Spring 6-12-2021

COVID-19 School Closures: Professional and Personal Impacts on Building Principals

Paula R. Dawson
University of Washington - Tacoma Campus, prdawson@uw.edu

Alicia M. Nosworthy
University of Washington - Tacoma Campus, nosworam@uw.edu

COVID-19 School Closures: Professional and Personal Impacts on Building Principals

Paula R. Dawson

Alicia M. Nosworthy

A dissertation in practice submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership

University of Washington, Tacoma

2021

Supervisory Committee:

Robert MacGregor, Ed.D., Chair

Laura Feuerborn, Ph.D., Member

Allison Drago, Ed.D., Member

Vincent Pecchia, Ed.D., Member

Program Authorized to Offer Degree: University of Washington Tacoma Education Program

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a global impact resulting in an altered reality for educational systems around the world. The mandate by the governor of Washington State to close all school buildings produced immediate and significant impacts to the educational systems throughout the state, which resulted in professional and personal challenges for building leaders. The researchers, two school administrators at different levels in separate districts, had a unique "front row seat" to the challenges being faced by educators in the region and across the state. Based on this positionality and the current reality, the overarching question of this study focused on the professional and personal impacts to elementary and secondary public-school principals during the COVID-19 crisis to develop an understanding of these impacts on school leaders in Washington State, as well as the potential long-term effects. A survey of Washington State school administrators was conducted with a focus on the professional demands of the job during a crisis, social-emotional and physical well-being, the technological and learning challenges of remote learning, and the inequities associated with a virtual platform. The data analysis examined levels of job satisfaction pre- and post- the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the availability of support systems and coping mechanisms employed by administrators during the crisis. Recommendations for potential support systems in the time of crises and further research are based on the survey data and subsequent analyses.

Acknowledgements

Our journey on the doctoral path would not have been successful without the continued support and guidance from our families, friends, colleagues, professors, and advisors. Each of you saw the "brilliance" and the light when we would become temporarily blinded by our privilege or the darkness of our current circumstances and for that, we are forever in your debt.

The feedback and guidance we received from Dr. Rob MacGregor, Dr. Laura Feuerborn, Dr. Allison Drago, and Dr. Vincent Pecchia was invaluable especially as we navigated uncharted territory during a global pandemic to gain insight into the challenges faced by those in our profession. We are thankful for the ongoing support of our individual districts and supervisors as we immersed ourselves in the research process during the school closures and continuous changes caused by COVID-19. In addition, we want to extend our gratitude for the partnership forged with Scott Seaman and AWSP in inviting their membership to be part of our study for the purpose of providing meaningful and authentic support for the principalship.

To our K-12 cohort mates, thank you for the laughter, perspective, empathy, and support through the successes, frustrations, and the tears. Your friendship allowed us to persevere in the face of the many unprecedented challenges in the pursuit of a doctoral degree. And to Paul, Dave, and our individual families and friends, the depth of our appreciation cannot be adequately captured in words. Just know that we would not have been able to complete this journey without your love, encouragement, and patience. We fully recognize that we might have been a little difficult at times during the process. Thank you for sticking it out with us anyway!

Last, but not least, we would like to express our admiration for, and heartfelt gratitude to, the building leaders throughout Washington State who courageously shared their impacts and had the resilience to lead during this challenging time. You are our heroes!

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Working as an educator in the public-school system is a stressful undertaking in a typical year. The profession is fraught with competing interests, never ending responsibilities, ever changing accountability pressures, dramatically increasing demands, and underfunded mandates and requirements all contributing to difficult work conditions. When combined with a deep-rooted system reluctant to change, these factors result in high educator attrition rates (Busby, 2019). Perhaps the most challenging job within the PK-12 public education system is the school principal with long hours, an expansive range of stakeholders with an array of demands, and few, if any colleagues in their buildings to collaborate with and provide mutual support (Maxwell, 2015). As Maxwell (2015) asserts, "No one else in a school has the same responsibilities." When combined with a deep-rooted system reluctant to change, these factors result in high rates of attrition among educators (Busby, 2019).

