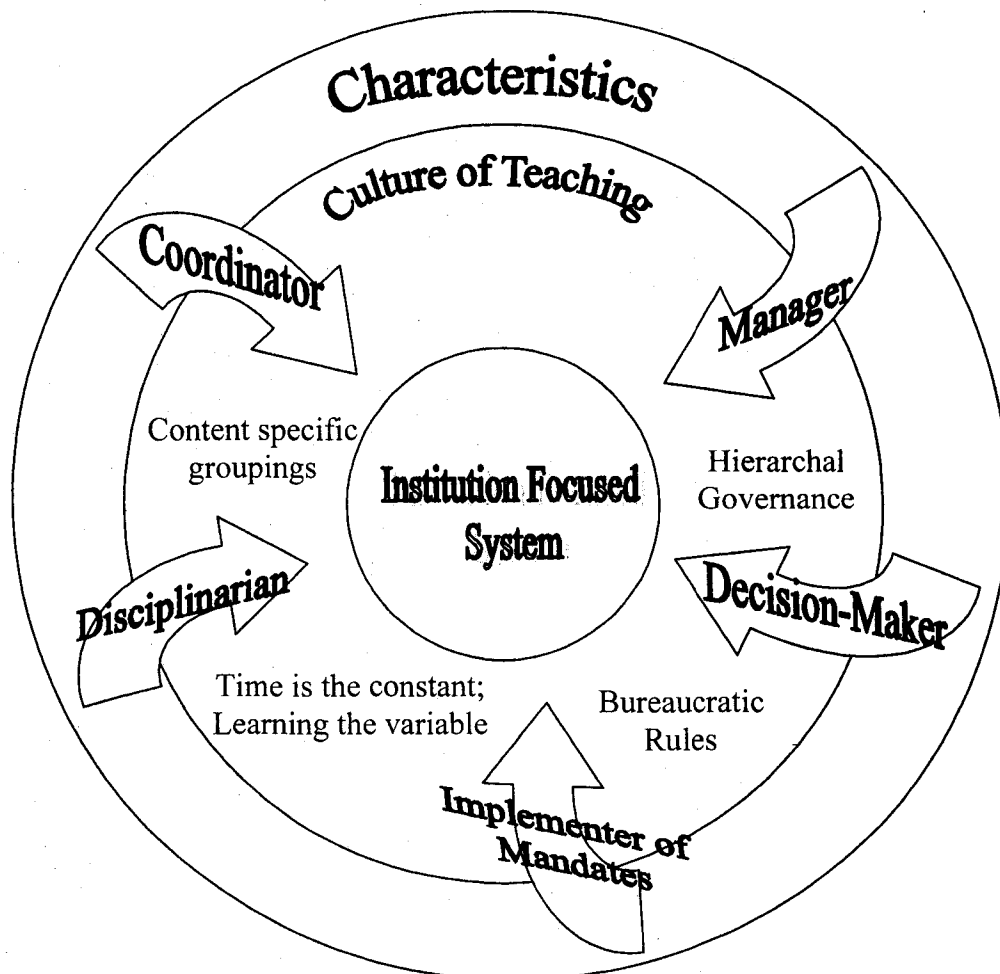
Diagram 1 identifies key elements of administration for the high school principal

serving in a traditional environment. The focus is on the institution and maintaining the

culture that has been in existence for the past century. The Culture of Teaching describes

the factors that guide the principal's actions, including the governance structure,

expectations, and other processes that guide teaching. The characteristics identify the

roles the principal brought to the high school culture. Diagram 1 reflects key elements of the high school principal as highlighted in the brief history of education.

In reviewing the historical highlights of secondary schooling and principalship over the last half of century, the research pointed to the need for redefining the leadership responsibilities of high school principals as one component of school reform. As Wilmore (2002) described, "The role of the principal has transitioned again from school manager to the school catalyst for success for all stakeholders" (p. 5). These changing leadership roles must be identified and aligned with the characteristics principals need to guide this reform process.

School administrators were prepared to work in this traditional system. The current reality as described in the literature suggests the existing system is not meeting the needs of the students in preparing them for a satisfying life in the twenty-first century. Administrators need preparation programs and professional development to build this individual capacity required to lead this new era of secondary schooling. To build this capacity of human capital, the characteristics of high school principals that will support student learning in this reinvented high school must be clarified.

The expectations for a high school principal have fluctuated with the current focus on reinventing high schools. There continues to be numerous perspectives around the principal's role and characteristics needed to fully engage in that role. The discussion has included managerial qualities to instructional leadership to visionary qualities. The basic question should focus on what are the qualities essential for principals working to enhance student learning in twenty-first century schools.

Educational Leadership Theories

In analyzing educational leadership, Marsh (2000) identified three common themes that relate to the role of principals during a time of reform. The first theme focused on defining and measuring student learning at the system level. The second theme was the "shift from a rule-driven to a results-driven system. . . This shift will continue the expansion of leadership roles and organizational support needed within the school, create a very different culture, and value much different views of expertise and collaboration." (p. 128). The third theme Marsh (2000) identified was "teaching and learning will change in truly revolutionary ways. The push for 'value-added' schooling and much higher student performance for all students will force schools to dramatically change the way teaching and learning take place" (p. 128). Current research that has clarified the best strategies to support learning, improved technology to guide student assessment, and offered a more focused approach to define standards and benchmarks will all continue to change the approach to teaching and learning. Marsh (2000) described how the "next decade will also be characterized by political, economic, and social issues of stunning complexity and tenacity" (p.129). The changes of the next decade will overwhelm the changes of the last century. It is time to rethink the role of the high school principal. As Marsh (2000) concluded, "All these trends have strong implications for the nature of educational leadership needed by school principals" (p. 129). He went on to state, "the new educational role for school principals will need to be reinvented – mere extensions of previous views of the role will inform but not suffice as the basis for the new role" (pp. 129 – 130).

Qualities Identified for Reform Leadership

The principal leading the reinvented school will need a skill set aligned to work in this new environment. Fullan (2003) described the challenge,

> Leading schools – as any great organization – requires principals with the courage and capacity to build new cultures based on trusting relationships and a culture of disciplined inquiry and action. The school leaders with these characteristics are in short supply is the point. Leading schools through complex reform agendas requires new leadership that goes far beyond improving test scores. Admittedly, developing trust and discipline in an organization that doesn't have it is a huge challenge. But again, this is the point: There are cases where it has been done. We need to learn from theses schools, focus on the right things, and create the conditions under which new leaders can develop and flourish (p. 45).

As Fullan described, there are cases of principals providing leadership in this new climate. The next step was to identify the skills that are making a difference in creating this environment.

Proficiencies - National Association of Elementary School Principals

In 1997, the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) published Proficiencies for Principals, 3rd edition. This document provided guidance for practicing principals and aspiring educators in developing skills to lead schools that are undergoing change. The following four prerequisites to success as a school leader were identified:

1. Advanced skills in the teaching and learning process

2. A thorough understanding of practical applications of child growth and development

3. A solid background in the liberal arts

4. A sincere commitment to children's welfare and progress. (p. 3)

In the NAESP publication (1997) responsibilities of the principal were further defined by developing a list of 96 proficiencies organized into eight categories that define effectiveness. The categories with sample proficiencies are as follows:

1. Leadership behavior

   a. Demonstrates vision and provides leadership that appropriately involves the school community in the creation of shared beliefs and values.

   b. Demonstrates moral and ethical judgment.

2. Communication skills

   a. Writes and speaks clearly and concisely so the message is understood by the intended audience

3. Group processes

   a. Establishes a framework for collaborative action and involves the school community in developing and supporting shared beliefs, values, mission, and goals for the school

4. Curriculum and instruction

5. Assessment

6. Organizational management

7. Fiscal management

8. Political management. (p. 6 – 18)

The development of competencies and proficiencies reflected a shift in defining principal responsibilities from a process orientation to an outcome expectation.

Standards – Educational Leadership Constituent Council

For many years professional administrative organizations and states followed locally developed standards to guide administrative performance. With the movement for increased accountability in education several educational administration groups and organizations joined to develop a common set of standards. In 1988, the National Policy Board for Education Administration (NPBEA) was formed (Wilmore, 2002). The NPBEA was comprised of ten organizations with the purpose of improving educational leadership. The Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) a subgroup of the NPBEA and the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), a subset organization of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), developed a comparable set of standards to guide the development of school leaders. The Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards are as follows:

A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by . . .

1. facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a school or district vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community

2. advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth

3. ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment

4.   collaborating with families and community members, responding to

diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community

resources

5.   acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner

6.   understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social,

economic, legal, and cultural context

7.   substantial, sustained, standards-based experiences in real settings that are

planned and guided cooperatively by university and school district

personnel for graduate credit (Wilmore, 2002, pp. 13 – 14)

Competencies and Strategies - Marsh

In describing educational leadership for the twenty-first century, Marsh (2000)

described competencies and strategies important for future leaders. The first was

"leading from the middle still required a substantive leader" (p. 136). This suggested that

principals must have a deep understanding of teaching and learning and the relationship

of these to student outcomes. The principal was an effective mentor, "but in the end,

their influence was both substantive educationally as well as collaborative and

transforming" (p. 137). The second competency Marsh (2000) described was "reframe

the right problems" (p. 137). Successful principals use effective information to guide

decisions and solve problems with the focus directed on students and supporting student

learning. Marsh's (2000) third recommendation was "focus on the best results and

sustain the focus" (p. 138). The school has a clear vision focused on instruction for each

student. As Marsh described, "the vision was robust in incorporating many dimensions

of teaching and learning while on the other hand remained flexible and continually

rethought in relation to the results" (p. 138). The next of Marsh's competencies was

"develop strategic thinking/planning that matters" (p. 139). He identified several specific

skills needed for this step including, process skills in engaging others, deep understanding

of the system and alternative strategic directions, and the ability to lead without taking

over the process. "Restructured and recultured in a powerful synergy" was the fifth

competency Marsh (2000, p. 139) identified. This step described the process where the

principal reorganized the teachers into work groups that focused on the actual changes in

teaching and learning. The principal maintained the fragile balance between

micromanaging the groups and providing the support and knowledge needed for the

groups to be successful. The sixth principal competency "linked management support to

work structures and organizational redesign" (p. 140). With this competency,

"educational leaders had a holistic understanding of the interface of management

supports to the educational efforts of the school as linked to strong student results and

institutional success" (Marsh, 2000, p. 140). Successful principals modeled a holistic

view by integrating management and leadership responsibilities while maintaining the

focus on student learning. The seventh strategy focused on "powerfully expanded

teaching and learning linked to the new results" (Marsh, 2000, p. 141). The principal was

not a content expert in each subject area, but recognized the qualities of great teaching

and learning. Coaching teachers to improve teaching techniques was a particular strength

of the principal as well as supporting collaboration and integration of content areas. The

final competency Marsh (2000) identified was, "created professional capacity and

learning communities driven by results" (p. 141). The successful principal established professional teams that collaborate and plan instruction. Capacity was built in these teams through quality professional development aligned with the team goals. The support for the teams built sustainability into the reform activities of the learning community. Marsh (2000) described eight competencies and strategies highlighting a new approach to educational leadership. In these recommendations "the principal had a new form of educational leadership that provided substantive and cultural leadership to the transformation of the school linked to the high performance organizational arrangements that support the results-driven collective focus" (p. 142).

<u>Dimensions and Competencies - Sergiovanni</u>

Sergiovanni (2006) described leadership as being very personal, where the individual combines three important dimensions – one's heart, head, and hand. He stated, "different principals in the same situation typically behave differently. Leader and context defy separation" (p. 2). The *heart*, according to Sergiovanni (2006),

> has to do with what a person believes, values, dreams about, and is committed to-that person's *personal vision* . . . The *head* of leadership has to do with the theories of practice . . . and our ability to reflect on the situations . . the *hand* of leadership has to do with the actions we take, the decisions we make, the leadership and management behaviors we use as our strategies become institutionalized (p. 2).

Leadership characteristics of principals will be influenced by their own values and beliefs, professional preparation and personal experiences. Each principal will need to establish his/her own approach and path to finding effective leadership.

With the heart, head, and hand dimensions as the foundation for leadership development, Sergiovanni (2006) described eight basic competencies that were key to a

successful principalship in the twenty-first century. The eight basic competencies were identified:

1.   the management of attention – the ability to focus others on values, ideas, goals, and purposes that bring people together and that provides a rationale, a vision leading to consensus

2.   the management of meaning – the ability to connect teachers, parents, and students to the school in such a way that they find their lives useful, sensible, and valued

3.   the management of trust – the ability to be viewed as credible, legitimate, and honest, the key to the development of social capital and human capital

4.   the management of self – the ability to know who you are, what you believe, and why you do the things you do; displaying a sense of wisdom

5.   the management of paradox – the ability to bring together ideas that seem to be at odds with each other; bringing together an emphasis on rigorous standards without imposing standardization or compromising local discretion.

6.   the management of effectiveness – the ability to focus on the development of capacity in a school that allows it to improve performance over time; how school success is understood and measured

7.   the management of follow-up – the ability to take the vision, develop strategies and action plans, execute, and follow-up to see action plans become reality

8.   the management of responsibility – the internalization of values and

purposes that obligate people to meet their commitments to each other and

to the school (pp. 8 – 12).

Using these eight basic competencies would provide the basis for building a new

style of leadership. The work was completed from a base of shared values and vision

with the principal guiding the action.

<u>Characteristics – Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership</u>

The Institute for Catholic Educational Leadership (ICEL) at the University of San

Francisco developed a set of characteristics that they expect their graduates to model.

The five elements and abbreviated explanations are as follows:

1.   Open to growth – a visionary leader who articulates clearly the school's

philosophy and mission to the various publics

2.   Academically and professionally competent – a scholar who has

demonstrated academic competence in all coursework, a researcher

3.   A religious leader – a person who has an understanding of Catholic

education as an integral part of the Church's teaching mission

4.   A community builder – an astute and sensitive leader who is able to assess

the school climate and to foster a sense of community among all facets of

the school

5.   Committed to doing justice – an educator who integrates faith into culture

and life in order to promote justice and service to others (Traviss &

Shimabukuro, 1999, pp. 338 - 339).

The discussion around principal leadership transcends the public and private educational sector. A common set of characteristics was shared among the various identified sets of descriptors.

Sustainable Leadership – Hargreaves and Fink

Leading through a change process is only part of school reform. As Sergiovanni (2006) stated, "Leading improvement is at the center of the principal's leadership role as is sustaining learning. The two are inseparable. Schools succeed when they are able to show continuous improvement in achieving their learning purposes over time" (p. 349). Schools have been plagued with issues of sustainability. Veteran educators often reluctantly become involved with new activities because the initiative doesn't become fully implemented before a new trend comes along. Sergiovanni stressed the need not only for principals prepared to lead school improvement initiatives but also acquire skills necessary for guiding the sustainability of the initiative.

Hargreaves and Fink (2004) described principles of sustainable leadership. Their Seven Principles of Sustainable Leadership are described as follows:

1. Sustainable Leadership Matters – learning that engages students intellectually, socially, and emotionally, going beyond temporary gains in achievement scores to create lasting, meaningful improvements in learning.

2. Sustainable Leadership Lasts – sustainable leadership means planning and preparing for succession – not as an afterthought, but from the first day of a leader's appointment.

3.   Sustainable Leadership Spreads – ensuring that others share and help
develop the vision, distributing leadership throughout the school's
professional community so others can carry the torch after the principal is
gone.

4.   Sustainable Leadership is Socially Just – sustainable leadership benefits
all students and schools – not just a few at the expense of the rest.

5.   Sustainable Leadership is Resourceful – systems provide intrinsic rewards
and extrinsic incentives that attract and retain the best and brightest of the
leadership pool and provide time and opportunity for leaders to network,
learn from and support one another, and coach and mentor their
successors.

6.   Successful Leadership Promotes Diversity – promoters cultivate and re-
create an environment that has the capacity to stimulate continuous
improvement on a broad front, enable people to adapt to and prosper in
their increasingly complex environments.

7.   Sustainability Leadership is Activist – leaders engage in local and
community networks to form alliances related to policy and
communication (p. 9 – 13).

Sustainability is an important factor in working with school reform.
Understanding leadership within the context of change AND sustainability is essential for
reform leaders.

Dimensions and Levels of Behavior – Leithwood and Montgomery

In describing the effectiveness of principal's behavior, Leithwood and Montgomery (1986) identified four dimensions of behavior each with four levels of performance. The four dimensions of behavior are highlighted as follows:

- Decision making – skilled use of multiple forms; matches form to setting and works toward high levels of participation

- Goals – selected from multiple public sources; highly ambitious for all students, transformed into short term goals for planning

- Factors – attempted to influence all factors bearing on achievement; expectations within factors are specific

- Strategies – used a wide variety of strategies; criteria for choice include goals, factors, context and perceived obstacles. (pp. 18 – 19).

Each of the dimensions was defined with levels of achievement, with the lowest level assigned the designation of administrator, the second level was humanitarian, the third level was program manager, and the fourth or highest level was systematic problem solver. Leithwood and Montgomery (1986) related the higher the level of principal behavior with a more effective school. Also, the higher the level, the more complex the demands and behaviors for the principal became.

Interdependent Roles – Rallis and Goldring

In describing the changing leadership roles for principals, Rallis and Goldring (2000) identified six interdependent roles. Rallis and Goldring (2000) stated principals were leaders "because they are facilitators, balancers, flag bearers and bridgers, and

inquirers" (p. 135). A brief description of the changing leadership roles is provided below.

- The facilitator – the facilitator motivates, coordinates, and legitimizes the work of their teachers; enables others to act and legitimizes their action; the enabler of internal leadership

- The balancer – the principal of a dynamic school balances autonomy for the school with influence and control from other systems; time is spent communicating – listening, translating, informing, and filtering

- The flag bearer and bridger – links the school to the external environment; the principal carries the message to the community in which the school lives; communicates and builds relationships with community constituencies

- The inquirer – principals–in–charge question where their schools have gone, where they are going, and their progress in getting there; open-minded and willing to surface and address weaknesses to find answers and support strengths; self-critique and critique of other programs

- The learner – the role of inquirer involves being a learner; continual learning and reflection in addition to action

- The leader – principals in charge of a dynamic school must attend to more constituencies; permeable boundaries between the dynamic school and the environment (pp. 135 – 140).

The work of Leithwood and Montgomery (1986) looked at the relationship between the principal's perception of the complexity of the job and the principal's level

of operation. As principals begin to view their job with greater degrees of complexity, they operate at higher levels of performance – thus more effective schools.