Due to the many expectations required of the building principal, and the expectation that the overwhelming demands of the job will be met regardless of the time and energy involved, the retention of high-quality school leaders has been an ongoing concern (Malone & Caddell, 2000). To illustrate, Campbell et al. (2014) found that on an annual basis, 15% of school principals in Washington State move between buildings or leave the principalship altogether. Their report also found the school principal turnover rate to be the highest in "high-poverty, rural and secondary schools" suggesting that context matters. As posited by Hauseman et al. (2020), the advent of a crisis exacerbates these circumstances, creating work intensification with added demands and new responsibilities. The increased stress of leading through a crisis adversely impacts the professional and personal well-being of the individual, and potentially their willingness to stay in the profession.

In December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) became aware of multiple cases of a viral pneumonia with unknown causes in Wuhan, China (WHO, 2020). At that point, the Novel Coronavirus, a developing new respiratory illness with a rapid transmission rate, became a global concern. The first checklist and professional guidelines were issued by the United States' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in February 2020 (CDC, 2020a). This bulletin was the first of numerous guidelines which would be issued in the weeks that followed, initially providing information primarily to health care workers. For Washington State, the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) became a concern within a few weeks of the first CDC bulletin. On March 11, 2020, COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic and subsequently, on March 13, 2020 it became a national emergency in the United States (CDC, 2020b).

The impact of COVID-19 on school systems locally, nationally, and worldwide was profound. Previous research on respiratory illnesses suggested that school-age children transmit diseases quickly due to their proximity and regular contact with others (Hens, et al., 2009) and as a containment tactic, school closures could reduce the rapid spread of the disease (Cauchemez, et al., 2009; Bailey & Schurz, 2020). Consequently, in February and March 2020 as a mitigation strategy, governments around the world began closing schools in response to the virus (Bayham & Fenichel, 2020).

Per the direction of the governor of Washington State, effective March 17, 2020, school buildings in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties were temporarily closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Office of the Governor, 2020a). With only a brief two-day timeline to plan and pivot, schools in these counties scrambled to redesign schools in a virtual learning format for the predicted six-week closure. Shortly thereafter, all schools in Washington State would close and

transition to remote learning, with the initial physical building reopening date set for April 27, 2020 (Office of the Governor, 2020b). As COVID-19 cases continued to increase within Washington State, what began as a short-term mitigation strategy became an extended closure requiring schools to transition to full time remote learning for the remainder of the year. On April 6, 2020, the Governor announced brick and mortar schools would be closed through June 19, 2020, effectively ending the academic school year (Office of the Governor, 2020c).

The school closure response strategy required building leaders to take on unprecedented challenges with little training, adding to an already full plate of responsibilities (Stone-Johnson & Weiner, 2020). Principals were tasked with leading the navigation of uncharted territory and serving as frontline workers. They distributed food to students and families qualifying for free and reduced meals; provided childcare for the students of first responders and healthcare workers; issued, and frequently delivered, computers and other necessary technological devices to students; and supported the remote delivery of lessons to ensure previous learning, knowledge, and skills would be retained (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI], 2020b, 2020c; Stone-Johnson & Weiner, 2020). Once it was determined physical school buildings would remain closed for the duration of the academic school year, the instructional focus shifted from reviewing of previously taught content and skills to providing new information and instruction in a continuous learning model (OSPI, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c, 2020d, 2020e). In addition to the interruption of daily routines, the learning process, and school culture, culminating events such as grading practices, educator evaluations, and high school graduations were dramatically altered resulting in substantial impacts on the building leaders managing the process in real time.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the professional and personal impacts to elementary and secondary public-school principals and assistant principals in Washington State during the COVID-19 crisis, to develop an understanding of the real time and potential long-term effects. Concern for staff, students, and families, in addition to the many new demands, were studied, as well as how administrators coped with stress amid the crisis. Further, this study examined the level of school principals' job satisfaction and desire to leave the principalship pre- and post- COVID-19 to explore potential support options for school administrators in a time of crisis.