Leadership as Responsibilities – Marzano, Waters, and McNulty

Research has referred to principal leadership in terms of characteristics of behavior such as clearly defined vision or strong communication skills. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) completed a meta-analysis on research based on principal leadership. From their work, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) identified 21 responsibilities that would define an effective school leader. The 21 responsibilities are as follows:

1. Affirmation – the extent to which the school leader recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failures

2. Change Agent – the leader's disposition to challenge the status quo

3. Contingent Rewards – the extent to which the leader recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments

4. Communication – the extent to which the school leader establishes strong lines of communication with and between teachers and students

5. Culture – an effective leader builds a culture that positively influences teachers, who, in turn, positively influence students

6. Discipline – protecting teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their instructional time or focus

7. Flexibility – extent to which leaders adapt their leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and are comfortable with dissent

8. Focus – extent to which the leader establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention

9. Ideals/Beliefs – possessing well-defined beliefs about schools, teaching, and learning

10. Input – extent to which the school leader involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions sand policies

11. Intellectual Stimulation – the extent to which the school leader ensures that faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices regarding effective schooling and makes discussions of those theories and practices a regular aspect of the school's culture

12. Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment – the extent to which the principal is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment activities at the classroom level

13. Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment – the extent to which the leader is aware of best practices in these domains

14. Monitoring/Evaluating – the extent to which the leader monitors the effectiveness of school practices in terms of their impact on student achievement

15. Optimizer – the extent to which the leader inspires others and is the driving force when implementing a challenging innovation

16. Order – the extent to which the leader establishes a set of standard operating principles and routines

17.   Outreach – the extent to which the leader is an advocate and a spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders

18.   Relationships – the extent the school leader demonstrates an awareness of the personal lives of teachers and staff

19.   Resources – the extent to which the leader provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their duties

20.   Situational Awareness – leaders' awareness of the details and the undercurrents regarding the functioning of the school and their use of this information to address current and potential problems

21.   Visibility – the extent to which the school leader has contact and interacts with teachers, students, and parents (pp. 41 – 61)

According to Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), the meta-analysis identified the 21 responsibilities not only as being important leadership characteristics but also as having a "significant relationships with student achievement" (p. 64).

In addition to identifying the 21 responsibilities, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) analyzed how the responsibilities relate to one another. In evaluating the factor analysis, the researchers found that "the leadership supporting an innovation must be consistent with the order of magnitude of the change represented by that innovation" (p. 66). First-order and second-order change were identified as the categories to distinguish the complexity of change. First-order change was gradual and incremental, the actions that would typically be considered the next step in the process. "Second-order change is

anything but incremental" according to Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005, p. 66). If first-order change was considered tinkering around the edges, second-order change was a total redesign. In relating the 21 responsibilities to first and second-order change, the researchers found that all 21 responsibilities were identified in first-order change. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) found that seven of the 21 responsibilities related to second-order change. The seven responsibilities were as follows:

1.   Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

2.   Optimizer

3.   Intellectual Stimulation

4.   Change Agent

5.   Monitoring/Evaluating

6.   Flexibility

7.   Ideals/Beliefs (p. 70).

The seven responsibilities of second-order change were evident only in the context of action. Second-order change was not based on abstract work or creative talk. Another key point related to second-order change was the negative impact it had on four of the 21 responsibilities. The four responsibilities negatively impacted by second-order change were Culture, Communication, Order, and Input (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty 2005, p. 73).

<u>Shared Characteristics</u>

In reviewing the current literature, multiple lists of essential qualities were identified. It would be very difficult for one individual to demonstrate each of these

qualities as identified by various authors and agencies. This section of the literature review focused on common themes that emerged from the literature review.

<u>Visionary Leadership</u>

Several authors (Covey, 1989; Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2003; O'Hanlon & Clifton, 2004; and Sousa, 2003) identified that high school principals must provide visionary leadership for their schools. O'Hanlon and Clifton (2004) asked an essential question for defining characteristics of high school principals when stating, "What guides the work of the effective principal? Vision. Effective principals are very clear about the mission of their schools" (p. 29). The vision provides a foundation, or basis on which to ground decisions and actions related to the learning environment. When describing great leaders, Sousa (2003) stated, "Leaders need to determine where they want the organization to go and how they will get it there. To know where they are headed, leaders must analyze, assess, plan, implement, and evaluate" (p. 9). According to Cunningham and Cordeiro (2003) a clear vision was essential in guiding the skill development process and building schools to educate students for the twenty-first century. They stated, "Without a strong vision of what great twenty-first century schools look like, it is highly unlikely that capacity-building efforts will have much impact on classrooms, schools, or students. Capacity and vision must proceed hand in hand if we are to achieve any level of success" (p. 58).

The concept of vision does not operate in isolation of other important leadership characteristics. As O'Hanlon and Clifton (2004) described,

> An important strength of effective principals is their ability to be visionary about what their schools can be. This vision focuses on helping students succeed as

learners. These principals are able to involve staff and students in this vision in a way that both incorporates their thinking and provides direction for action. Turning the vision into reality is the hallmark of success for the principal (p. 37).

Hughes (1999) also supported the significance of vision when stating, "Leaders have a vision-a sense of what might be and what ought to be; a decided and advertised point of view; a point of view that others know about. Leaders also have a plan-a design-about how to get there" (p. 19). These authors supported the idea that vision does not stand in isolation but is directly tied to an action plan and other essential characteristics of effective leaders.

The visionary principal must also incorporate the characteristics of collaboration and communication to fully implement a dynamic vision. Cunningham and Cordeiro (2003) also related the principal's skills in providing visionary leadership to the characteristic of guiding through collaborative leadership. They stated, "Educational leaders need to build direction, alignment, and a culture of visionaries to encourage risk taking and experimentation, to set the pace, and to lead by example. Leaders must focus on planning, effective innovation, the classroom, student learning, and the twenty-first century" (p. 76).

Collaborative Leadership

Collaborative leadership was another important characteristic of high school principals that was identified by several authors. In connecting high school reform recommendations, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in the publication *Breaking Ranks II* (BRII; 2004), identified collaborative leadership/professional learning communities as one of the three core areas on which to

focus for high school reform. The vision was the direction, but it offered little value if there were no action plans to follow. BRII (2004) made this point, "interpreting the comprehensive changes called for by *Breaking Ranks* as an opportunity for single-minded leadership will undoubtedly undermine reform efforts" (p. 21). Comprehensive school reform is a very complex, dynamic process that requires the engagement of the entire school community. It is through strong leadership that capacity among school leaders may be built to move forward on the reform initiatives. The principal that models strong leadership, quality collaboration and community building is developing the culture for the reinvention process.

Characteristics of collaborative leadership in a high school principal are important for several reasons. As Fullan (2003) described, "The pipeline of leadership is crucial. You cannot have highly effective principals unless there is distributive leadership throughout the school. Indeed, fostering leadership at many levels is one of the principal's main roles" (p. 24). Covey (1989) would describe this idea of building capacity for collaborative leadership as the Win/Win paradigm. He stated, "Win/Win means that agreements or solutions are mutually beneficial, mutually satisfying. With a Win/Win solution, all parties feel good about the decision and feel committed to the action plan" (p. 207). Building a collaborative e culture committed to engaging an action plan is very important as schools work on high school reform.

Collaborative leadership was also important to build sustainability into the reform process. BRII discussed this rationale for collaborative leadership by stating, "Reform driven solely by the principal is not only less likely to succeed, but also less likely to

provide long-term results" (2004, p. 21). Hughes (1999) tied vision and collaboration together when stating, "Successful principals get goal consensus by working with the staff to establish a collective vision of what the school might become and, more importantly, a vision of what each student might become" (p. 17). Collaborative leadership is needed to draw upon the full range of expertise and passion for providing student quality programs from among the teachers, staff, students, and community.

From a purely pragmatic position, collaborative leadership is necessary from the shear volume of work that emerges from the school reform activities. One principal-leader will most likely not have the time or energy to bring to fruition the level of change needed for high school reform. Also, from the practical perspective, principals are accepting new professional opportunities and may not be in the same community to see the action plans through to completion. BRII (2004) discussed this concern,

> Retirements within the profession and a dearth of people seeking to take on the complex and demanding responsibilities of the principalship have produced a shortage of highly qualified principals in some areas. This shortage, and various accountability adjustments, have increased the mobility of some principals and put additional strain on reforms and requiring continuity (p. 21).

A collaborative team is needed to carry forward the vision and mission established by this learning community, and develop a sense of sustainability within the school community. Reform activities that are driven by one leader may lose momentum if that leader moves to another position or leaves the institution. BRII (2004) discussed this issue, "reform driven solely by the principal is not only less likely to succeed, but also less likely to provide long-term results" (p. 21). Another pragmatic rationale for collaborative leadership was the shear volume of work required with high school reform.

Collaborative leadership is important to build and enhance the skill level among faculty, staff, students, and community members to support the high school reform process. Cunningham and Cordeiro (2003) summarized this essential element when they stated, "no educational improvements will occur if an organization has not built in the capacity to change. To succeed, the people in it must use a great deal of care to create a culture and approach that motivates and supports participants" (p. 58). Cunningham and Cordeiro went on to discuss basic principles of learning that included a school culture that was "grounded in collaborative inquiry" (p. 55). A skill of establishing and nurturing a collaborative learning community is important to the work of high school principals working in reforming high schools.

Relationship Building Leadership

Another characteristic identified as important for high school principals was relationship building. O'Hanlon and Clifton described the relationships building responsibilities of a principal when they stated, "Most of the principal's job is dealing with relationships" (2004, p. 43). As O'Hanlon and Clifton (2004) stated, "Building relationships with students is a key element in the effective principal's commitment" (p. 40). They went on to reiterate the point that schools should be student focused and through these student-principal relationships the administrator keeps in touch with student concerns and issues. O'Hanlon and Clifton (2004) supported this point when stating, "The number one concern of the effective principal is the students" (p. 40).

The faculty and staff are another group of individuals with which the effective principal builds relationships. O'Hanlon and Clifton described this commitment to teachers,

> The effective principal also has a strong commitment to the teachers and other staff of her school. Effective principals believe that the single most important thing they do is hire the right people . . . In some ways teachers and other staff are the principal's students. She must build a strong relationship with them and continue to provide support and training for them (2004, p. 41).

School relationships with the community are needed to support success for students. As Seifert and Vornberg (2002) stated, "The principal must work to engage the public, which entails working with families, community organizations, and other agencies" (p. 257). Parents and teachers have the same goal for our youth, to support student learning and success. This is not always perceived to be the situation and relationships become strained. As schools become more engaged with the reform process it is critical that all stakeholder groups become engaged. The role of the principal will be to encourage community participation. Seifert and Vornberg (2002) supported this concept when stating, "Coupled with a rapidly changing society, it is paramount that schools develop real partnerships with all of the stakeholders in the community. The process of developing these coalitions is dependent on the context of the community; the goal remains the same: the building of a stronger school through the external support of the community" (p. 257).

Effective Communication

Another commonly identified characteristic for successful high school principals is effective communication. Schumaker and Sommers (2001) described the significance

for communication, "it all starts with communication – administrators cannot expect to be effective if they cannot communicate what they want and how they want it done in a way that encourages others to listen and act" (p. 1). Achilles, Keedy & High (as found in Hughes, 1999) supported the importance of communication when stating, "The effective principal is a communication center for the education hub" (p. 43). Others also identified communication as an essential skill (Creighton, 2005; Donaldson, 1991; Fullan, 2003; and Reina & Reina, 1999). "Communication is the most important skill in life" according to Covey (1989, p. 237). All aspects of communication were identified, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills as being essential characteristics for working collaboratively in improving instruction for students. Each of these skills was identified as necessary for working collaboratively with all stakeholders in school community.

Covey (1989) and Creighton (2005) emphasized the importance of listening skills for effective leadership. Creighton (2005) shared the observation that "I cannot recall an image or memory of an effective school leader who did not have this very noticeable ability to listen before making decisions" (p. 71). Both authors discussed how important listening was to genuine communication yet how little preparation or practice most leaders received in learning this skill. Covey (1989) referred to "empathic listening" as listening with the intent to truly understand. Communication skills were important characteristics of an effective principal.

In the area of communication, not only were the actions of communication identified as important characteristics of principals but also the resulting cultural

characteristics related to sound communication. Reina and Reina (1999) and Fullan (2003) identified communication trust as directly tied to communication because it involved providing accurate information, engaging in positive and negative feedback, respecting confidential information, and participating in a free exchange of ideas and thoughts. The art of communication did not exist in isolation but provided a cornerstone for establishing trust within a community. These authors related the principals' skills in the area of communication as a building block to establishing trust and other relational skills.

Conclusion

The review of literature provided a brief historical background on the evolution of high schools and highlighted corresponding expectations of the principal. A visual model summarized these key elements of a traditional high school principal. Several educational leadership theories were reviewed to provide background information for this research study. Current literature identifying qualities for reform leadership were also reviewed. Common strands of leadership characteristics were identified from the literature discussing the qualities of principals working to bring about reform. This literature review was conducted to provide background information for the researcher but not to limit the qualitative approach to this research project.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was identifying behavioral characteristics of high school principals providing leadership in reforming Iowa high schools. Two high schools were selected for participation in this study based on active participation with a nationally recognized high school reform initiative focused on improved student learning and preparation for options in post-secondary life. Two high school principals, ten high school teachers, and the direct supervisor of each principal participated in individual interviews for this study. Teachers with varying degrees of teaching experience, content expertise, and years of experience working with the specific high school administrator were selected for the interviews.

The Research Problem

The basic research problem for this study was: "Identifying the behavioral characteristics of high school principals providing leadership in reforming Iowa high schools."

The Structure of the Study

For this study, interview methods were used to identify behavioral characteristics of high school principals providing leadership in reforming Iowa high schools. Teachers, principals, and principal's supervisors were interviewed to identify characteristics and behaviors in high school administrators that will lead to school change. The semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face at an onsite school location. The

participant selected the specific school site for the interview. The interview format provided an opportunity for teachers and administrators to identify skills valued in successful high school principals working in a changing environment.

<div align="center">Site Selection</div>

Two school sites were selected for this study. As stated in Chapter II, as schools reform and change there will be a need for a new style of leadership to guide the change process. This leadership will require a style of leadership that is different from the traditional model. The schools were chosen based on two main criteria. The first criterion was that the high school must have participated in and were continuing to participate in a nationally recognized high school reform program for two years. Both schools were implementing *High Schools That Work*™ (HSTW) and/or Achieving Via Individual Determination (AVID) high school reform programs, attending HSTW and/or AVID conferences, participating with HSTW and/or AVID professional development, and working with representatives from the respective initiatives. An Iowa Department of Education consultant recommended NRHS and SRHS because of the level of participation and engagement with the various elements of HSTW and AVID. The consultant had been involved for eight years with comprehensive school reform initiatives at a state and national level, including serving as a member of technical assistance teams providing direction to schools implementing various reform initiatives. The second criterion stated that the current high school principal has held the position as high school principal in the respective school for a minimum of three years. The

principal would have been involved in the selection of the specific reform initiative as well as the implementation of the reform program.

<u>North Roads Community Schools</u>

North Roads Community Schools (NRCS) was selected as a participation site for this research project because of the implementation of *High Schools That Work*™ (HSTW), a nationally recognized high school reform program. North Roads High School (NRHS) has been involved with HSTW for two years

HSTW was an example of a nationally recognized high school reform program. HSTW was developed by the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) as a comprehensive school improvement activity to enhance student learning. HSTW provided schools a framework to guide school improvement activities that included Goals, Key Practices, and Key Conditions. The HSTW Goals were as follows: raise the mathematics, science, communication, problem-solving, and technical achievement of more students to the national average and above; blend the essential content of core academic and career/technical studies; and development of policies and leadership initiatives to sustain school improvement activities (SREB, 2003). The SREB developed the following five HSTW Key Conditions:

1.   organization structure and process for ongoing school improvement involving administrators and teachers.

2.   leadership to improve student learning that utilizes a leadership team including the principal, assistant principal(s), and teachers leaders

3.   commitment from the school board to support a more demanding and rigorous curriculum

4.   superintendent and school board that support the reform initiatives with the resources, including professional development, to make the necessary changes

5.   superintendent and school board that support the necessary changes including flexible schedule changes where time becomes the variable and learning the constant (SREB, 2003)

The HSTW program identified ten Key Practices that contributed to the framework for guiding comprehensive school improvement and enhanced student learning. The Key Practices are as follows:

1.   high expectations – motivate and encourage students to meet high expectations tied to coursework

2.   program of study – each student is required to complete challenging academic core of study

3.   academic studies – students are challenged to learn college-preparatory curriculum in real world situations

4.   career/technical studies – expand student access to intellectually challenging career and technical programs that emphasize higher order thinking, inquiry based and problem-solving skills

5.   work-based learning – challenging in-school coursework is integrated with work-based learning opportunities

6. teachers working together – teams of teachers work in cross-disciplinary groups to offer integrated learning opportunities for each student

7. students actively engaged – students are engaged in research-based instruction strategies

8. guidance – students and families are involved in an advisory program that focuses on relationship development, goal setting, and career planning

9. extra help – students are provided a scaffold of structured assistance to support success in academically challenging offerings

10. culture of continuous improvement – data is used to guide ongoing program evaluation (SREB, 2003).

North Roads Community School District (NRCS) was located in a midsized Iowa community. NRCS had a school enrollment of approximately 1,100 students, k – 12. The school served two separate communities, with a population of approximately 4,700 in the larger city. An elementary building was located in each community with a separate junior high and high school building located in North Roads. There were approximately 400 students attending the high school. There were forty-one percent of the students eligible for free and reduced lunches and a minority population of two percent.

South Roads Community Schools

The second site selected was South Roads Community School District (SRCS). South Roads had been involved with implementing HSTW and was implementing Achieving Via Individual Determination (AVID). AVID was also a nationally recognized high school reform framework.

AVID programs were described as "a philosophy: Hold students accountable to the highest standards, provide academic and social support, and they will rise to the challenge" (AVID, 2006). The AVID program was developed to provide students the academic structure to acquire the skills for four-year college eligibility. The target audience for an AVID program was the student found in the academic middle, the B, C, and D student. This student population was selected because this group was frequently overlooked or determined ineligible for four-year college admission. The students selected for the AVID program were often the first generation in their family to attend college, the struggling English language learner, or from a low-income level family. The AVID program provided the structure for enrolling students in academically challenging courses and the necessary supports necessary for academic success.

There were eleven AVID Program Essentials for schools electing to implement this innovative model. The eleven program essentials were identified as follows:

1. AVID student selection process identified students in the academic middle who would benefit from the support and college preparatory offerings

2. AVID program participants, both students and staff, voluntarily participate

3. The school system must be committed to full implementation of the program including necessary resources

4. AVID students must be enrolled in academically challenging courses that meet admission requirements for four-year college enrollment

5. A rigorous writing curriculum is the foundation for the AVID elective course

6.   Inquiry based instruction is the core instructional approach for the AVID elective course

7.   Collaboration is the foundation for instruction in the AVID classroom

8.   Adequate tutors and other supports assist in student success in the rigorous and academically challenging courses

9.   Multiple data sources and data points are utilized to monitor AVID program implementation, student progress, and program evaluation

10.   The district has committed to implement AVID program Implementation Essentials, to participate in AVID Certification, and to ongoing participation in AVID staff development.

11.   An active interdisciplinary site team collaborates on issues of student access t and success in rigorous college preparatory classes (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2002, pp. 3 - 9)

HSTW and AVID programs shared several common elements. Both programs were focused on establishing academic expectations for each student as well as the support structures needed for student success. Both programs described preparing students to have the skills necessary for post secondary educational options. They both also identified making data driven decisions for guiding student success and program evaluation. Broad school-wide support from the administration and board was another shared component from both programs. HSTW and AVID included collaboration among school personnel and parent partnerships as essential elements. Both programs also maintained a student focus as the guiding value that drove program development.

The second school, South Roads Community Schools (SRCS), was located in a community of approximately 10,100 residents. SRCS educated approximately 2,000 students, k – 12, with approximately 640 in the high school. In grades 7 – 12, there are approximately 54% Caucasian, 33% Hispanic, 12% Asian, and 1% other ethnics. (data from the South Roads Community School District 2004 – 2005 Annual Progress Report).

<div align="center">Participants</div>

Seven educators were interviewed at each site, the high school principal, the principal's direct supervisor, and five teachers. In both schools the principal's direct supervisor was the superintendent of the school district. The selection of the individual teachers was conducted in a manner to respect his or her individual confidentiality. The teachers were selected from a list that identified the teacher's specific content area of teaching and years of teaching experience in the respective school. One teacher in each school was to have taught in the respective school for less than three full years. The teachers new to the district were selected to see if there were any differences in the their perceptions because they were new to the school. The teacher in each school with less than three years of teaching experience was selected first because there were only a few teachers that met this criterion. Because the researcher placed a priority on including a broad cross section of content areas, the next step was to look at areas of teaching while maintaining a gender balance. There was to be a balance between career and technical education (CTE), core academic area, the arts, and special education teachers. Career and Technical Education teachers might teach family and consumer sciences, industrial technology, business education, marketing education, agriculture education, or health

occupation. The core area teachers might teach mathematics, science, social studies, or language arts. The arts teachers might include art education, theatre, choral music, orchestra, or instrumental music. There was to be no more than two teachers of any category in each school interviewed.

Once the researcher selected the five teachers in each high school, the school secretary was contacted. She was asked to maintain the confidentiality of the list and place a note in each of the identified teachers' mailbox requesting they contact the researcher. Each of the teachers contacted the researcher to arrange the specific time and location for the interview. Two teachers selected an after school interview and the others selected a time during the school day when they were not directly responsible for students. The principal and superintendent in each school were contacted directly by the researcher to arrange the interview. The length of time for an individual interview ranged from approximately forty-five to seventy-five minutes.

The researcher did not know any of the principals, teachers, or one superintendent prior to meeting them at the time of the interview. The researcher served on a state level educational committee with one of the superintendents so had previously met this participant on a professional level.

The participants represented a range of subject content areas and years of experience as educators. To provide confidentiality the names and descriptors of the participants have been changed. The names of the educators from North Roads School District began with the letters, "A," "B," "C," "D," "E," "F," and "G", Abby, Bob, Carol, Deb, Ely, Floyd, and Gerry. The names of the educators from South Roads School

District began with the letters, "L," "M," "N," "O," "P," "Q," and "R", Lori, Monte, Natalie, Owen, Peter, Quinton, and Rick.

Participants at North Roads Community Schools

Abby, (Career and Technical Education). Abby was a family and consumer science teacher in her third year of teaching at North Roads High School (NRHS). She met the criterion of the teacher with less than three years of experience. The interview with Abby was conducted in an office area close to her classroom. She served as a committee member of the school's reading improvement committee. Abby described NRHS as a place where "we are always, always changing. If there is something out there new that we think would benefit students we are going to try for it. We are a tightly knit community. If there is an issue we bring it to the table and we don't have any trouble dealing with it."

Bob, (Core Area). Bob taught mathematics including a statistics course for upper level students and has been at NRHS for twelve years. Bob identified his tenure in teaching by stating, "I'm kind of an old fart from the teaching perspective." The interview with Bob was conducted in an office area close to the main high school office. He summarized his thoughts about change when he stated, "A lot of change can't happen because we are scared we might not be able to do this or that. We don't have to give up anything, we can change and get better." In describing the school culture, he stated, "I feel I've had some wonderful opportunities to have my voice heard."

Carol, (Arts). Carol has taught art for eighteen years at NRHS. The interview with Carol was conducted in a general high school conference room. Carol spoke

positively about change when she stated, "we have goals that are worthwhile goals in terms of progress and so I think that we have a lot of community support. We have a lot of potential for good change. I think that we probably have more support from the community than most districts."

Deb, (Special Education). Deb was a special education teacher engaged in co-teaching in multiple classrooms. She has taught for twenty-seven years at NRHS. The interview with Deb was conducted in a general high school conference room. She described her perspective on school-wide decision making when she stated, "on many issues we have as much input as we would like to share. . . . I feel that my opinions have always been look at and listened to. . . . I feel very comfortable bringing forth a new idea."

Ely, (Core Area). Ely taught life science/biology and coached for twenty-two years at NRHS. The interview with Ely was conducted in his science classroom. Many of his comments were related to coaching analogies. "You have to have a real clear vision. The analogy, it is like a new basketball coach. He has a vision. He knows what offense he is going to run and what defense he is going to run and the personnel they need to run it." Ely continued to describe NRHS when he stated, "the administration needs to have a vision. They need to know exactly what that vision is. What tools they need to implement it and what kind of people they need to make it happen."

Floyd, (Direct Supervisor). Floyd was the superintendent at NRCS, serving in his tenth year in that capacity. The interview with Floyd was conducted in his office at the central administration building. Floyd served on several state level committees with

several different educational organizations. In describing the high school, he stated, "it has been great seeing the faculty become more and more involved in the initiatives." Floyd identified the number of dual credit courses offerings and college credit students graduated from high school with as strengths of the high school.

Gerry, (Principal). Gerry has served for four years as the high school principal at NRHS. She was the counselor at NRHS prior to serving as high school principal. The interview with Gerry was conducted in the high school conference room. Gerry described the school culture by stating, "we have an administrative staff that works well together, from the superintendent to the principal to all building level people to technology staff to grounds people. We get along very well together. We all have similar philosophies." Gerry described the working climate at NRHS, "the new teachers have a voice. The teachers are really jumping on board with the HSTW. There are four teachers that have gone both summers to the national conference. They are really taking the lead in HSTW."

Participants at South Roads Community Schools

Lori, (Career and Technical Education). Lori was in her fourth year as the family and consumer sciences teacher at SRHS. The interview with Lori was conducted in her classroom. She returned to the classroom four years ago after spending several years away from teaching. Abby was very welcoming to the researcher and shared details of an upcoming fundraiser sponsored by the student group she advises. She described the school culture by stating, "we value diversity here. I think the students understand that we not only value diversity but that we care about them." She continued to talk about

how the high school faculty was "continually trying to better ourselves in terms of all the teachers thinking on the same page in terms of how we do things."

Monte, (Career and Technical Education). Monte was an industrial technology teacher with six years of teaching at SRHS. He was interviewed in his industrial technology classroom. In describing the strengths of South Roads High School (SRHS) Monte stated, "our strengths are that we are a real diverse school . . . the kids learn a lot from seeing some of the traditions in some of the other ethnic groups." He also stated, "I think communication in all these classes and all these things we are doing is the most important thing we've got."

Natalie, (Core Area). Natalie was a biology teacher at SRHS, in her second year of teaching. Natalie met the criterion of having taught for less than three years. She was interviewed in her science classroom. The strengths of SRHS that Natalie described were, "we are [have] a real close student teacher relationship . . . I pretty much know most of the students." Natalie continued to describe SRHS when she stated, "I think we have a great faculty." When prompted to identify why she felt SRHS had a great faculty, she stated, "just about trying new stuff. We are not shy to just sit down in some else's class and get new ideas. In my first year I thought it was kind of weird that there were other teachers sitting in my room. I thought it was kind of different. Teachers will stop or come in and ask my opinion about something. That is just great."

Owen, (Arts). Owen was a music teacher with twelve years of teaching experience at SRHS. He was interviewed in the office area adjoining the music classroom. He described SRHS as "very progressive. There are some traditions that are

maintained, but there is always the perspective that, not really in reinventing the wheel, but can we make it better." Owen continued to describe the faculty when he stated, "they are innovative as well."

Peter, (Core Area). Peter was a mathematics teacher at SRHS with twelve years of teaching experience. He was interviewed in a conference room located in close proximity to the mathematics classrooms. Peter described SRHS when he stated, "some of our strengths start with our faculty and staff. We have veteran staff who have taught quite a few years either in SRHS or in other schools. That provides cohesiveness. We know each other. We help out somebody that is new." Peter then described the SRHS students by stating, "our students know our expectations and they appreciate those . . . With our diverse population, our students work well together. They are accepting of each other."

Quinton, (Direct Supervisor). Quinton was the superintendent at SRCS, in his third year of service to the district. He was interviewed in the superintendent's office in the central administration building. When Quinton described the high school he stated, "the high school has a lot of options, class course work that gives the students a wide variety of things to choose from. Yet, we maintain a whole consistency of what we expect students to know and do when they are out of the school."

Rick, (Principal). Rick was the high school principal, in his sixteenth year in that capacity at SRHS. Rick was interviewed in the high school principal's office at SRHS. Rick identified "an atmosphere where everyone seems to get along pretty well" as one of the school's strengths. When asked to elaborate on how this type of atmosphere was

developed, he stated, "I think the main thing all along has been that expectations, and they are high expectations. Everybody knows what is expected of them." He continued to describe the school culture by stating, "we are in this together. Our day goes as everyone pitches in and makes it go."

<div align="center">Interview Protocol and Field Testing</div>

This study focused on the research problem, identifying the behavioral characteristics of high school principals providing leadership in reforming Iowa high schools. A flexible interview protocol was organized with open-ended statements to prompt responses from the participants. See Appendix B for the protocol. The protocol was developed and field-tested with three high school teachers. Each teacher was interviewed individually and then asked to analyze the order, content, and clarity of the questions. Two of the field-test teachers were uncertain about question #2 that sought the perspective of an individual teacher's role in developing the school's comprehensive school improvement plan (CSIP). Each stated they had not been directly involved in developing a school CSIP and did not know if most teachers would have been engaged in the planning of the CSIP. The third teacher had served on an advisory committee that provided input, but really felt there had minimal input from the teacher's perspective. This question was included in the interview because it was a way to check at what level within the district the teachers might have become involved in goal setting and long range district planning.

Questions #4 and #5 each had multiple sub-points. During the field test, each of the respondents answered more than one of the sub-points in the overall discussion. The

individual points were left in the specific questions to prompt the interviewer when meeting directly with the participant. During the field test, the researcher found that one prompt elicited responses that addressed multiple interview prompts. The order of prompts varied for each interview as determined by the participant's prior response. The researcher anticipated this fluid response order.

Three teachers were interviewed on the first day of conducting interviews. Following these interviews, the interviewer reflected on the interview protocol, teacher responses, and changes that would strength the remaining interviews. The first statements asking the teacher to identify strengths and weaknesses of their school was a positive way to begin the interview. Each teacher was very direct and enthusiastic in describing the school and the offerings for students. The most difficult questions to elicit teacher responses were the question about the CSIP and school governance. It was clear these questions needed to be slightly modified to gather the teacher's perceptions about the processes used in their school related to goal setting and decision-making. The questions were revised to ask the participants' to describe the high school's short and long-term goals, and if the teacher had a really exciting activity they would like to implement to describe how they would proceed. These minor editing changes clarified the questions during the interviews and eliminated participant uncertainty. The teachers and administrators responded openly to the other questions.

The University of Northern Iowa's Institutional Review Board granted permission to conduct this study. (See Appendix A). Permission was received from the North Roads Community School District (NRCS) and South Roads Community School Districts

(SRCS) to conduct this study with school personnel from the respective districts. The names of the schools, communities, and participants have been changed to protect the identity of the participants.

Data Collection

Data was collected through individual semi-structured interviews with each of the participants. The researcher conducted the interviews on-site at the respective schools. Appointments had been arranged prior to the actual interview with each of the participants.

The interviewer met individually with each of the participants conducting face-to-face interviews. Each interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes, while one lasted sixty minutes and another interview lasted seventy-five minutes in length. Participants agreed to be contacted by phone or email if the researcher requested any follow up responses. One follow up email was sent to one participant seeking clarification on a statement. At the respective school, the participant selected the location for the interview. The sites included classrooms, teacher offices, department conference rooms, superintendent offices, or general school conference room.

The interviewer audio recorded each of the interviews. In addition to the taping of the interview the researcher also wrote down notes on the individual interview protocol sheet. This provided an avenue for the researcher to process the information at the same time it was shared orally. The researcher noted possible follow up questions and other observation notes that might not have been reflected on the audiotape. The field notes also provided a checkpoint for the analysis of the audiotape and transcript.

The data was analyzed for themes that identified behavioral characteristics of high school principals providing leadership in reforming Iowa high schools.

Data Analysis

The Constant Comparative Analysis method was used to analyze the data for this research project. Henderson and Bialeschki described Constant Comparative analysis, "[this] technique is inductive like other forms of qualitative analysis, which means the patterns and themes emerge from the data rather than being imposed prior to data collection" (2002, p. 309). They identified four stages for the constant comparative process:

1. Reduce, code, and display the major themes or patterns that emerge.

2. Integrate the categories and compare them to one another and to the themes.

3. Delimit and refine the themes.

4. Provide examples from the data that show how the themes were derived (2002, pp. 309 – 310).

Data analysis followed these four stages. The first step in reducing, coding, and displaying the major themes or patterns include the transcript transcription, coding of descriptors, and displaying the patterns on separate charts. The second stage included comparing the initial patterns to generate themes shared between the educators in the two schools. The third stage included refining the themes by crosschecking identified principal behaviors with the themes, an analysis check with an experienced educator, and

validity check. The final stage in the data analysis was providing examples from the data

to show the source of the themes (Dieser, 2005). This step was completed as Chapter IV.

Initial Themes

The first step was to reduce, code and display the major themes or patterns. To

begin this process, the researcher transcribed the data from the audiotapes of the

individual interviews with the fourteen educators. This provided an opportunity to begin

the process of familiarization of the data. After the data had been transferred to print

format the researcher read each transcript and coded the individual participant's

comments. The first coding involved using a color-coding process to identify any general

descriptors of the principal. Once the general descriptors were coded, each coded item

was dealt with separately. The first descriptor was written on a large sheet of paper.

With each subsequent descriptor a decision was made to 1. add the coded descriptor to a

page with other related descriptors or 2. write the descriptor on new separate page. This

process was followed for each individual transcript to identify a list of initial descriptors

or themes. Initially, the researcher identified categories that emerged by each separate

school. The categories from the NRHS participants included the following: student

focused culture, the principal as a researcher/thinker, decisive, risk taker, communication,

student engagement, collaboration, shared philosophy, action planning for

implementation, vision/focus, creativity, interpersonal relationships, trust and honesty,

and high expectations. The initial categories from SRHS included the following:

decisive, vision and new ideas, interpersonal skills, commander, faculty leadership,

collaboration, value students, salesperson, communication, risk taking, leader of change, student focus, progressive, high expectations, ongoing learning, and shared governance.

The second step in the data analysis process was reflecting on the categories, comparing them to each other, and identifying themes. In comparing the categories for North Roads and South Roads high schools there was significant commonality. The following themes were identified following the synthesis of the categories: student focused culture, student focus, effective communication, decisive, having a vision and communicating the vision, vision and new ideas, communication skills, collaboration that would include seeking input from staff and students, collaboration and cooperation, risk taker, researcher/thinker, ongoing learning, and high expectations for all.

Table 1 provides a visual summary of the alignment with the initial categories and emerging themes identified in NRHS and SRHS. The initial themes were grouped horizontally by shared themes. In SRHS, the researcher also identified initial themes of value students, shared governance and faculty leadership.

Table 1.

Initial Major Themes by Individual School.

Researcher initial themes from NRHS	Researcher initial themes from SRHS
student focused culture	student focus
	value students
researcher/thinker	ongoing learning
decisive	decisive
	commander
risk taker	risk taker
communication	communication
collaboration	collaboration and cooperation
	shared governance
	faculty leadership
action planning for implementation	sales person
vision/focus	vision and new ideas
creativity	progressive
interpersonal relationships, trust and honesty	interpersonal skills
high expectations	high expectations

Refined Themes

 In analyzing the initial categories identified in the individual schools there

appeared to be common themes emerging. The next step in the analysis process involved

analyzing the initial categories from the individual schools to identify shared and distinct

themes. Several of the initial categories were combined and themes began to emerge.

In describing the Constant Comparison method of data analysis, Henderson and Bialeschki (2002) stated, "The technique [constant comparison] also may mean going to others (e.g., colleagues or respondents) to have them confirm that they see similar themes uncovered or that interpretations are correct" (p. 308). An experienced educator was asked to review sample transcripts to confirm that the themes identified by the researcher could be correct interpretations. The educator had worked as a teacher, Area Education Agency consultant, Breaking Ranks II trainer, and high school reform consultant over the past thirty-two years. The experienced educator was provided two transcripts from each school with the directions to identify common themes that would describe an effective principal. Table 2 listed the initial common themes identified by the researcher and the educator. There were minimal differences in the educator's coding of the individual transcripts from the two schools. All eight of common initial themes identified by the experienced educator were also identified in the list of common themes generated by the researcher. The researcher included five additional themes from the initial data analysis.

The researcher generated her list of themes from analyzing fourteen transcripts and the guest educator analyzed four transcripts. The difference in initial themes may have been identified from the complete data set. In analyzing the data, there were no notable differences in teacher comments based on content area of teaching or time of service in the respective school.

Table 2.

Initial Themes — Schools Combined

Researcher initial common themes from combined data	Educator initial common themes from combined data
student focus	student centered
value students	
ongoing learner	recognize the importance of staff development
decisive	
risk taker	risk takers - willing to risk to make things better
communicator	effective communicator
collaboration	collaboration
teachers involved in leadership	
action planning to implementation	
vision/seeks new ideas	vision and articulate that vision to others
creativity - progressive - willing to change	
interpersonal skills	respect for others
high expectations	high expectations of staff and students

Theme Crosscheck - Specific Behavior or Action Analysis

Following the identification of initial themes, another approach to coding the transcripts to analyze the data from another perspective was completed. The transcripts were reviewed and specific behaviors or actions of the principal were identified. The

individual behaviors or actions were then checked against the initial themes identified to determine if other themes should be added, if there were overlapping themes, if the initial themes could be condensed and/or expanded to more accurately reflect the data.

Identifying the behaviors or actions of the principals assisted in the confirmation of the emerging themes. A sample list of behaviors or actions included, "encourages faculty to 'try new stuff'," "listens to teacher ideas," "communicates with the community," "interacts with parents," "organized groups of teachers to form teams," "requests ideas from teachers," "thinks outside the box," "values creativity," and "makes decisions based on student needs." The written transcripts and any field notes completed during the interviews were used to complete this process. This analysis of the specific actions or behaviors of the principal resulted in combining several of the initial themes because the actions were appropriate in either theme category. Also, titles of themes were edited to more accurately reflect the data points in the themes.

Through this stage of analysis two other categories emerged. Through further analysis of the transcripts, parent participation and community involvement were identified as additional categories.

Leadership Themes

Three distinct, yet related themes emerged from the data analysis. The first theme identified characteristics of the principal, the skills and knowledge he or she provided to the school culture. This theme included sub-themes of "vision and new ideas, effective communicator, communicating decisions with supporting rationale, ongoing learning,

and interpersonal relationships including trust, honesty, and consistency in dealing with others."

The second theme that emerged was related to the behaviors of the principal; this theme was based on the behaviors of the principal in creating a positive school culture. This theme included sub-themes of "collaboration, mentoring, shared philosophy, engaging the community, involving parents, faculty leadership, seeking input from staff and students, and creating a sense of 'we' in the building."

The third theme was the principal possessed a philosophical value of wanting what was best for kids, a student driven system. This learner focused system included sub-themes of "creating a better place for students, student voice, success for each student, and personalization."

From further refinement of the themes and sub-themes three major elements and sub-elements describing leadership of the high school principal emerged. The elements were Essential Characteristics, Culture of Learning, and Student Focused System. From the data analysis, cross checking, and coding reliability processes, the following definitions of the elements and sub-elements were developed.