The research regarding school closures as a mitigation strategy predominantly centered on the impact to teachers, students, families, and communities. A noticeable gap existed in the availability of literature focused on the professional and personal impacts on building leaders during a crisis. Malone and Caddell (2000) assert that recruiting and retaining principals was already difficult due to the ongoing demands of the job before the current pandemic. In addition, Drago and Pecchia (2016) found that building administrators feel isolated in their job roles, suggesting supportive structures are even more critical during a time of crisis to provide guidance, connection, and collaborative networks. Finally, identifying the needs of building principals in a crisis is necessary to inform the development of resources and supports in such challenging situations.

Theoretical Frameworks

The Crisis in Context Theory (CCT) and the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (TMSC) were used to provide guidance in the collection of data. In addition, the frameworks helped to create structure and clarity in the analysis. Complementary in their alignment, each

framework became the primary or secondary lens dependent upon the focus of the question

series and the data collected. Together, each of these frameworks provides a specific lens for

understanding the impact of a crisis on the individual and the system by emphasizing the

interdependence of the relationship (Myer & Moore, 2006; Folkman, 1984).

To determine the magnitude of the crisis for the individual and/or the system, the CCT

identifies four life dimensions (Myer & Moore, 2006), as shown in Figure 1. The physical life

dimension corresponds to the individual's basic physical needs and safety as well as comfort.

Intrapersonal elements such as emotional well-being and self-efficacy define the psychological

life dimension. Connections and interactions with family, friends, co-workers, and others

characterize the life dimension of social relationships. Finally, a critical consideration in

determining the impact of a crisis is the individual's belief systems in the moral/spiritual

dimension (Myer & Conte, 2006). The four life dimensions of the CCT provided a framework

for constructing the first and second series of the Likert scale questions (see Appendix B) and the

subsequent analysis of the data collected in these areas.

Figure 1

Crisis in Context Theory (CCT)

CRISIS IN CONTEXT THEORY (CCT)
Four Life Dimensions

Physical	Psychological	Social Relationships	Moral/Beliefs
• Basic needs • Health • Safety • Comfort	• Emotional well-being • Personal identity • Self-esteem	• Family • Friends • Co-workers • Students • Social networks	• Integrity • Belief systems • Values • Moral convictions • Spirituality

Myer & Moore, 2006
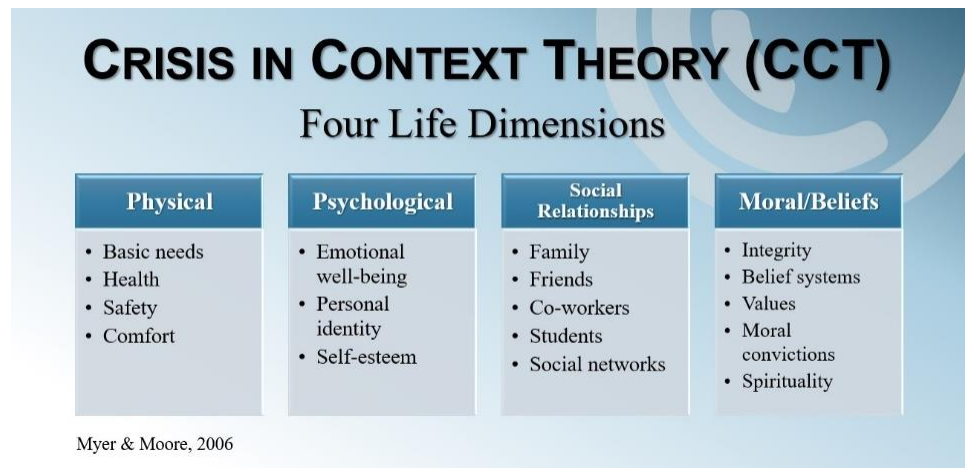
The TMSC is relational and process oriented. Like the CCT, it defines stress as stemming from the relationship between the person and the environment based on the individual's perception of the event (Folkman, 1984). This theory also addresses the importance of perceptions, beliefs, and the sense of personal control in the cognitive aspect of stress and coping as shown in Figure 2. As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to evolve, the individual's perception of control was impacted.