<u>Definitions of Leadership Themes</u>

<u>Essential Characteristics</u>

•<u>Visionary</u> – has a laser-like focus on students' needs and creative solutions to meet those needs. The principal clearly articulates this vision with various stakeholders. Identifies and develops action plans to implement the vision.

•<u>Effective Communicator</u> – listens, listens, and listens some more to the school's stakeholders. Responds in open and accepting manner to let others know his/her ideas have been heard. Exhibits positive speaking skills and verbally communicates in a professional manner with students, faculty, parents and community members. Writes newsletters and other print communications.

•<u>Risk Taker</u> – willing to try something new, willing to move forward and break from the traditional approach. The principal seeks new ideas and implements these strategies even if failure is a possibility.

•<u>Learner</u> – engages in ongoing learning, researches, and explores new ideas. Attends conferences, talks with colleagues about new ideas. Is a life-long learner, appreciates education and expects others to also enjoy learning.

•<u>Decision-maker</u> – willingly takes a stand on issues. The principal gathers data, seeks multiple perspectives, but states clearly what appears to be the best choice for the current group of students. Makes decisions even when full agreement may not be evident.

•<u>Relationship Builder</u> - builds interpersonal relationships within the school community, including students, teachers, parents, and community members. Models and expects others to also live by the core human values of honesty, trustworthiness, caring, and respect.

<u>Culture of Learning</u>

•<u>Facilitates a shared philosophy</u> – the principal and faculty target school improvement activities toward improving school life for students. It is clear that

decisions are made with the question of "how will this make things better for our students?" Current and new staff clearly understand that activities are focused on students. Teachers and administrators work to enhance this shared philosophy.

•Supports collaboration – the principal seeks and gathers input from staff and students. Stakeholders are engaged in the initiatives and activities. Faculty freely contribute perspectives on new ideas and attend conferences to seek new ideas. The principal embraces teacher leadership and a sense of cooperation in the environment.

•Establishes high expectations – the principal clearly establishes the anticipated behaviors of students, staff, and self. The principal describes what is expected of faculty and staff, and expects faculty to articulate high expectations for their students and well as him/herself

•Nurtures parent partnerships – the principal promotes relationships with parents. This category includes connections with parents that currently have students enrolled in the high school. Parents are encouraged to attend conferences and participate in planning the student's academic goals and post secondary plans. Technology offers parents new opportunities for communication and connections with the school and individual teachers and administrators.

•Encourages community engagement – the principal encourages community stakeholders to be involved with the school as well as the faculty, students and staff to reach out to the community. The community supports booster clubs for

band, athletic, or theatre; community members dine at the student run restaurant; and, students participate in community-based internships.

Student Focused System

•Student needs drive decisions- decisions are made with the reference point of making things better for students. The data for the students in the specific school is analyzed to determine students' needs. Programs and initiatives are selected based on the student data from the specific school. Examples include a literacy program implemented to target improving reading proficiency and the advisory program that was initiated to support academic success and post-secondary transitions.

•Student centered environment for each student – services and programs are offered that provide students opportunities to excel in multiple areas, including sports, music, drama, theatre, academic clubs. Adults provide positive role models and each student feels s(he) has an adult mentor in the school community. Examples of this include the advisor/advisee systems, multiple co-curricular offerings, and development of career goals and plans.

•Student voice – students have opportunities to express their opinions, ideas, and talents. Possible options identified in the data include participation in the student council, representation on teacher selection committees, individual career plans, advisory meetings to provide input on school course selection, general perceived availability of the principal for student conversation, and student surveys.

• Student options – a range of course offerings are available in career and technical, core academic areas, and the arts. Course offerings are provided to challenge the individual student's academic needs. Courses are available in conjunction with the local community college, on-line learning, and local private college as well English Language Learner (ELL) or the challenged learner. A range of co-curricular offerings are available that include sports, music, drama, speech, and various academic clubs.

<u>Coding Reliability</u>

To crosscheck the reliability of analysis with the identified themes, the researcher conducted two additional steps to ensure coding reliability. The first step involved the researcher meeting with a qualitative researcher to check the category selections, clarify the definitions of the elements and sub-elements, and review the alignment between data and category coding. The researcher selected twenty direct quotes from the fourteen original transcripts. A minimum of one quote was selected from each transcript to provide a broad cross-section of the data. The researcher provided the qualitative researcher copies of the selected quotes and an outline of the elements and sub-elements with brief descriptors of each element and sub-element. The qualitative researcher discussed the categories with the researcher, reviewed each transcript quote, and identified the sub-element(s) represented in each quote. With more than one sub-element in some of the quotes, the qualitative researcher and researcher coded the quotes the same in twenty out of twenty-three responses. As a result of this accuracy check the definitions

were expanded to include more specific details and examples that would align with the individual sub-element.

The second reliability check was conducted with a current high school principal. The high school principal was provided the same set of selected transcript quotes but also received an expanded and more detailed set of descriptors for each of the elements and sub-elements. The high school principal's coding matched twenty-two out of the twenty-three responses. One additional point of clarification resulted from the principal's discussion. It was recommended that for the sub-element of collaboration, the action descriptor more clearly indicate that the principal not only seeks, but also supports and encourages collaboration. The sub-element more accurately reflected the data that collaboration was an action item of the culture rather than passive.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Introduction

There was one research problem for this study – Identifying the behavioral

characteristics of high school principals providing leadership in reforming Iowa high

schools. The analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of the data resulted in the identification

of three overarching key elements of leadership for the effective principal in a twenty-

first century high school. The key elements of leadership defining an effective principal

were as follows: demonstrates Essential Characteristics, creates a Culture for Learning,

and values a Student Focused System. The Essential Characteristics included visionary,

effective communicator, risk taker, decision-maker, learner, and relationship builder.

The Student Focused System included sub-elements such as student centered

environment, student needs drive decisions, student voice, and student options. The

Culture for Learning included the sub-elements of collaboration, shared philosophy, high

expectations, parent partnerships, and community engagement. The Student Focused

System included sub-elements such as student centered environment, student voice, and

student options.

Essential Characteristics

The focus of this research study was to identify the behavioral characteristics of

high school principals providing leadership in reforming Iowa high schools. The data

from this study identified Essential Characteristics of the high school principal as one key

element of effective leadership. The Essential Characteristics included the following sub-

elements: visionary, effective communicator, risk taker, learner, decision maker, and relationship builder. The Essential Characteristics identify the specific qualities demonstrated by the effective principal.

Visionary

Visionary is an Essential Characteristic for the effective high school principal. This characteristic described the principal's ability to identify creative solutions to meet the needs of students. The visionary is an individual that looked for new ways to address the challenges the school had encountered. The visionary is not bound by existing parameters but thinks differently about the school's responsibilities to prepare students for living in a changing world. The visionary is not satisfied with the status quo, but he or she knows the world in changing and therefore the needs for students to live in that changing world will be different tomorrow than they are today or were yesterday. The visionary principal not only has a well developed vision but a plan of action on how to implement strategies to move toward the vision. The visionary defined an emerging vision for the Culture of Learning and clearly articulated that vision to the students, staff, parents, and community.

Peter, (mathematics teacher), described a visionary principal when he stated,

The principal for the twenty-first century must look in so many new areas – what is the computer going to do and other things I can't even think about for twenty years. Is our school calendar going to look different? Will we go to year round school? Somebody that has a vision and not just stuck in their little cubicle. They know what is coming, has their ears and eyes open. They would know the right time to implement it and make the decision for the right reasons.

Bob, (mathematics teacher), described a visionary principal when he stated, "She [principal] gives the big picture and for me she does this very well. See the big picture

and a different kind of picture. . . . There is a vision out there that I think we can have a really different kind of school. . . . I think we need to have some sort of visionary that enlightens us and say hey, try this." Ely, (science teacher), stated, "There has to be an overall vision. You have to have a real clear vision. The administration needs to have a vision. They need to know exactly what that a vision is. What tools they need to implement it and what kind of people they need to make it happen." Peter, (mathematics teacher), stated, "our current administration is willing to look at new things. Even if it is just a single teacher's voice of doing something different than has been done before."

In describing the ideal principal of the twenty-first century, Ely, (science teacher), stated it is someone that "brings that vision forth and maintains the vision." Monte, (industrial technology teacher), described the effective principal by stating, "he [principal] has a real clear vision on where this school needs to go. He has got a real clear vision of what the problems are that we need to solve. I think he has a real good vision on some of the ways he plans on doing that and then he lets us give our input on how the little things – like how and when." Lori, (family and consumer sciences teacher), described the visionary leader, "he [principal] wants to get, sometimes to get outside the book. He wants to think outside the box. I think he values that creativity."

The participants described the importance of having a clear vision but also developing the action plan to implement the vision. Carol, (art teacher), described this perspective when she stated, "They [effective principals] needs to be able to articulate what their vision is so people can understand where they are going." Monte, (industrial

technology teacher), stated, "I think he is real good at having ideas for some of the solutions. Not that all of the ideas are going to work."

Monte, (industrial technology teacher), described Rick's, (principal's), planning of professional development activities while maintaining a vision when he stated,

> Rick has to weed out or choose the ones that fit our particular problems the best. He has been real good at relating something we did four years ago to what we did two years ago to what we are doing this year. It used to be we tried this, didn't like and dropped it. For the six years I've been here, it seems that I can relate what we've been doing to one goal, our vision.

In offering advice to a new principal of the twenty-first century, Gerry, (principal), offered the following advice,

> Have a vision about what you want the school to be. Have a clear vision about what you want the HS to be down the road. Identify the faculty that has that similar vision. Those people working with you; don't worry about those that don't see that vision or don't want that. You can spend an awful lot of time worrying about the people that are not on board. You take the people that are on board with and move forward and those that see the light. Don't worry about those that don't, they will either see the light or go somewhere else. It may take some people a little time to see the vision.

Floyd, (superintendent), offered this advice about formulating a vision, "It is important to have a vision, a clear image, a goal of where the process needs to go and communicate this clearly to the teachers and others. You also have to have the stick-to-itiveness to stay with it. You need to create a vision that is above and beyond the current reality. It means getting the staff to look beyond 'good'."

Effective Communicator

An effective communicator was another Essential Characteristics for the effective principal. An effective communicator utilized skills in all areas of communication

including listening, speaking, writing as well as the unspoken message. Listening skills were repeatedly identified as an important communication skill that was observed in the effective principal. The effective communicator responded in an open and accepting manner to let others know his/her ideas have been heard. The effective communicator exhibited positive speaking skills and verbally communicated in a professional manner with students, faculty, parents, and community members. Effective communication was also conducted through the written format of newsletters and other print communications.

Peter, (mathematics teacher), described the importance of communication by stating,

> Communication skills are very important. Talk to everybody, everybody! Let everybody have some kind of input, even if you don't take their idea. Don't just talk to teachers, talk to secretaries, cooks, janitors, [private college] faculty, parents, even if they don't have kids in school. Don't exclude people. If you don't know who to talk to get help to find out. Brainstorm with others.

The teachers and administrators identified the importance of communicating with multiple stakeholders. Carol, (art teacher), supported this point when she stated, "Communication with teachers and who are going to be decision makers. Who are you going to look to for leadership, not only from faculty, but from students and parents. That communication end of things on who are you going to listen to and how are you getting your ideas across." When Deb, (special educator), was asked to identify the important characteristics of the high school principal, she responded, "Communication is huge."

Listen, listen, listen was a common message from several participants. Bob, (mathematics teacher), stated, "She [principal] is easy to talk to. She listens to our ideas

and stuff." Carol, (art teacher), described the effective principal as someone who "listens all around and is able to listen to everybody and then come up with the plan. People need to feel like they are being listened to." Deb, (special educator), described the principal when she stated, "she listens very well." Lori, (family and consumer science teacher), stated, "Mr. Z. [principal] is very open to listening to the teachers." Peter, (mathematics teacher), stated, "The effective principal is willing to listen first and not say no first." He also stated, "the principal likes to listen to all of us." Owen, (music teacher), continued the theme of listening when he stated, "the principal here will listen. I mean he will listen. If you have an idea, he will listen and if he can incorporate it he will and credit given for those that do bring about that." Owen also stated, "we give our views to him and he listens and then he gives his back. He is a good listener and he tries to find words on how it [a good idea] should be led, focused, the direction it should go." Monte, (industrial technology teacher), stated, "we can go to Rick [principal] and he will gladly listen to our gripes and concerns and if nothing else put it out over our emails or the internet and get feedback that way. I'd say Rick's door is open if you need to talk to him."

In addition to listening, Gerry, (principal), recommended that principals should "ask the right questions, listening beyond the words." Peter, (mathematics teacher), identified communication goes beyond words when he stated, "the principal needs to be extra careful in their approach because they may be the first person a new person in town may encounter. They can set the tone for the whole school, they need to be the model."

Owen, (music teacher), summarized his thoughts, "One thing I really like is that we always get a chance to express ourselves."

Peter, (mathematics teacher), identified another factor related to communication when he stated, "the principal must communicate with the staff to get the information out, from the minute to the biggest. Tell us in a timely fashion so people know what is going on." Monte, (industrial technology teacher), summarized his thoughts about communication when he stated, "I think communication in all these classes [professional development activities] and all these things we are doing is the most important thing we've got."

Risk Taker

Risk taker was another Essential Characteristic identified for the effective principal. A risk taker was a principal that willingly tried something new and moved forward in the reform activities. They were prepared to move from traditions to new initiatives that were more clearly focused on future learning needs of students. The risk taker took a chance on failure, and was willing to fail as long as failing meant the attempted activity had been intended to meet the needs of students. The risk taker learned from failures and used that data to take another risk. The risk taker accepted the challenge of creating the Culture of Learning and supporting others in risk taking adventures.

In describing the principal, Carol, (art teacher), stated,

I think you have to be a risk taker. If most of the time you stay on that safe side where people don't see it as risky, you are staying right where you were before.

You have to be willing to put yourself out there. I think you have to be a little willing to fail, too, not to just abandon it, but to keep tweaking it. If you don't know something or believe something is good for the school, you have to take a risk to do it and stick with it long enough to see it through. I think most of the time they are right on, but don't stick with it, they go 'oh that didn't work,' we have to do something else.

Bob, (mathematics teacher), described failure as part of risk taking when he stated, "If you try something different and it fails, so what. Be a little bit risky about trying something different. It might open up a whole new area that could lead to something else. I would like to see the current principal take more risks.

Carol, (art teacher), supported risk taking when she stated, "An effective administrator has to be willing to take the step. We have studied this and now we are going to take a step. We don't have to live with it forever, but now it is time to move forward. No one ever has the courage to say, we are going to try this, we are moving forward to everyone, move out of the way." Ely, (science teacher), also talked about the value of risk taking when he stated, "they [principal] have go to be a risk taker [pause] but in being a risk taker, you take a look at what others have done and then expand on that. You can't just sit back and let others come to you. You have to be willing to try some things and be willing to fail. We don't always want to try some things because we aren't willing to fail." Abby, (family and consumer sciences teacher), described the principal in a changing environment as a "high risk taker because we jump into things."

Deb, (special educator), described the qualities of the twenty-first century principal as one that

[has] to be a risk taker. You have to try things that are out of the [pause] the classroom is changing whether it will be some day there will be night classes

offered at the high school. I don't think you want to jump on every bandwagon, but I think that you need to be a risk taker and try a lot of new things. Take more advantage of the community so they are out in the community."

Lori, (family and consumer sciences teacher), talked about the principal, "he is always, has been on the cutting edge of trying to implement what he thinks might work for our school."

Rick, (principal), described risk taking with an air of impatience when he stated,

> I don't have time to wait it is just like there are a lot of AEA [Area Education Agency] initiatives; they are about one or two years behind us. We don't have time to wait. It is just like some of the state stuff, it is too late. I have to move on. The demographics change so fast and some of the programming that the state or the AEA offers, it would be nice to work with them, but it would be nice to have that support. Some of the things we have done, it would have been nice to have been to the depth and have gotten some support.

Quinton, (superintendent), also talked about the balance of risk taking when he stated,

> Rick is very willing to take a risk, but it is going to be a calculated one. He is not going to say here is something I dreamed up last night that I think will be good for kids. It is not putting my banner up the flagpole and saying we always do the right professional development because it is research based. He understands that being on the cutting edge and bleeding out there is not always what you want to do. You do want to be careful and not always be THE leader. I think he does his research and feels very comfortable and asks for volunteers and says this is something we are going to try for the committee.

Floyd, (superintendent), stated, "You won't have high school reform and change without being a risk taker. Another important thing about the high school principal taking risks is to also encourage the staff to be risk takers."

Rick, (principal), talked about the complexity of risk taking when he stated,

> I'm orange in my work. Outgoing, risk taking, and all that stuff but I'm also very blue, that is caring and helping people and understanding how they feel. That is balance. Know when to hold'em and when to fold'em. Yes, I'm aggressive and

outspoken and risk taking in some of my work. Also, I try very hard to be compassionate. I try to understand the affective things, the arts aspects.

Decision-maker

Decision maker was identified as an Essential Characteristic of the effective principal. The decision-maker gathered data and input from a variety of sources before willingly taking a stand. The decision-maker provided sound rationale for the decisions and articulated the decisions with the constituents. Decisions were made without full agreement; however, the best interests of students remained the focus for decisions. The decision-maker had the courage to act and the confidence to move forward. A wait and see attitude would hinder the progress on reform initiatives and ultimately meeting the needs of students. The decision maker did not act in isolation by garnered extensive input from the Culture of Learning while maintaining a Student Focus.

When describing an effective principal, Deb, (special educator), stated, "You are going to have to have broad shoulders in a leadership role. You are not going to make everybody happy. You have to agree to disagree." Bob, (mathematics teacher), described the principal as decision-maker when he stated,

> I know eventually she [principal] has to make the decision. What I appreciate is that some times it may be a decision that I don't agree with but it has to be that way sometimes. She doesn't just tell us a decision and say deal with it, she gives us the rationale behind the decision and why it must be that way. Don't wait to keep everyone happy. Let's try something and instead of worrying about failing, let's worry about being successful.

Carol, (art teacher), stated, "I think that a good leader is a consensus builder but also has to know when you just say, OK, I've heard your ideas, I've thought about what everybody has said and this is what we are going to do. This is what we are doing and

we expect everyone to get on board." Monte, (industrial technology teacher), supported

the characteristic as decision-maker when he stated, "Some decisions he [principal] has

just got to make. If teachers are happy or unhappy that is just too bad. For the most part

the teachers have a lot of say in what goes on around here."

Carol, (art teacher), related decision maker to collaborator when she stated, "As a

teacher I want to be heard, and I want them to listen to my opinion, but I have no problem

with someone saying, I know where you are coming from and I see this from a different

angle and this is what we are going to do." Owen, (music teacher), stated,

> It is a cooperative military system, (hahaha), where the commander is still the
> commander. I like that, I like structure and this is one of the things we have here,
> is structure. Our administrator is prepared; he has things ready to go. He tells us
> why. We may not always approve of his opinions just like he doesn't always
> approve of ours. One thing I really like is that we always get a chance to express
> ourselves.

Owen continued his description of decision-maker, "The governance is cooperative

military, but with extreme benevolence, (hahaha), because it is true, otherwise I wouldn't

stay here. We had a poll for the students to see if they felt safe here, comfortable here.

Kids felt safe here because there is that regimentation here, it does feel good."

Learner

Learner was identified as an essential characteristic of the effective principal. The

learner was the principal that read and explored new ideas. The principal demonstrated

life-long learning by researching, attending conferences, and networking with other

reform-oriented administrators. The learner recognized that the knowledge base related

to student learning continued to expand at a rapid rate and he or she sought and explored

that information. The learner modeled this passion to acquire new knowledge and encouraged those within the Culture of Learning to also be learners.

Lori, (family and consumer sciences teacher), described the effective principal as a learner by stating, "I don't know how he gets there. He must read a lot; he must network with other people to find out what is out there. I'm always amazed. Maybe this is discussed at the principal's conferences. He is pretty aware and I think that is one trait you really need in a principal, to be aware of what is out there." Peter, (mathematics teacher), added, "The principal values ongoing learning."

Owen, (music teacher), described an avenue for learning, "He does a lot of research to make sure he knows what is going on." Ely, (science teacher), stated, "The principal has to know if there is a research base to support the vision they want to go after." Abby, (family and consumer sciences teacher), shared, "I know she [principal] reads a lot." Peter, (mathematics teacher), stated, "The principal should be knowledgeable in all subject areas. If not, get to the right people. Don't assume you [the principal] know what a math or Spanish or English classroom should look like. If you don't know go to a conference."

Owen, (music teacher), described the effect of the learner on faculty when he stated, "When Mr. Z. [principal] delivers an inservice we pay attention because he has done all that research, he lays it in front of us. He lets us know what he is thinking, where he is going. He gives us statistics, he gives us reports, and we get a chance as a faculty to contribute to that too." Abby, (family and consumer sciences teacher), stated,

"the principal is always keeping up with the technology and what is new, always looking. Being current and deciding what they would do."

Monte, (industrial technology teacher), summarized his thoughts when he stated, "I would say he feels there is never an end to learning. He is probably one of the main people around here that push us to keep doing stuff and he does the same thing. The guy is never in his office, he is always trying to figure out different ways of doing things. I think he knows that learning never ends."

Rick, (principal), described a research process he had used for selecting a reading program when he stated, "I looked and looked and looked. I looked at one program that was going to cost $25,000, which is too expensive. I ran into FAME at a meeting. I went to a conference to check it out. Then I got some teachers involved." Gerry's, (principal), advice to a new principal about being a learner, "take advantage of conferences – it gives you new ideas."

Quinton, (superintendent), described the significance as a learner not only as a model for the faculty but also the students, "A principal is very knowledgeable on the topics. Keeps very current. I'm suggesting reading a book at the administrative team meetings, and Rick has probably already read it. Another important thing is to be a role model to the students." Quinton's, (superintendent), concluding advice, "A principal leading change has to have a commitment to and able to learn."

Relationship Builder

Relationship builder was an essential characteristic of an effective principal. The principal, as a relationship builder, lead by modeling the basic core values of honesty, trustworthy, respect, responsibility, and caring. The principal built interpersonal relationships within the school community as well as with the other school stakeholders. The principals were consistent in dealing with students, an important component in building student relationships. The principal identified the significance of building relationships with students as a foundation for academic success. This was evident through the advisory programs and professional development provided to teachers. The SRCS district-wide commitment to the true tenets of cooperative learning was an example of the schools district's priority toward developing the skills needed for relationship building. The effective principal exuded the characteristic as a relationship builder to create the Culture of Learning around a Student Focused System.

Bob, (mathematics teacher), described the principal as relationship builder when he stated, "you had better be honest, responsible, and respectful, the core values. If any one of those breaks down, it all breaks down." Abby, (family and consumer sciences teacher), stated, "I am going to say honesty is a very important value of an administrator." Deb, (special educator), stated, "all of those people skills are basic – listening, being compassionate, making people feel they are listening." According to Abby, (family and consumer sciences teacher), "The principal should always model the

six pillars of character [Character Counts™ Six Pillars - trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship]."

Peter, (mathematics teacher), continued to describe the principal as a relationship builder, "The principal needs to be caring in how they come across to the staff. Why they do, what they allow us to do." Owen, (music teacher), stated, "There is give and take. He [principal] respects my opinion and I respect his . . . he cares, he cares about what other people think. I like the caring, I like the ability to listen."

The focus as a relationship builder included students. In describing the school climate, Rick, (principal), stated,

> We try to consciously look at inter personal relations. I keep saying to people the number one thing that this district did was when they made a commitment to cooperative learning techniques. The right kind of cooperative learning techniques; the true tenets of cooperative learning. The teachers were schooled on, yes, we have an academic task we need to perform in our classroom on a daily basis, but we also need to look at the interpersonal relations and interactions of kids in those classrooms.

Rick continued,

> When we put them in cooperative learning groups they not only have an academic task to perform, they speak clear, but we need to help them deal with here, that social aspect of group work and cooperative learning, even analyze that and look at that after the lesson is done. Did we say and talk and look at each other in the eye. We know, we hear all the time that the number on thing why people loose their jobs in society it is not because they cannot do the work or the task, but it is their interactions with other people.

Rick related the value of relationships with parental partnerships when he stated, "The minute we put the focus on post secondary and career we finally saw that you had the relationships because you had that advisor and that student right there with the parents, all the key players right there together."

In offering advice to a new administrator, Rick, (principal), stated, "the number one thing is the people skills. Supporting those people. I look for people that have neat, wonderful ideas. I will support them in whatever they do. I will find the money and resources. I have wonderful people." Quinton, (superintendent), added, "A principal must build rapport and relationships, rigor and relevance. If there aren't relationships with students, I don't know what you have. Rick [principal] accomplishes this in the most part by listening to them and giving them a voice."

<div align="center">Culture of Learning</div>

In addition to the Essential Characteristics of a high school principal, other identifiers also emerged from the data. A Culture of Learning and Student Focused System were identified in the data as elements of effective leadership.

The Culture of Learning was the environment created by the actions and behaviors of the effective high school principal. The Culture of Learning surrounded and supported the Student Focused System. The Culture of Learning included the sub-elements of shared philosophy, collaboration, high expectations, parent partnerships, and community engagement. HSTW and AVID programs identified essential factors that contributed to the Culture of Learning including high expectations, teachers working together, guidance involving students and his or her parents, collaboration, and interdisciplinary site teams (Guthrie & Guthrie, 2002; SREB, 2003).

Shared Philosophy

Shared Philosophy was a sub-element of the Culture of Learning. Creating a culture with a shared philosophy communicated to teachers, administrators, students,

parents, and the community that while each group had separate responsibilities, they

shared a common direction. The shared philosophy provided a backdrop on which to

make decisions. The shared philosophy in each school was directly tied to the values of

the Student Focused system, where the philosophy was doing what was necessary to

support student learning. HSTW and AVID offered the school leadership a framework

around which to develop and sustain a Student Focused Culture of Learning with a shared

philosophy.

Several participants described the importance of focusing initiatives around a

shared philosophy. Bob, (mathematics teacher), described the importance of the shared

philosophy when he described the initial stages of involvement with HSTW, "It really

gave us some sort of tool to start doing stuff. It helped us see a purpose for what we were

doing. It is really going to give us something that will revitalize our school." Owen,

(music teacher), described the significance of the shared philosophy when he stated, "our

school has a pretty clear philosophy about children, they say the ones [teachers] that

don't like it leave, so I can be fairly comfortable saying, our faculty is willing and able

and adaptable." Owen continued to talk about a shared philosophy for approaching

change when he stated,

> To put it this way, the ones [teachers] that don't embrace this [reaching more
> students better and faster] leave. We have some go. You have got to share
> attitudes [pause] attitude is everything [pause] you have got to share in the
> attitude that what you are doing is important enough, you have got to be willing to
> adapt. The environment is changing; my environment is different in my band this
> year from a year ago. Every time I bring new people into it, it becomes different.

Lori, (family and consumer science teacher), described the shared philosophy by stating,

"I think we are continually trying to better our selves in terms of all the teachers thinking

on the same page in terms of how we do things . . . so how we are consistent with how we do things." Quinton, (superintendent), described how the shared philosophy directly impacted students when he stated, "we maintain a whole consistency of what we expect students to know and do when they are out of school."

Monte, (industrial technology teacher), described part of the process of developing a shared philosophy when he stated, "He [principal] gets the biggest group of teachers on the bandwagon right away and then hopefully it will bring the rest of us along." Quinton, (superintendent), continued to describe the importance of professional development toward a shared philosophy when he stated, "We have been working with cooperative learning for years. With each new staff member they have four days of training on cooperative learning for any new staff. This sends a message to our faculty on what we think is important." Developing a shared philosophy within a Culture of Learning needed ongoing professional development.

The Shared Philosophy was described as important in the sustainability of the high school reform initiatives. The high school principal may move to other positions or possibly retire so having developed a shared philosophy provided a foundation for sustaining the reform efforts.

Gerry, (principal), described the relationship between shared philosophy and sustainability when she stated,

> You have to look at the reality that I will probably retire in a couple of years and if there is really going to be any changes it must come from the teachers. It must come from inside. If it is to be lasting reform it must come from within. They must see and share that need for reform. I feel I am building capacity. That is my goal to build that capacity in the teachers.

The Shared Philosophy was identified as an important component in the continuation and sustainability of change initiatives.

Owen, (music teacher), summarized how working from a shared philosophy assisted in maintaining a Culture of Learning when he stated,

> Here we know the intent is to help students. It is not to try to create more work for the teachers, as it is to help the students. Some of these things, quite honestly as teachers, we put up with because we understand the intention, we might not like it, but it is a passionate move to do things the right way and doing it better. We should be striving to do things better. We shouldn't become complacent. We shouldn't think this is the way we have always done things this way, why should we change. We know as a faculty here we are here to help students. We are not going to stay the same. We know because of our leadership and the attitude that we have at school that things are not going to keep going in the same hole. The indication amongst all of us is to make things better.

Collaboration

Collaboration was a sub-element of the Culture of Learning where the principal actively sought and gathered input from all stakeholders. The principal welcomed and expected input from faculty on all issues. Faculty were freely consulted on decisions related to reform initiatives and encouraged to propose change and be risk takers. The skills and expertise of faculty were respected and engaged to assist in facilitating change. Faculty were afforded opportunities to attend professional conferences and provided leadership related to the conference upon their return. A sense of cooperation was the expectation within the learning community. Teachers mentored colleagues to support improved teaching and learning. The principal built and nurtured a Culture of Learning where collaboration was the norm.

For the purposes of this study, collaboration will mean inviting, allowing, and/or involving teachers and other stakeholders in the change process by encouraging effective

communication and engagement. This would be distinguished from collaborative leadership where it might be assumed that teachers are included as final decision makers.

Collaboration was evident when the educators were asked to describe how decisions were made from the point of the comprehensive school improvement plan (CSIP) to implementing a new initiative in the individual classroom. Owen, (music teacher), stated, "Collaboration and cooperation are two of the fundamental things of school." Carol, (art teacher), described the Learning Culture by stating, "we have a lot of faculty leaders and the faculty is given a lot of chance to set policy and set rules and they are listened to." Deb, (special educator), described her perspective on faculty collaboration in school activities when she stated,

> We have input on a lot of things. There are some things we don't have input on but after serving on a lot of committees I can see why we don't have a lot of input on some committees. I think sometimes the decisions need to be made from the top. On many issues we have as much input as we would like to share. I feel that my opinions have always been looked at and listened to.

Gerry, (principal), established the tone for collaboration by stating, "I try to run the building as 'this is our building' and not my building. I have a teacher advisory board and we meet every other week. My first direction is that this is not a bitch and moan and gripe group, if there is a concern we have to come up with ways to solve this problem."

When asked about the relationship between collaboration and decision making, Monte, (industrial technology teacher), stated, "I don't know that teachers help him [principal] make the decisions but to get input into the decisions he is going to make. How are the teachers going to take this? How would you take it as a teacher? If this is what I am going to do, what is the best way to implement it now? This is what we need

to do, how are we going to do it?" Monte believed that in "80% of the situations we would talk over the decisions that are going to be made."

When asked what he thought the principal would do if the faculty really did not agree with what the principal suggested, Monte responded,

> I think he would stop. He is not so stubborn that he would do it anyways. He might take a group with him to a seminar. He may say, you don't understand what I'm trying to do. They either find different ways to think about it or stop it all together. I think he takes what the teachers say very seriously. If they don't think it will work, I don't think he would do it.

Monte, (industrial technology teacher), described the committee structure as an avenue to provide teacher voice to the collaborative process. He stated, "twice a month we have teachers meetings in the morning and then that is where the teams, their foreman or whatever, spokesperson can get up and say this is what we are having problems with, this is how we think we can change it. So you have a voice at least twice a month."

From the perspective of the high school literacy committee, Abby, (family and consumer sciences teacher), described an experience with collaboration. She stated, "it started last year and we [literacy committee] would meet on what we wanted to get done. We decided what we wanted to do and how it was going to get done. We first took it to [the principal], then the superintendent, and the board. It was approved."

When asked about starting a new initiative, Rick, (principal), stated, "I usually gather some key people. I've looked into it so I know what it is pretty much about. I have looked into it and get them to a conference. They come back and convince the rest of the faculty." Gerry, (principal), described the HSTW initiative, "The first year I had gone to the training and helped the first year to get it started. Now that we have a core

group of teachers that have gone to the summer conferences, I have turned that leadership

over to the teachers."

Quinton, (superintendent), described collaboration through the committee

structure when he stated, "I know that Rick [principal] has a committee working on this

[HSTW and AVID]. It is not just the administrator and the assistant. There are staff

members involved. There are times we involve the students if it is just the nature of what

is going on."

When asked, Owen, (music teacher), described why the reform activities have

been successful, he stated,

> We as the faculty have been cooperative. He has asked us, and we responded in
> kind. Because of the fact, you see that is the thing, when we go to teacher
> meetings, it is not like we are the privates and corporals and the non-coms, and he
> is up there spouting to us. He talks *TO* us. We know and I still like this. We
> know where the buck stops and we know who is going to end up making the final
> decision, but we can be able to ply him with all kinds of opinions, ideas,
> information, and everything that way and he will listen. He is gathering tons of
> information.

Collaboration was identified as a valuable component of the Culture for Learning

for the students as well as the teachers. Peter, (mathematics teacher), stated, "Mr. Z.

[principal] is much in agreement with cooperative learning. It is good to have the

students work in groups and if you have a job you have co-workers. Why not start in

school and see how you can help each other out."

When Floyd, (superintendent), identified skills needed by a principal today that

weren't needed ten years ago, he stated, "the principal needs to be a team and coalition

builder. They need to be able to work with everyone no matter where they are in the

change process." Collaboration meant the principal was actively encouraging teachers and students to become engaged and work together in creating a Culture of Learning.

High Expectations

Establishing High Expectations was identified as a sub-element in creating a Culture of Learning. Clearly articulated high expectations stretch students, faculty, staff, and administrators to reach for the next level of performance. High expectations were openly and clearly communicated with students to avoid any misunderstanding about appropriate and expected student behaviors. Communicating high expectations provided a basis on which to hold individuals accountable for their actions and performance. Teachers in both schools described how the respective principal held him or herself to high expectations and modeled this level of performance for the teachers, staff, and students. High expectations set the tone for the quality of work and behavior that will be exhibited across all areas in the Culture of Learning.

Owen, (music teacher), described high expectations when he stated, "We have high expectations for students and work to make them be successful. They are there for everyone. We are current in what is happening and willing to change, the adaptability to the situations." Abby, (family and consumer sciences teacher), described high expectations as related to classroom climate when she stated, "you have to have high expectations for kids. Have high expectations within the classroom with the behavior."

Teachers and administrators alike, talked about the importance of modeling high expectations. Lori, (family and consumer sciences teacher), described high expectations when she stated, "I think he [principal] expects that we are modeling high expectations

for kids." Peter, (mathematic teacher), described student response to high expectations when he stated, "our students know our expectations and they appreciate those. We expect the kids to study; we expect them to work. I think they pick up the caring that we want them to be successful and that we expect them to be successful."

Rick, (principal), supported Peter's statement, "I have strong expectations of the staff. I talked about building relationships and setting your expectations. They will meet those, and if not, they will be gone." Monte, (industrial technology teacher), described high expectations and his principal when he stated, "He pushes himself the same way he pushes us."

Gerry, (principal), identified high expectations as the center of the high school reform initiative. To support understanding the relationship between high expectations and other reform activities, Gerry designed a large tree with high expectations as the trunk and other initiatives as the tree limbs and branches. Gerry described high expectations when stating, "Find a way to visualize for your staff that what you are doing is interconnected and you are all working to develop higher expectations for our students. I would say that higher expectations are the trunk of the tree. Higher expectations not only for our kids but for ourselves."

Rick, (principal), described high expectations with a student-focused lens when he stated,

> I think the main thing all along about an atmosphere where students get along has been that expectations, and they are high expectations, everybody knows what is expected of them. My teachers know what is expected of them in helping keep a disciplined, yet friendly inviting atmosphere in this school. If the kids know that up front that there are certain expectations and certain social procedures and mores to follow that are expected of them - interpersonal relations.

Parent Partnerships

Parent Partnerships was identified as a sub-element of a Culture of Learning because of the roles and responsibilities of families to support student learning. Parent partnerships included parents of students currently enrolled in the high school. One of the Key Practices in HSTW identified *guidance* – involving each student and his or her parent in the planning of an academically challenging program and career goals – as a program expectation. Both principals identified the importance of developing strategies to involve the parents in academic and career planning for each student. Approaches implemented included advisory/advisee programs, parent-student-advisor conferences, and career planning sessions. Building Parent Partnerships supported student transitions to post-secondary careers and educational opportunities.

Several educators described the challenges of involving parents of high school students with academic planning as well as building capacity in parents for active engagement. Owen, (music teacher), described the state of parent partnerships when he stated,

> The only thing is that I see a trend of parents saying they [the school] are doing it so I don't have to. This is the nature of parenting process right now. You can stand and gripe about it all day long, or you can try to fix it. Come up with ways to adapt. The best we could do is to make all kinds of sources of information available to the parents and hope that they will pay a little attention to it. We went to this advisory group for the students. We went to mandatory conferences last year. The parent had to come in and talk to that particular teacher. Some parents came to school that had never been inside the walls. We had interpreters around that could help take care of that, too. We are giving it the best shot. We've got to communicate with the families and bring the communities in to the school.

Ely, (science teacher), described developing high school parent partnerships by stating, "you have to have a vision on how to get parents involved in today's education."

Several educators described the impact of an advisor/advisee program and parent-student-advisor conferences as avenues to nurture parent partnerships. Deb, (special educator), stated,

> We have scheduled conferences for everybody. Our conferences went from maybe 10% to 80% attendance, so that was a good move. That is part of the HSTW initiative. One of the things that gets the parents there is we work on the student's schedule right there. If there are any areas of concern we can talk to them then. You can always schedule another time if more time is needed.

Lori, (family and consumer sciences teacher), described parent involvement, "we actually implemented an advisory program and started it last spring. We scheduled individual conferences with the students in our own advisory. Conferences brought a lot of parents in to school that we might not see."

Rick, (principal), shared his thoughts on the advisory program and scheduled conferences when he stated, "It gets more parents in here, focus is great – looking at what is it we are working toward. Conferences are much more meaningful and relevant for the students. It helps them see why they are taking these courses."

Owen, (music teacher), described additional avenues for parent participation when he stated, "We are getting it now so that parents can go online to find student's assignments, get grades, letters are sent out all the time to students – remember that this is coming up or whatever, besides your student is in trouble, it is letters beyond that."