Primary elements of the TMSC are the personal commitments or belief systems as they reveal what is important and has meaning for the individual, thereby influencing perspective. When a crisis impacts a strongly held commitment or belief, it may be evaluated as significant with respect to well-being and the extent of potential harm to that commitment (Folkman, 1984). For example, the COVID-19 school closures caused many educators to examine their existing belief systems regarding student attendance, performance, and grading in these unprecedented circumstances (Hatch, 2020; Seaman, 2020b; Trombrella, 2020).

Four stress and coping categories are identified in the TMSC framework that align with the four life dimensions described in the CCT model. These categories are: (a) physical (e.g., health, energy, stamina); (b) social (e.g., support systems, social networks); (c) psychological (e.g., beliefs, problem-solving skills, self-esteem, morale); and (d) material (e.g., money, tools, tangibles) (Folkman, 1984). The TMSC provided the structure for the development of the third and fourth series of Likert scale questions pertaining to the physical and mental impacts of stress and the coping mechanisms employed by the individual (see Appendix B). This framework also provided the lens for the analysis of the data collected in these areas.

The complementary alignment of the TMSC with the CCT allowed for a seamless shift between the framework used as primary and secondary focus. Further, the frameworks provided a robust

lens for reviewing the literature, creating the survey tool, and analyzing the data focused on the personal and professional impact to educators during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 2

Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (TMSC)

Folkman, 1984
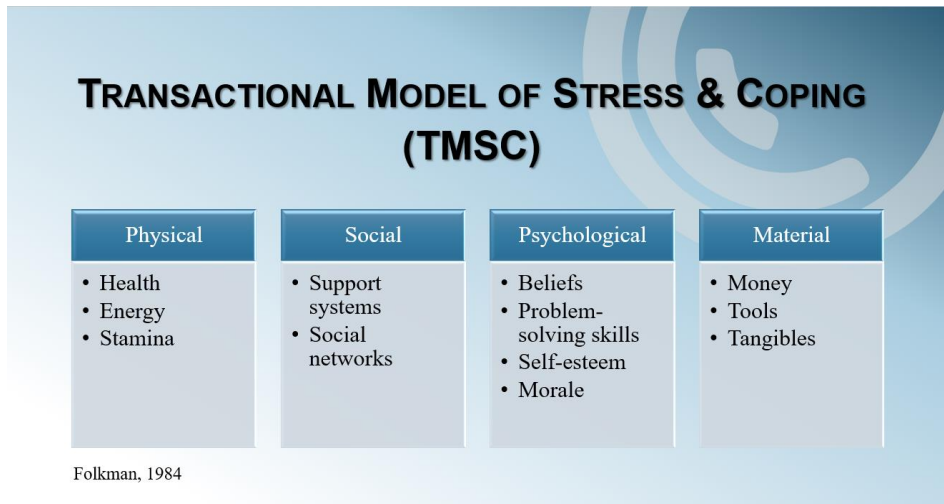
Operational Definitions

- *AWSP*: Association of Washington School Principals, the state professional organization for PK-12 administrators in Washington State.

- *COVID-19*: A highly contagious acute respiratory illness in humans caused by a coronavirus, capable of producing severe symptoms and in some cases death, especially in older people and those with underlying health conditions. It was originally identified in China in 2019 and became a global pandemic in 2020.

- *Distance Learning*: An instructional delivery model where students are not physically in school therefore, teachers are providing instruction virtually using computers, the Internet, and other technology.

- *Educator Well-Being*: The physical, mental, and social-emotional health of a professional teacher or administrator.