Rick, (principal), described the role of parents in focusing the educational experience on their student. He stated,

> Sitting down with those kids [Charter School students] with their parents and an interpreter in most cases, having them focus on what it is they wanted to do in the future. Whether they want to, what kind of career they wanted to go into, what kind of schooling would entail to achieve the goal, having the students set career goals, and having the parents in on that and seeing where they have come from and what they have done and what they were going to have to do was a real eye opener. That brought it all together. There was a relationship. A real eye opener for all of us involved.

Rick, (principal), continued to describe the importance of parental involvement when he stated, "The minute we put the focus on post secondary and career we finally saw that you had the relationships because you had that advisor and that student right there with the parents, all the key players right there together."

Quinton, (superintendent), described a concern about parent participation when he stated,

> We may have an expectation of involvement that is unattainable with this generation of parents. We want them to come in and do more at home and it may be something that they are unable to do. We went as far as to tell parents to don't try to teach English to your child. If you are able to read Spanish we will give you a Spanish book and you can read that at home. The research says it doesn't matter if they are reading in Spanish or English as long as you are reading to your child is what that is important. They need to learn formal language and not a street language.

Parent Partnerships contribute a very important component to the Culture of Learning by expanding the circle of support in a Student Focused System.

Community Engagement

Community Engagement was identified as a sub-element of the Culture of Learning because of the expansion of learning outside of the school walls as well as other mutual benefits. As the world demographics continue to change (Chapter II) the walls of the traditional schools have expanded to include community "classrooms" as well as virtual learning. Learning opportunities for students at NRHS and SRHS were provided in community businesses and industries as well as with the local community colleges. The business community provided job shadowing, intern experiences, and other input for skill development related to career decisions. As school reform activities continued to evolve, community engagement was needed to support some of the changes.

School leaders described the resources the community offered the high school, including booster clubs' financial support to supporting local bond issue requests. Community members attended various school sponsored activities, including a student run restaurant, concerts, sport activities, and theatre productions. Community engagement in the Culture of Learning involved establishing two way avenues of sharing between the high school and external community.

Community stakeholders were invited and encouraged to be involved with the school while at the same time teachers and students became more engaged in service and academic experiences in the community. When describing high school reform, Bob, (mathematics teacher), stated, "I think our community will need to understand and appreciate the focus the school would have to accomplish. The principal will need to communicate this with the community." Carol, (art teacher), discussed the importance of

community conversations by stating, "Somebody [a principal] that is going to be effective is going to need to be very political. They are going to have to be able to do [pause] know what is important and be able to communicate that to people."

There were several avenues used for building community engagement. Owen, (music teacher), stated, "the community is informed through articles in the paper, I mean, we have a school newsletter that when a particular thing that he [principal] needs to have thrown in he does. I think [the] community is pretty well informed of what we are doing." Lori, (family and consumer sciences teacher), talked about the student operated restaurant when she stated, "That [student prepared dinners] is another way we connect ourselves with the community. I think the more we do that the better off we are."

Abby, (family and consumer sciences teacher), described the mutual benefits of school-community engagement. She stated, "If we wanted to do a project with the community, it is open arms to helping us." She also stated, "I have seen where the community members come in to the school wanting the school to participate. . . community members come to the school to see what they can do or what we can do for the community." Abby concluded by stating, "they [administrators] are real open and flexible with the community and not wanting to be a separate entity."

One of the participating school districts was preparing for a bond issue. Peter, (mathematics teacher), described the importance of community engagement when he stated, "The administration has been talking with parents and getting other elementary faculty out to the other schools. It helped because they [the administration] communicated over and over again. Not just talking with it but also supporting it with

data. The administration has been taking the PowerPoint around to Rotary and other community groups."

Monte, (industrial technology teacher), described the principal's interactions within the community when he stated, "Very good. He [principal] is involved with the community, which helps tremendously. He is real good at trying to do diversity days and things like that to get the public involved with the school."

Peter, (mathematics teacher), summarized the role of communication in nurturing community engagement when he stated, "I think you have to communicate with them [the community] frequently, tell them often, tell them early, and in a timely fashion."

<div align="center">Student Focused System</div>

The Student Focused System (SFS) provided the guiding core around which all activities revolved. The SFS was at the heart of the principal's professional value system. The teachers and administrators repeatedly described making decisions based on student needs as the common theme for their work. The educators referenced selecting new initiatives, developing policy, planning teaching strategies, and establishing expectations all based on making things better for the students. Four sub-elements were identified to more fully define a SFS - student needs drive decisions, student-centered environment for each student, student options, and student voice.

Student Needs Drive Decisions

Student needs drive decisions was identified as a sub-element of the SFS because the teachers and administrators frequently described the changing needs of the student population which was necessitating changing the way "school" was delivered. As

discussed in Chapter II, the social, political, economic, and cultural demographics of the world was rapidly changing and the impact of these changing demographics was felt at the grassroots school level. The educators in these schools valued the students with which they are working and expressed their desire to provide an educational experience that was based on the needs of "these students."

The teachers and administrators discussed the selection of school reform initiatives in terms of meeting the needs of students. Both HSTW and AVID included as an essential component of the program, rigorous courses of study and the support system for each student to be successful in this academic program. The schools in the study selected these programs because they believed the program would "meet the needs of their students." The decisions from the selection of a teaching strategy in the classroom to the hiring of new faculty were made from the reference point of "will this decision make things better for our students." The school data points, including student achievement data and surveys on school climate, were analyzed to determine student needs. The resulting programs and initiatives were selected based on the data. The implementation of the Sustained Silent Reading Program, the Charter School, advisory programs, and AVID were all described by administrators and teachers in terms of meeting the needs of their students.

Bob, (mathematics teacher), reinforced the significance of valuing a student-focused environment when he stated, "every aspect of what we do needs to be around what we can do to help kids." He also discussed the importance of valuing a student-focused system when he stated, "We need to make a decision about the purpose of

education and how to meet the needs of our kids. A lot of things have changed with our population and we are changing to meet the needs of our changing students." Several teachers in this study described situations where they may not have liked the decision that had been made, but they would support the decision because they knew it was based on what was best for the students.

Several teachers described a Student Focused System as the continual process of school improvement – making things better for students. Owen, (music teacher), described this when he stated, "we are very progressive but there is always the perspective that not really in reinventing the wheel, but can we make it better [for the students]. Owen continued to describe the process of improving things for students with an analogy of auto repair. He stated, "one of the things we try to do is identify what they [the students] need. It is like a mechanic that we have to find the problem before we can fix it. That is what we try to do; we try to realize what is not working and try to make adjustments so it will work. We have a lot of things in progress right now."

When Rick, (principal), was asked what drives him to break ground and do things differently, he responded, "It is good for kids. I look at our demographics. The challenges are there, if you look at them as challenges and not as problems. I would say what keeps me going is what is good for this group of kids at this time? What might work to help them succeed in their education?" Floyd's, (superintendent), advice for the high school principal was brief, he stated, "You have to love kids."

<u>Student-Centered Environment for Each Student</u>

The student-centered environment for each student was a sub-element of the SFS because it reflected the importance of looking at each student as a separate entity within the SFS. The teachers and administrators in both schools shared comments about connecting with individual students and observing the "eyes light up" when a student understood a new concept. The student-centered environment for each student provided opportunities for each student to connect with at least one adult in their learning community. The student-centered environment for each student was described as an avenue for assisting students in establishing short-term and long-range personal learning goals and post secondary career planning with the support of their advisor and family. In a student-centered environment for each student, teachers knew the students both through curricular and co-curricular activities. Students were challenged by the academic expectations but also were provided with the necessary support systems each student needed to succeed. Students were encouraged to be active participants in a broad range of student activities.

Lori, (family and consumer sciences teacher), described the significance of a student centered environment for each student when she stated, "I think the students understand that we not only value diversity but that we care about them." Natalie, (science teacher), described the student centered environment when she stated, "we have a real close student teacher relationship, even though we are a 3A school I know most of the students. . . I got to know them through sports, camps, Physics Olympics. They are real great kids." Abby, (family and consumer sciences teacher), described the student

environment by stating, "They [students] feel comfortable coming to teachers with personal problems. I just had a student coming to me outside of my room talking about personal issues. There is a strong teacher student relationship."

An advisory program also contributed to a student-centered environment. Through the advisory activities, students developed career goals and supporting individual academic plans. The added benefit of the advisory program as described by Rick, (principal),

> Sitting down with those kids with their parents and an interpreter, in most cases, having them focus on what it is they wanted to do in the future. What kind of career they wanted to go into, what kind of schooling would entail to achieve the goal, having the students set career goals, and having the parents in on that and seeing where they have come from and what they have done and what they were going to have to do was a real eye opener That brought it all together. There was a relationship

The advisory program was one offering in the student-centered environment; however, Rick's comment described the multiple contributions the advisory program offered in a Student Focused System. The advisory program brought family and professionals together for the purpose of focusing on the needs of the individual student.

Rick, (principal), summarized how the student-centered environment contributed to the individual development of each student within a Student Focused System,

> Everything that you do in a staff meeting or staff development, you are always looking at these kids, where are they? Where do they come from? What are we going to do about that to get them to the point they need to be for what their needs are? Everything has to be focused on YOUR kids, and not somebody else's. You have to look at the data for the kids at South Roads high school. What can we do to push the process along?

Student Voice

Student voice as a sub-element of a Student Focused System provided students opportunities to express opinions, ideas, concerns, skills, and talents. Traditionally students have been the "receiver" of the teaching with minimal opportunity to participate in the conversation about their individual needs or the overall high school programming. Educators encouraged "student voice," by providing a framework for students to develop personal plans for high school course selection and transitioning to post-secondary life.

Student voice provided students with opportunities to acquire skills that will be valuable as they transition from high school to the life beyond. Communication skills, assertiveness skills, and leadership skills were examples of the benefits to students when there was a student voice as a sub-element of the Student Focused System. Also reflected as part of this sub-element was the idea that the high school principal and other educators valued what the students had to say. Data from both schools identified "student voice" options that included student council, student academic organizations, school reform initiative committee work, and open conversations with teachers and administrators

Owen, (music teacher), stated, "I know he [the principal] works with the student council. I don't know all the details but I do know that he works to involve a large group of the students and not just a few. He wants to hear from the students."

Student voice included the students feeling comfortable in approaching the principal and other school personnel. Monte, (industrial technology teacher), described the opportunity for student voice when he described student interactions with the principal,

he is very accessible to them. I've been in school systems where you didn't see the principal or superintendent, ever, in the halls. Rick [the principal] is constantly in the halls and the kids just don't see him when they have problems. I think it is very important to where you just don't see the principal when you screw up. Rick is in the halls all the time talking to kids."

Monte, (industrial technology teacher), described student voice in his individual classroom; he described an approach to establishing his expectations for student behavior. Monte stated,

> In the class [Monte was taking] they are talking about kids being in control. I have been doing some of it here with the kids helping to solve the problems. I didn't think I could give up control and be happy with it. It is like we are asking Rick [principal] to give up some control and listen to us and what we want to do in our classes. You know, the kids are kind of the same way. I'm going to give up some control. The kids are going to say these are the rules, except the rules we have to have for safety. The kids have some really good ideas. I would have never thought it would work.

Gerry, (principal), described an avenue for student voice when she stated, "the student council presents at our teacher inservice before school starts. They have met and have identified their goals for the year. They have an opportunity to share these with the teachers before school starts."

Rick, (principal), talked about student voice as he described different avenues to hear from students. He stated,

> I need to know about this student's goals and likes to help make the academic program more relevant. We have a student newspaper where they write about their likes. The next year the students will write a career paper. . . . We do a lot of surveys. . . . This year our hope is to learn more about each kid first, their likes, their dislikes, what they are headed towards and do a better job at that.

Quinton, (superintendent), described including students in the curricular process by stating, "where I really think the curriculum and instruction is getting more to the other side is getting less directing and more involving the students to have some input."

Quinton, (superintendent), described another option for student voice when he stated, "I've been at schools where this was talked about as a good idea, but this is the first school I've been at as an administrator that involves students in interviews for new teachers. In that decision-making process he gives them a voice. I wouldn't say he gives them the authority, but he certainly gives them a voice and they learn from that."

Quinton, (superintendent), discussed student voice when he described student feedback about classes, "It matched up with students saying this class is boring. What they were really telling us was that they were not engaged. It was a real eye opener." Quinton continued to describe student voice as he discussed the selection of the high school reform program, "There are times we involve the students; it is just the nature of what is going on here." Quinton also described the connection between student voice and relationships when he stated, "If there aren't relationships with students, I don't know what you have. Rick accomplishes this in the most part by listening to them and giving them a voice. He brings it to them and says this is the next thing we are thinking of doing, what do you think?"

Student voice included encouraging students to share ideas about individual goals, needs, concerns, and celebrations related to school and his or her life beyond high school.

Student Options

Student options, a sub-element of a Student Focused System, provided students a wide array of curricular and co-curricular programming. Course offerings were provided to challenge the individual student's academic abilities, wherever the student was performing on the learning continuum. Each student participated in a rigorous

curriculum that included options for learning supports as needed. Student options also included a range of co-curricular offerings. Students could participate in band, choir, theatre, dance team, multiple men's and women's sports, academic clubs including physics olympics, FCS club, and speech competition to identify a few.

Several educators in this study described the number of student options provided in a Student Focused System. Student options included providing students a range of academic course offerings to meet the individual student skill level while at the same time stretching the student to enroll in academically challenging offerings. Courses in both high schools were offered through a variety of formats in addition to the traditional forty-five minute, in-building course offering. Students were enrolled in Post Secondary Educational Opportunity Act (PSEOA) offerings that were scheduled on the grounds of their own high school, shared offerings scheduled at neighboring high schools, and/or courses offered at the local community college. These dual-enrollment courses were also provided through online learning and through collaboration with a local private four-year college. The shared understanding in both of the high schools involved in this study was students should be prepared with essential skills that will keep all options for life following high school graduation open.

Lori, (family and consumer sciences teacher), described the teacher's role in supporting student options when she stated, "I just want to continue to show them [students] opportunities that are available to them. Something they can avail themselves to. You never know when the light bulb will come on."

Peter, (mathematics teacher), described student options when he described mathematic offerings. He stated, "we have three ways kids can take Algebra, one semester—compacted, two semesters, or three semesters spread over two years. We have allowed the three-semester class because it offers more kids success. It is not because a teacher has a favorite class, that is not the way it is approached, it is because some kids do better with this class."

Monte, (industrial technology teacher), described how the principal in his high school supported student options when he stated, "the main thing that Rick [principal] does is he keeps implementing things to help kids. Rick is into giving kids options. Rick is big at helping them understand options they didn't have before."

Gerry (principal) described student options by stating, "It is an expectation from the parents in this community that we will provide college credit. The students are starting college from a protected environment. It gives them a transcript with a solid start. It gives students the opportunity to do more exploring when they get to college."

One of the major options that had been implemented at South Roads High School was a Charter School that provided post-secondary choices for students. Owen, (music teacher), noted the principal's values when he described the Charter initiative,

> He [principal] saw all these bright young people that don't have any money. They would have gone back to work for Tyson or Sarah Lea because they couldn't afford any schooling, he [principal] has opened this Charter School. There are 44 students in the Charter School right now that probably wouldn't have gone on. They are taking higher-level courses because the opportunity presents itself. He saw this coming down the line himself. He wanted these kids to have choices.

The effective principal values a Student Focused System. Rick, (principal), described this priority, "first of all, we added the Charter. That was to help kids focus, some kids that didn't see college in their future focus on that, that was an attainable goal." Lori, (family and consumer sciences teacher), summarized the importance of valuing a SFS when she stated, "he [principal] is really good with wanting what is right and fair for the students."

Conclusions

Three Key Elements of Leadership for the effective twenty-first century high school principal were identified. The first Key Element for an effective principal was demonstrated the Essential Characteristics of visionary, effective communicator, risk taker, learner, decision-maker, and relationship builder. The second Key Element of the effective principal was created a Culture of Learning. This element included the sub-elements of facilitates a shared philosophy, supports collaboration, establishes high expectations, nurtures parent partnerships, and encourages community engagement. The third Key Element was the principal valued a Student Focused System. The sub-elements were student needs drive decisions, student centered environment for each student, student voice and student options.

The data analysis did not identify any notable difference in perceptions based on professional responsibilities or years of service in the school.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Introduction

The purpose of this study was identifying behavioral characteristics of high

school principals providing leadership in reforming Iowa high schools. The current

emphasis around reforming high schools will also result in a call for effective principals

prepared to provide leadership in this newly emerging high school. To gain an

understanding of the behavioral characteristics of this effective high school principal, the

perceptions of teachers and administrators working in a school currently engaged in

reform activities were studied. The following research problem was developed to guide

this study, "Identifying behavioral characteristics of high school principals providing

leadership in reforming Iowa high schools."

Discussion

Overview of the Study

High school reform in Iowa may be perceived to fall along a continuum from not

recognizing the need to reform to full engagement in a nationally recognized high school

reform program. For the purpose of this study two Iowa high schools were selected that

had been engaged in nationally recognized high school reform programs for a minimum

of two years. The two programs were High Schools That Work (HSTW) and Achieving

Via Individual Determination (AVID). The schools and the current high school

principals had been participating with these programs for at least two years and were still

actively implementing reform initiatives. Data was collected through direct one-to-one interviews with five teachers, the high school principal, and superintendent in each of the two schools. The teachers represented a cross section of content area expertise including mathematics, industrial technology, music, science, art, family and consumer sciences, and special education.

Three Key Elements of Leadership for the effective high school principal emerged from the data analysis. The first Key Element was the set of Essential Characteristics exuded by the effective principal. The sub-elements included the following: visionary, effective communicator, risk taker, learner, decision-maker, and relationship builder. The second Key Element was the principal created a Culture of Learning. The sub-elements for this area included the following: facilitates a shared philosophy, supports collaboration, establishes high expectations, nurtures parent partnerships, and encourages community engagement. The third Key Element was the principal valued a Student Focused System. Sub-elements included the following: student needs drive decisions, student-centered environment for each student, student voice, and student options. The elements were identified as three separate units but they were very clearly related and would not stand in isolation. The evolving American high school undergoing change to prepare students for satisfying lives in a twenty-first century environment. The results of this study would suggest that the characteristics, behaviors, and values of the high school principal leading school reform are also evolving to meet the needs of students.

Introduction of the Visual Model

Three Key Elements of Leadership for the Effective 21st Century High School Principal were identified from this study. The key elements of leadership were distinct, yet deeply intertwined and thus do not stand in isolation. Essential Characteristics of the high school principal was one element. The characteristics identified the specific qualities the effective principal would demonstrate. The characteristics define the specific dispositions important in the principal leading in a reforming school. The Essential Characteristics were as follows: visionary, effective communicator, risk taker, learner, decision maker, and relationship builder.

The second main element was the Culture of Learning. The principal assumed responsibility for creating a Culture of Learning. The Culture of Learning described the environment, the climate in which learning occurred. The principal set the tone and created the culture of learning by his or her actions. The Culture of Learning included collaboration, shared philosophy, high expectations, parent partnerships and community engagement.

The third element was the Student Focused System (SFS). This served as the heart of the work of the principal as he or she brings personal characteristics to play in creating a learning culture. The SFS was the guiding dimension on which decisions were made. The SFS was the product or the outcome of the reform efforts and initiatives of the various stakeholders.

A visual model of the key elements was created to provide a representation of the findings in this study. The Student Focused System was placed in the middle of the

Diagram 2 because of the multiple comments from the participants describing how decisions were made from the reference point of meeting student needs. The reform programs in each school were chosen to focus on the needs of students. The students were described as being at the heart or core of the work of the high school teachers and principals. The principal and teachers in SRHS stated AVID had been selected to meet the needs of the students in the academic middle. When asked what drives him to try new initiatives, Rick, (principal), stated, " if it is good for kids . . . if it is good for this group of kids at this time. . . look at what might work to help them [students] succeed in their education." The work of both schools was driven and focused on the meeting the needs of students and providing student options, thus Student Focused System was placed in the middle of the diagram.

The Culture of Learning was placed in the next ring because the school culture nurtures the student development. The school culture included the collaborative work of the students and teachers as well as the parents and larger community. Quinton, (superintendent), described collaboration as part of the school culture when he stated, "I know that Mr. Z. [principal] has a committee working on this [reform initiative]. It is not just the administrator and assistant. There are staff members involved. There are times we involve the students depending on the nature of what is going on." Peter, (mathematics teacher), described the processes of collaboration and developing a shared philosophy for a Culture of Learning when he stated, "We have discussions. [Administrators] let us vent if we need to. It might not go their [administrators] way, it might need to go this way because it would be better for students." Teachers felt they

were working in a Culture of Learning where they could collaborate around a shared philosophy yet openly disagree with colleagues in a respectful professional manner. As Owen, (music teacher), stated, "There is a give and take. He [principal] respects my opinion and I respect his." The Culture of Learning was built on the active participation of multiple stakeholders focused on providing students with opportunities for learning.

The Essential Characteristics of the principal were placed in the outer ring because the administrator provides key leadership in drawing all of the pieces together. The principal created a culture that supported each student in developing the skills, knowledge, and behaviors for living a satisfying life. The specific behavioral characteristics included visionary, effective communicator, risk taker, learner, decision-maker, and relationship builder. Monte, (industrial technology teacher), described the principal as a visionary when he stated, "he has a real clear vision on where this school needs to go." Rick (principal) described the importance of relationship builder when he stated, "we try to consciously look at building interpersonal relations." Teachers and administrators repeatedly described the principal as a risk taker. Rick summarized the role of risk taker when he stated, "I'm aggressive and outspoken and risk taking . . ." As Peter, (mathematics teacher), summarized, "They [principals] have their hands full. It is an important job. It can make or break the school. It takes a great principal to work with great staff to make it all work." Owen, (music teacher), concluded, "No matter how you look at it, it is me that either makes or breaks it for the band. Any history teacher either makes or breaks it for the kids sitting there. The principal is the one that makes or breaks it for the school." The Essential Characteristics of the principal are in the outer circle

because as the two teachers described, the principal is the one to bring everything

together for the successful high school.

Diagram 2.

Key Elements of Leadership for the Effective 21ˢᵗ Century High School Principal

Essential Characteristics

Culture of Learning

Visionary

Community
Engagement

Learner

Collaboration

**Student Focused
System**

Parent
Partnerships

Effective
Communicator

Decision-Maker

Shared Philosophy

Risk Taker

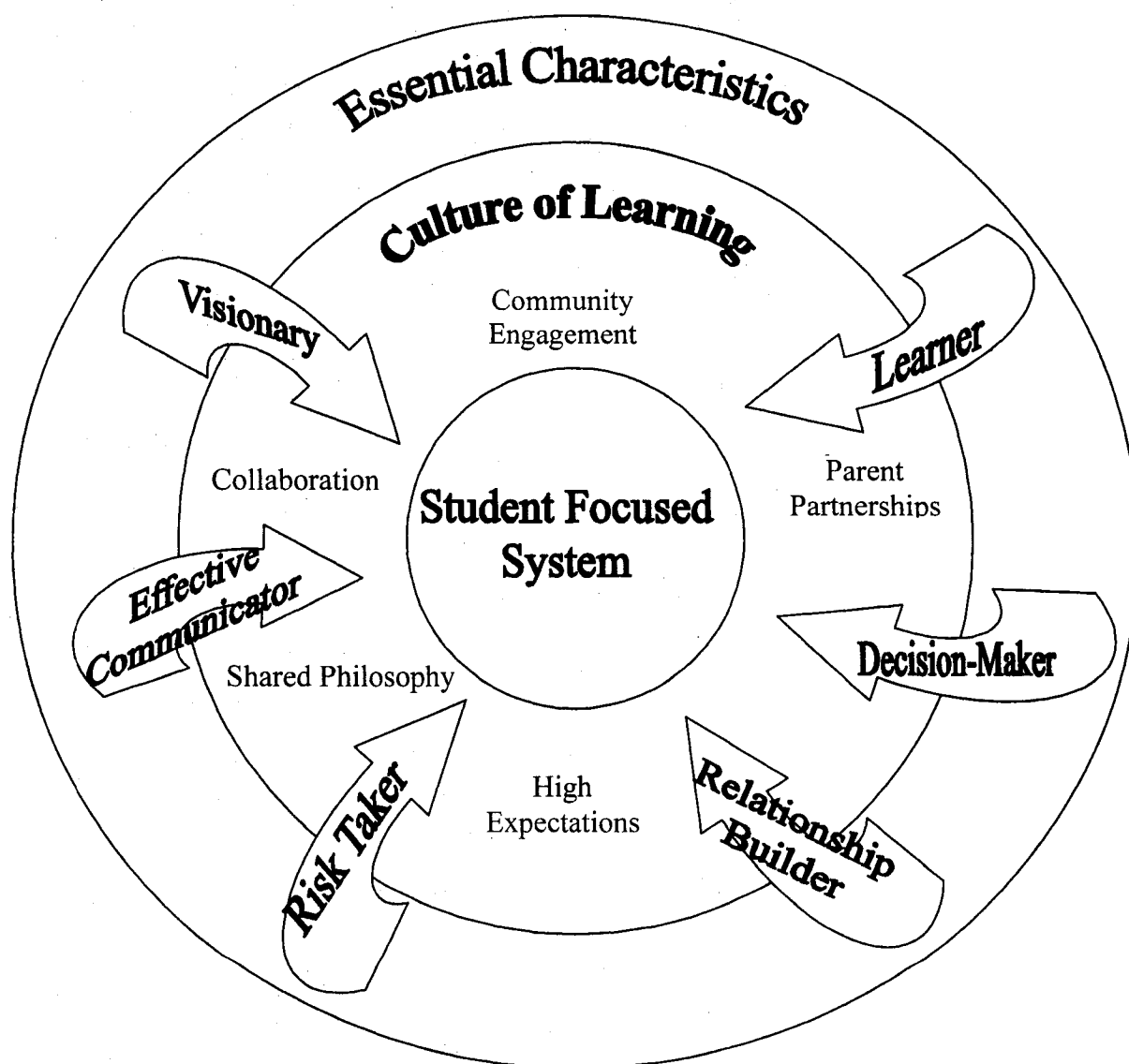High
Expectations

Relationship
Builder

Diagram 2 provides a visual representation of the Key Elements of Leadership for the Effective High School 21st Century High School Principal. The principal's Essential Characteristics provide the skills and talents needed to lead the work of creating a Culture of Learning. The Culture of Learning surrounded and nurtured the Student Focused System. Removing any one element or sub-element from this model would leave a gap or void in the leadership model. The findings supported the development of the model as it was designed to communicate that each area was distinct but individual elements were defined with an expectation of interdependency.

Comparison of the Traditional and 21st Century Visual Models

There were several differences between the Traditional High School Principal as identified in Diagram 1 and the 21st Century High School Principal as identified in Diagram 2. In the traditional model the principal's characteristics included manager, decision-maker, disciplinarian, coordinator, and implementer of mandates. The essential characteristics of the 21st Century principal included visionary, effective communicator, risk taker, decision maker, learner, and relationship builder. The findings of this study identified several new characteristics of particular note - visionary, risk taker, and learner.

A Culture of Teaching described the environment of the traditional high school. This included the sub-components of hierarchal governance, bureaucratic rules, content specific groupings, and time as the constant with learning the variable. The traditional model with the Culture of Teaching was in contrast with the 21st Century environment of a Culture of Learning. Included, as the sub-elements in the Culture of Learning, were collaboration, shared philosophy, high expectations, parent partnerships, and community

involvement. The focus shifted from a culture of teachers working in isolated units, protected by the principal from the external world to a Culture of Learning where multiple stakeholders work collaboratively to support learning throughout the school culture. The major shift from a Culture of Teaching to a Culture of Learning was a shift from a climate of isolated teaching to climate of inclusiveness and learning.

The traditional school was driven by an Institution Focused System that maintained an industrial model of in-classroom instruction for set periods of time where student learning was measured by credits. The Student Focused System provided students options and a voice in meeting individual needs. The traditional model included students as objects of teaching within defined boundaries. The findings of this study identified placing students in the center of the high school environment. Students voice and input was valued as programs were selected and implemented.

Discussion of the Visual Model

A review of the literature discussed in Chapter II highlighted a multi-dimensional approach for the findings. Sergiovanni's discussion of the multi-dimensional leader seemed to support the emergence of the three-theme analysis.

As Sergiovanni (2006) described, there were three important dimensions of an effective leader, the heart, the head, and the hands. These three dimensions correlated to the three layers of complexity in describing an effective principal. The principal's behaviors or actions were driven by his/her heart or values supporting what is best for students; the hands or specific actions of the principal were guided by the heart; and the

final theme, the head, brings the knowledge, dispositions, and characteristics for the hands and heart to use in the work of the principalship.

Using Sergiovanni's (2006) analogy of the heart, the head, and the hands, the researcher developed the model in Diagram 2. The elements and sub-elements grew from the data first identified in Table 1 and Table 2.

Discoveries

Three sub-elements emerged from this study that had not been discussed through the previous literature review. Risk taker, learner, and establishes high expectations were characteristics or actions of the principal that were uncovered through this study. The teachers and principals discussed at great lengths the importance of the principal being willing to take risks in seeking new and creative avenues to meet the needs of students. The participants also stated that failure was an important part of risk taking, encouraging the principal to break out of the norm accepting the possibility of failure.

Learner was another finding in this study. The exponential growth of knowledge and expanding research on student learning must challenge educators to be lifelong learners. This was clearly identified by both the principals and teachers in this study.

High expectations was another sub-elements identified as being critical for establishing a culture of learning. Principals, teachers, and students must be stretched and challenged to reach individual potential. Both principals discussed the significance of clearly communicating high expectations to the students and teachers as well as living by the same standard. Teachers described the positive impact of school-wide high expectations as having a positive impact on student learning and school climate.

Communication, vision, collaboration, and relationship building were identified as shared characteristics through the literature review in Chapter II. Effective communicator with an emphasis on listening skills was an important characteristic identified in this study. This study reinforced the significance of speaking and writing skills as important components of communication but specifically highlighted the value of quality listening skills in supporting collaboration and positive school culture. Visionary was identified in this study as being a very important characteristic of the principal. This study enhanced the earlier discussion of visionary but adding descriptors such as creative and innovative. The findings in this study described collaboration as gathering data from multiple stakeholders while expecting the principal to remain the primary decision maker. The literature talked about collaborative leadership that would also involve the stakeholders as part of the decision making team. Relationship builder was a characteristic clearly identified from the literature and the findings of this study. The qualities of honestly, trustworthiness, respect, and character were identified in this study as well as reinforced by the literature review.

Interconnectedness of the Elements

At the center of the visual model was the Student Focused System. The work of the teachers and administrators should always be couched in the question, "Is this best for students?" The shift from an Institution Focused System to a Student Focused System forced principals to think differently as decisions were made. In the former assembly line approach to instruction, the schedule often dictated course offerings and program availability for students. Minutes of seat time and the Carnegie Unit measured student

success; time was the constant, learning the variable. High schools should no longer sort students into tracks of college bound or non-college bound, but prepare each student, in a culture of high expectations, with the necessary skills to have a range of options following high school graduation. High schools for the twenty-first century must be prepared to educate each student, with his or her unique needs - a Student Focused System. The Student Focused System challenges the effective high school principal implementing reform initiatives to think of the student first. Priesz supported the SFS by stating, "The curriculum needs to be meaningful and useful to all students" (2006, p. 10). With changing student demographics and globalization, student needs must be clarified to maintain the focus on this moving target.

The effective high school principal must have a passion for students and value the Student-Focused System to provide the leadership needed for this shift in thoughts and actions to occur. DiMartino and Miles described effective principals as "student-centered and value-driven" (2006, p. 50). Changing systems is a challenge in and of itself, so the effective principal will need a deeply seated set of values and beliefs related to "students first" to help stay the course for effective reform.

The Student Focused System (SFS), identified in this model, does not exist in isolation. The SFS was surrounded and nurtured by the Culture of Learning. The Culture of Learning was the "hand" of Sergiovanni's (2006) theory, as reflected in the behaviors and actions of the effective principal. The sub-elements of the Culture of Learning were the support structures for the Student Focused System. When the

principal was facilitating a shared philosophy, he or she was collaborating with the students, teachers, parents, and community to work in a common direction.

The creation of the Culture of Learning was the visible work of the "hands" in Sergiovanni (2006) theory. The work of the "head" was more difficult to define because this was the knowledge or theories of practice or reflective thinking or Essential Characteristics of the principal. The Characteristics of the effective principal became public through the creation of the Culture of Learning. The characteristics of visionary, effective communicator, and relationship builder shared common ties in implementing high school reform. The visionary principal clearly articulated the vision and built relationships to see the vision through to fruition. The learner characteristic was tied to the visionary characteristic because of the depth of knowledge needed to develop and grow the vision. The characteristic of risk-taker was essential because implementing high school reform meant breaking from the traditional mold and taking the chance at failing.

Implications

The implications and findngs of this study will be discussed in three parts. The first will be the implications for current and future high school principals, the second will be the implications for other high school and district personnel, and the third discussion will be focused on implications for other educational institutions and professional organizations. The principal is one component of the educational system so identifying an emerging new paradigm for the principal will also impact others tied to educational entities.

Implications for the Principal

The Essential Characteristics for the effective high school principal reflect several new characteristics or slightly different emphasis from the traditional characteristics. Traditionally, the principal was expected to manage an efficient operation that provided a safe environment where teachers could teach and students were taught. The responsibilities for the effective principal of the twenty-first century have greatly expanded beyond that of *managing* the institution to *leading* the institution while exuding a range of essential characteristics.

Visionary. The findings with this study clearly identified a principal that is expected to provide a clear vision for the school and the reform activities needed for the changing student demographics. The individual should be creative and move the vision into actual stages of implementation. This has emerged from the traditional role of a principal that would have been more in a position to carry out directives or mandates. The managerial principal was not described as a visionary. The data from the participants in this study was very clear about the characteristic of the effective principal as a visionary leader. The teachers stated they definitely expected the principal to be visionary as if that was part of the job description. Several teachers stated they were busy in the classroom with students and the principal was to seek out new and creative ways to address student needs. The teachers also felt the principal as a visionary filtered through the current trends to identify the reform activities that most aligned with their student population.

Visionary leadership was identified from the literature review in Chapter II as a shared characteristic. In this description of visionary leadership the literature identified the importance of the vision in guiding the work of the school, a clear sense of the mission of the school. Goodwin, Cunningham, and Childress confirmed the role as visionary, "The principals in this national study validated the importance of their role as the strategic leaders of the school by describing the power of the principalship and the importance of the principal's role as a visionary and a change agent" (2003, p. 33). The findings of this studied also emphasized not only using the vision to guide the decisions, but the visionary leader was creative, innovative, and always looking ahead for new avenues to meet the anticipated needs of the specific school population. This study identified the visionary as someone who nurtured this quality in others, encouraging teachers to champion the vision from their personal areas of expertise. Nurturing the visionary qualities in others was not specifically identified in the literature reviews.

Effective Communicator. The principal leading reform must model the qualities of an effective communicator. In addition to strong written and verbal communication skills, principals must demonstrate exemplary listening skills. The traditional principal would have been someone considered to have strong communication skills, however, the participants in both schools of this study specifically described the strength of the principals' listening skills. The teachers stated repeatedly they appreciated the principal listening to their thoughts and ideas and felt they were really heard. The teachers described the open door policy of both principals, stating they felt they could talk to their respective principal whether they agreed or disagreed on a specific idea. One teacher

stated specifically he had not always agreed with the principal on issues, but he could openly express his perspective and maintain a level of professional respect.

Effective communication was another shared characteristic identified in Chapter II. All communication skills were identified as being important qualities, with no specific communication skills highlighted. The findings from this study would emphasize the significance of listening skills and actually hearing the intended message. The implication was more than the physical act of hearing but also included the expectations of listening for understanding.

Effective communicator provided a direct link with collaboration in the Culture of Learning as well as the characteristic, relationship builder. As an avenue for improving personal communication skills, the principal could work with a colleague or self-initiated skills assessment to complete a check on his or her communication strengths, especially listening, and develop an action plan for personal growth.

Risk Taker. This study identified risk taker, as an essentail characteristic for the effective high school principal. This was a new finding that would not have traditionally been associated with the high school principal. The participants looked for the principal to break from the traditional approach and cited factors that may interfere with the idea of risk taker. Historically educators in general were not perceived as risk takers. The emergence of the characteristic "risk taker" was a change from the traditional paradigm. Anderson & Shirley described the importance of risk taking, "Any type of serious school reform can ill afford absent principals, principals with "wait and see" attitudes, and principals who lack the courage to act in accordance with their principles because of

issues and concerns raised by district administrators or the community" (1995, p. 420).

While several participants described the principal as taking "calculated" risks, they still

viewed risk taker as an essential characteristic. This characteristic must communicate to

the high school principal that he or she needs to purposefully take calculated risks and

move out of the traditional comfort zone. The risks should be well studied and

incorporate broad stakeholder input, but nevertheless, involve a chance of and

willingness to fail as part of the process.

Decision-Maker. The sub-element describing the principal as a decision-maker

would carry over from the traditional system. The focus of the decisions in this new

model would have shifted from decisions of management to decisions of leadership. The

approach to being the decision-maker would also shift in the model. The decision maker

in the school engaged in reform actively seeks data and input to guide the decision where

the traditional approach might have been more unilateral. The teachers offered a very

clear perspective that they expected the principal to make decisions for the high school.

One teacher stated there would never be clear consensus on most issues so the principal

was expected to make an *informed* decision. However, the teachers repeatedly stated

they expected the principal to listen to their ideas, provide background information about

the possible decision, and articulate a rationale for the decision. The principal working in

a reform-oriented system maked well thought out and researched decisions about new

initiatives including activities needed for creating the Culture of Learning.

Learner. The essential characteristic as a learner was another finding related to

characteristics of the twenty-first century high school principal. Participants discussed

learner as mutually supportive of visionary and decision-maker. They stated the learner informed the visionary by always seeking new ideas, and studying the research to identify reform activities that would align with their student centered programs. One teacher stated she didn't know where the principal found all of his ideas but assumed that he must read a lot and attend meetings with other principals. Both principals described the importance of attending professional conferences and Gerry (principal) specifically offered this note of advice if she were mentoring a new principal. The visionary principal must actively nurture his or her creativity by attending conferences, networking with colleagues, leading study groups, reading journals, and participating in professional development activities that build on strengths and mitigate deficiencies. The learner recognizes that the quest for knowledge never ends. The principal may be working in a good school but is creating a great school for the current student population. The learner is seeking the next conversation with a colleague, the next conference on a new educational initiative, or the next article in a respected journal.

Relationship Builder. This model included the characteristic of relationship builder as providing the foundation for the program. The data suggested the core human values provided the basis on which to build relationships among the professionals and students in the school community. In describing the principal as a relationship builder the teachers used descriptors such as "of course, I assume the basic core values" and as Bob stated, "you had better be honest, responsible, and respectful, the core values. If any one of those breaks down, it all breaks down." The relationship building was not limited to the characteristics of the principal but included the programs and culture nurtured

within the high school community. Relationship builder is often assumed to be limited to person-to-person interactions. The relationship builder in the reforming high school helps students see the relationship with the coursework and career choice, the relationship between having high expectations and self-respect, as well as the relationship between the adults in the school and students success. The advisory program and co-curricular activities are examples of opportunities to build relationships with students. The principal lives by the human core values and models this expectation for students, faculty, staff, parents, and the community.

Creating a Culture of Learning resulted in a shift of several components in the traditional model of Culture of Teaching. Collaboration, high expectations, parent connections, and community reculturing were highlighted in these findings.

High Expectations. High expectations repeatedly emerged in the Culture of Learning through discussions with both the teachers and administrators. High expectations as a sub-element of the school culture, is a finding from this study that would not likely be found in a traditional high school model. Gerry, (principal), stated, " we have established higher expectations not only for our kids but for ourselves." The modeling of high expectations by the principal set the tone in each school for this sub-element in the Culture of Learning. The teachers discussed their perceptions of high expectations related to the expectations each principal established for him or herself. The teachers stated the principal clearly articulated his or her expectations for the teachers and students. This message was communicated through direct conversations, student assemblies, teacher meetings, or private consultations. Teachers expressed an

appreciation for high expectations as part of the Culture of Learning because they felt it carried into their classroom and supported student learning.

The resulting conversations around high expectations may challenge the perceived sense of complacency that has developed in many Iowa schools from the feeling that the schools are currently providing a pretty good educational product. Gerry (principal) quoted Jim Collins' statement, "Good is the enemy of great" (2001, p. 1). Collins followed this statement with the question, "Can a good company [school] become a great company [school] and, if so, how? Or is the disease of 'just being good' incurable?" (2001, p. 3) Iowa schools have a long tradition of providing a good education, but is it a great education, is "just being a good school" incurable? Are Iowa's educators satisfied with good and not providing students with a great education? Are our communities satisfied with providing *most* of their young people a good education, or do they want a great education for *each* student in their community? Do we have high expectations for each student? The shift from the traditional culture of teaching to a culture of learning challenges the effective principal to create a culture where high expectations for students, faculty, and administrators is the norm.

High expectations for the principal means he or she needs to model stretching their own personal level of professionalism but also build the capacity in the staff to meet high expectations. The principal needs to facilitate quality professional development opportunities for the staff, while holding them to high expectations.

The principal must also clearly articulate a sense of high expectations to students. High expectations must be the norm for each student wherever the student performs on

the learning continuum. Lower level offerings, remedial courses, and tracking need to be eliminated and replaced with courses and the necessary support systems that prepares each student with the skills needed to succeed in today's workplace and post-secondary educational environment.

Collaboration. Collaboration was another sub-element for creating a Culture of Learning. Collaborative leadership was identified from the literature review in Chapter II as a shared theme. The findings from this study suggest a slight distinction between collaborative leadership and collaboration. In Chapter II, collaborative leadership was described as building leaders at all levels of the school. Some references included assisting in making the actual decision as part of collaborative leadership. The findings in this study would support the explanation that the principal gathers a wide range of data from various stakeholders as the basis for collaboration, while the principal would make the final decision.

A sense of collaboration was an established norm in both schools in this study. Teachers and administrators provided numerous examples of the opportunities for teacher involvement in all aspects of the high school. Teachers were encouraged to propose new initiatives and follow up on the ideas. Teachers were asked to volunteer and were selected to attend national conferences gathering information about proposed initiatives. Teachers served on district level as well as high school level advisory boards. Teachers were encouraged to mentor colleagues through both formal and informal methods. Collaboration with students was also identified. Students were included in the hiring of

new teachers, presenting student council goals to the entire faculty, and serving on high school reform committees.

It appeared to be the norm in each school that the high school principal established the expectation that multiple voices are needed for the high school reform initiatives and the high school to run smoothly. To accomplish this sense of collaboration the twenty-first century principal must implement strategies to break down the silos of isolation and turf barriers often found in the traditional high school. As DuFour stated, "we need leaders who tear down the walls of isolation and build a collaborative culture based on teams whose members work together interdependently to achieve common goals" (2004, p. 67). This may be accomplished in multiple ways but the schools in this study had implemented several options. Cross-disciplinary grade level teams were organized to work in supporting the Culture of Learning and meeting the needs of a specific grade level of students. Teachers were also organized in reform initiative groups that reflected cross-disciplinary teaming. Cross-disciplinary teams were implemented to complete curricular gap analysis on skill sets for student learning. The focus of this work was on identifying where students learned specific skills, as well as gaps and repetition in skills acquisition, opening up opportunities for additional learning and collaboration. This type of collaboration resulted in broader understanding of the overall school offerings, planted seeds for collaborative projects, and prepared faculty for the role of advisor. The cross-disciplinary work communicates to students a message of relevance with the curriculum and supports student retention of concepts. Other suggestions for supporting collaboration include organizing faculty offices by grade level teams rather

than content areas. The principal establishes the tone of collaboration through the communication structures implemented.

Parent Partnerships. Parent partnerships at the high school level have typically been defined by support for a booster club organization or contact by the principal when the student made a poor decision. The emerging culture of learning included parent partnerships as an important sub-element. It had been described in Chapter I that students will not only need a high school diploma but also some form of post-secondary educational preparation to live a satisfying life in the twenty-first century. Parents will need to be informed partners to support their student in developing a learning plan and implementing the defined actions as the student transitions from high school. Parent partnerships are nurtured through advisory programs, parent-student-advisor conferences, meetings held at off-school sites, interpreters to reduce the perceived barriers, and membership on school advisory committees.

Community Engagement. The emerging reformed high schools will also result in reculturing the school community beyond the walls of the school building. The Culture of Learning will benefit both the internal school community as well as the community at large by providing expanded educational opportunities. The students will benefit from the relevance component of learning and the community will benefit from the educated citizens and workforce. The teachers and administrators in this study described connections that had been established with the respective community. These connections included internships, job shadow opportunities, guest speakers coming into the school, collaborations with the community colleges and private institution of higher education.

The principal serves as the lead liaison with the community. This may be accomplished through spearheading community wide culture days, encouraging teachers to design student learning activities that reached out into the community, designing a school day that moves beyond the traditional calendar, and service learning strategies.

Student Focused System. The model, Key Elements of Leadership, included a shift in core emphasis from an Institution Focused System to a Student Focused System. This way of looking at education was different than most everyone was accustomed, whether he or she was a professional educator or a product of the American educational system. This realigned focus challenges the high school principal to rethink his or her perceptions of job responsibilities and expectations. The principal that became an administrator because he or she enjoyed the managerial responsibilities of running an organization and the corresponding positional power will find new skills sets demanded for working in a high school engaged in reinvention. The high school principal must move from the mindset of managing an institution to the mindset of leading an educational organization with students as the focus of all the work. By defining a new focus and related expectations, the principal may need to relinquish some of the traditional institutional focus to clarify his or her values around a student focused system.

The Student Focused System means decisions and methods of teaching are designed to meet the needs of students. As Housman and Brand described today's twenty-first century high schools, "the purpose of high school: to prepare *all* [italics added] students for success in college, careers and active civic participation" (2006, p. 14). This means learning new teaching strategies to support instruction that is

differentiated and more relevant. Making decisions based on student needs means expecting faculty to teach and collaborate differently. Teachers talked about their schools being student focused and the impact this focus had on him or her individually. Several teachers stated that decisions had been made that they might not have liked, but they supported the decisions because they knew the decisions were in the best interests of the students. Meeting the needs of each student involves analyzing teaching strategies and facilitating instruction in ways to support individual student learning.

The principal must build the capacity in the faculty with the skills to meet the changing needs of the school population. When describing her work with teachers around high school reform, Gerry, (principal), stated, "I feel I am building capacity." The principals, superintendents, and teachers talked about this capacity building when they described the professional development in which they had participated.

Implications for Other District Staff

The implications of this study are not limited to the specific responsibilities of the principal. The Key Elements of Leadership provide a comprehensive look at the high school principal providing leadership in school reform. It is recommended that this model be made available to superintendents and other decision makers as a resource to use during the hiring, mentoring, and evaluating processes. The Key Elements of Leadership identify Essential Characteristics and behaviors for creating a Culture of Learning that would support the high school's reform activities. The model would be a valuable tool in developing job expectations and interview questions, as well as comparing leadership qualities of the candidate with the needs of the high school.

The high school is one entity within the overall school system. As the high school evolves various stakeholder groups beyond the high school staff will be impacted. The school board should seek opportunities to understand the complexity of the leadership responsibilities of the high school principal leading reform initiatives. This could be accomplished by attending conferences and high school study groups. As the high school emerges from the traditional paradigm of *system focus* to the model of *student focus* the work of the high school principal will be enhanced by board led community support for reform. As the high school undergoes reform other divisions within the school will also be impacted, necessitating a more system wide approach to school reform.

Implications for Other Educational Institutions

Administrator preparation programs and administrator professional organizations should use this model to guide the work of the respective institution. Administrative preparation programs in Iowa are structured around the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards. The Key Elements for Leadership should be used to bring relevance to the standards. Many preparation programs require the principal candidate develop a professional portfolio. The specific elements and sub-elements as described in this research would be appropriate suggestions for professional activities and data points for the portfolio. The Key Elements of Leadership define the values, behaviors and characteristics for the principal involved in high school reform. The preparation programs should use this model to more fully prepare the high school principal to lead in this emerging reform environment.

The high school principal will need professional development opportunities to recharge and renew his or her creative energies. Providing the leadership for high school reform is professionally and personally demanding. The Key Elements of Leadership provide a framework around which professional development programs should be developed. School Administrators of Iowa (SAI), Area Education Agencies (AEA), and/or regional principal organizations should use this model to inform the professional development activities provided high school principals. These activities may include mentor training, annual conferences, regional inservices, and leadership academies.

The Iowa Department of Education should also use this model to review the support of emerging changes around high school reform. This may include analyzing licensure requirements and supporting high school reform initiatives with professional development activities for high school principals.

<u>Conclusions</u>

In Chapter II, the work of Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) was discussed in regard to first and second order change. The magnitude of change was the distinguishing factor, with second order change involving total redesign. Waters and Grubb (2005) identified perceptions that determine order of magnitude associated with second order change. The perceptions included the following: "a break with the past; outside of existing paradigms; conflicts with prevailing norms, values; complex; nonlinear; requires new knowledge and skills; implemented by stakeholders" (p. 31). Waters and Grubb described effective change leadership when they stated, "To make the kind of changes needed in our schools, however, school leaders must have a sophisticated

understanding of change and know how to effectively initiate, lead, and sustain changes, including those that have varying implications for stakeholders" (2005, p. 31).

The Key Elements of Leadership bring to life the descriptors Waters and Grubb (2005) used to define second order change. The model identifies an environment of learning, focused on meeting the needs of a changing student population. Professionals are challenged to think differently about their work, multiple stakeholders are participating, ongoing professional development and learning is an expectation, with a nonlinear approach to creating new paradigms supporting student learning.

<u>Recommendations for Future Research</u>

From the findings in this study, the following recommendations for future research are suggested:

1.   This study was conducted in two mid-sized Iowa high schools. It is recommended that this study be conducted in schools with other demographic data to evaluate transferability of the Key Elements of Leadership. This would address one of the limitations of this study related to school size.

2.   The data for this study was collected from teachers, principals, and superintendents. The study should be expanded to include students, school board members, parents, and community members to gather a broader base of perceptions in identifying important elements.

3.   This study did not distinguish or analyze the data based on the gender of the principal. It is recommended that a study would be conducted to determine if there is

a gender difference to implementing the Key Elements of Leadership such as the creation of the Culture of Learning, and/or the Essential Characteristics.

4.   As the high school reform programs continue to evolve, the Key Elements of Leadership will also continue to evolve. The study will need to be replicated to determine if different reform programs require different principal characteristics and/or to monitor the evolutionary process of the changing high school principal leading in reform. This recommendation would address the limitation identified in Chapter I about generalizing conclusions based on two federally recognized reform programs.

5.   High school reform has impacted the leadership approach of the principal. This study focused on the behavioral characteristics of the high school principal providing leadership in reforming Iowa high schools. The teachers are also key players in the high school reform initiative. It is recommended that studies be conducted to identify the changing characteristics of the high school teacher working in a reforming high school. This study would also provide the opportunity to analyze the impact of teacher leadership in high school reform, another limitation identified in Chapter I.

6.   Leadership preparation programs in Iowa are aligned with the ISLLC Standards. A study should be conducted that would compare the current leadership preparation programs with the Key Elements of Leadership. The study might focus on how the Key Elements of Leadership might enhance the ISLLC Standards framework and bring the sense of relevance tied directly to high school reform.

7.   The purpose of this study was to identify the behavioral characteristics of high school principals providing leadership in reforming Iowa high schools. A study to

explore the relationship of the Key Elements of Leadership with student learning should be conducted. With the values of a Student Focused System, what is the relationship between a principal embodying the Key Elements of Leadership and students being prepared to live a satisfying life in the twenty-first century?

Summary

Identifying behavioral characteristics of high school principals providing leadership in reforming Iowa high schools was the purpose of this study. *Key Elements of Leadership for the Effective 21st Century High School Principal*, a visual model, was developed to communicate the three Key Elements of Leadership and the supporting sub-elements. The Key Elements of Leadership are as follows:

- the principal values a Student Focused System

- the principal creates a Culture of Learning

- the principal demonstrateas the Essential Characteristics

Based on this study, this visual model reflects the dimensions needed by a high school principal providing leadership in reforming an Iowa high school.

As Michael Fullan described, "The societal context for educational reform has radically changed. To be successful, future leaders of the school, district, or other levels will require very different characteristics than those expected of leaders in the last decade" (1998, p. 10). The characteristics of the twenty-first century principal need to be *different* to reflect the changing demands of the reforming high schools. The elements and sub-elements in this model reflect the *"different* behavioral characteristics needed to meet the demands of reforming Iowa's high schools.

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APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD PERMISSION

Office of Sponsored Programs

University of Northern Iowa

Human Participants Review Committee
UNI Institutional Review Board (IRB)
Office of Sponsored Programs
213 East Bartlett Hall

Date: October 26, 2006

To: Nadene Davidson
        Educational Leadership
        0241

From: Larry Hensley, Ed.D.
        UNI Human Participants Review Committee (IRB)

Title: Identifying characteristics of high school principals providing leadership in reforming a high school

Re: ID# 06-0057

Your project "Identifying characteristics of high school principals providing leadership in reforming a high school" has been approved following review under the expedited review procedure in accordance with federal guidelines 45 CFR 46.110. For your project, the applicable expedited review category referenced in 45 CFR 46.110 of the federal regulations is:

Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

You may begin enrolling human research participants in your project. If you modify your project in a way that increases the physical, emotional, social, or legal risk to the participants or you change the targeted participants, you should notify the Human Participants Review Committee in the Office of Sponsored Programs before continuing with the research.

Your project must be reviewed annually and therefore this approval will be active until 11 October 2007. You will receive a reminder and Annual Review/Closure form approximately 10 months from now asking for an update on your project. However, you are responsible for seeking continuing IRB approval for your study, *whether you receive a reminder or not*, and may not enroll any new subjects beyond the expiration date without continuing approval.

If you leave the university and/or complete the project before that time, please complete the Project Closure form at that point (available at http://fp.uni.edu/osp/research/policies.htm) and submit it to the Human Participants Office.

If you have any further questions about the Human Participants Review policies or procedures, please contact me at Larry.Hensley@uni.edu, or Anita Kleppe, the IRB Administrator, at 319.273.6148 or anita.kleppe@uni.edu. Best wishes for your project success.

cc: Institutional Review Board
        Greg Reed, Advisor

213 East Bartlett Hall • Cedar Falls, Iowa 50614-0394 • Phone: 319-273-3217 ▪ Fax: 319-273-2634 • Email: osp@uni.edu • www.uni.edu/osp

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Thank the participant for agreeing to be interviewed

    a. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study

    b. I appreciate you sharing your tim

2. Review the consent agreement

    a. Discuss confidentiality

        i. Your name will not be identified in the dissertation

        ii. The name of your school will be changed to support confidentiality

        iii. Any factors that would identify you will be kept confidential

3. Request permission to audiotape

    a. I would like to audiotape our conversation. Do I have your permission to tape our interview?

    b. If at any point in our interview you wish to stop the recording, please let me know and I will stop the tape recorder

    c. To clarify, I will be the only one to listen to this tape.

4. Questions?

    a. What question do you have?

    b. Respond to questions or if there are no questions, I would like to begin our interview

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your high school

    a. How would you describe your school's strengths?

    b. How would you describe your school's weaknesses?

2. Tell me about your school's comprehensive school improvement plan (CSIP)

    a. Describe the process for developing this plan

    b. Tell me about the different stakeholders and their involvement in the CSIP

    c. Tell me how the CSIP relates to the work going on in the high school

3. Tell me about your school's governance

    a. Describe the role of the teachers in school governance

    b. Describe the role of the high school principal related to school governance

4. Tell me about your school's high school reform initiative

    a. Describe the process used to engage in this initiative

    b. Describe the role of the faculty

    c. Describe the role of other administrators

    d. Describe the role of students

    e. Describe the role of parents

    f. Describe the role of the community

    g. Describe the principal's role in this initiative

5. Tell about the high school professional development activities

    a. Tell me about the development of the plan

        i. Tell me how it relates to current research

        ii. Tell me how it relates to student learning

    b. Tell me about the individuals involved with the planning

    c. Tell me about the implementation of the plan

    d. Tell me about the follow up/evaluation of the plan

e. Tell me about the principal's role in professional development

6. For teachers or superintendent - Tell me about a time you worked directly with your principal on a school improvement/professional development activity
For the principal – Tell me about a time you lead a school improvement activity.

   a. Tell me how the principal envisioned, developed, and implemented this activity

   b. Tell me about the administrator's interactions with you and other stakeholders (ie: Area Education Agency (AEA) personnel, teachers, administrators, etc.)

7. Tell me about your principal's interactions in the school community.

   a. Talk about interactions with students

   b. Talk about interactions with teachers

   c. Talk about interactions with administrators

   d. Talk about interactions with parents

   e. Talk about interactions with the community

8. Describe a time you observed the principal/(you) take a risk

   a. Describe the situation

9. Describe a time you observed the principal/(you) respond to conflict/difficulty

   a. Describe the basis of the situation

   b. Describe the principal's approach

   c. Describe the process implemented

10. Describe a time you observed the principal interacting with students

   a. Describe how the students were approached

   b. Describe the qualities of the interaction

11. Describe a time you observed the principal interacting with parents

    a. Describe how the conversation was initiated

    b. Describe the types of communication integrated in the interaction

12. If you were coaching your principal as part of a professional development plan, what would you talk about with your principal?

    a. Describe the principal's strengths

    b. Describe how the principal's values are reflected in his/her work

    c. Describe the principal's approach to learning

    d. Describe the principal's approach to change

13. Describe other behaviors you have observed in the principal that are important in an effective school.

14. General comments you would like to share about effective principals?