- *Impacts*: The short-term and long-term consequences of an action or circumstance such as a crisis or trauma.

- *Mitigation*: A type of strategy to reduce the impact or seriousness of something (e.g., school closures as containment)

- *OSPI*: Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the state guidance office of the Washington State School System.

- *Pandemic*: An outbreak of a disease that is spread across multiple countries and/or globally.

- *PK-12*: The pre-school through grade 12 public education system.

- *Social Distancing*: A mitigation strategy to reduce the spread of illness.

- *Work Intensification*: The increased workload or challenge of tasks and responsibilities frequently with a high-pressure timeline without increased accommodations or compensation.

CHAPTER 2: PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

Seeking school principals. Qualifications: Must be faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap tall buildings in a single bound; must communicate in multiple languages. Ability to be in more than one place simultaneously, to perform miracles and to walk on water highly desirable. Blue uniform with tights and cape furnished by employer (Cushing et al., 2003, p. 28).

One of the most demanding jobs in the professional world is that of the school principal due to everchanging and increasing pressures, that require heroic strength and agility to persevere. The cumulative impact of the stress associated with the principalship has resulted in negative health issues, personal professional imbalance, increasing job dissatisfaction, and desire to leave the profession (Seaman, 2020c). The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these circumstances profoundly impacting the professional identity, social relationships, physical health, and emotional strength of the principal (Hauseman et al., 2020).

Challenges faced by building leaders resulting from the COVID-19 school closures substantially increased adding to an already overwhelming workload. "Principaling has always been a daunting task, but now, principaling [*sic*] in the digital realm has completely redefined the role and responsibilities" (Seaman, 2020a, para. 4). For example, principals were charged with providing support for teachers as they grappled with adapting instructional strategies from the traditional in-person delivery model to a virtual remote learning format. They were challenged with a lack of familiarity with technology and associated platforms, adequacy of workspace and connectivity at home, and the absence of critical resources hindering the delivery of meaningful lessons for students (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020). Principals were leading staff remotely,

communicating without in-person contact, providing meaningful professional development, and attending frequent virtual meetings.

Building leaders were expected to complete teacher and staff evaluations that, due to the school closures, occurred in a virtual environment and in many cases, without having met the minimum observation requirements per state law. This entailed considerable amounts of time to remotely coordinate with building and district leaders to determine allowable modifications and create processes and protocols moving forward. Additionally, many educators cared for their own families, dealt with economic effects, and had the added responsibility of teaching their own children at home.

The extended duration of the school closures necessitated a revision to grading practices and reporting at all levels. High school administrators had the added challenge of communicating and providing guidance to teachers concerning emergency adjustments to graduation requirements, the changing expectations for grading, the impact to transcripts, and the alignment with post-secondary institutions (OSPI, 2020d, 2020e). Moreover, "social distancing" requirements impacted traditional school events including graduation ceremonies, meaning that limited numbers of students, family members, and staff could be in the same area simultaneously resulting in few approved options for how the event could be conducted (Washington State Department of Health, 2020). Due to the plethora of challenges, the distance learning that occurred in the spring might be more accurately characterized as "crisis learning" (McGroarty, 2020).

The research concerning the implementation of school closures as a mitigation strategy predominantly centered on the impact to teachers, students, families, and communities. The researchers, two building administrators experiencing the impact of COVID-19 in real time,

concurred with the impacts as described in the literature based on their personal experiences. However, a search of the literature revealed a substantial gap in the availability of studies focused on the professional and personal impacts on building leaders during a crisis. Identifying the needs of building principals in a crisis is imperative to inform and guide the development of resources and supports in challenging, and many times, unprecedented circumstances. As stated by Cushing et al. (2003), "Have we recognized the stress and health concerns often brought on by the job, and provided support in dealing with these issues?"

Research Question

The researchers hypothesized the COVID-19 school closures adversely impacted the professional and personal well-being of building administrators. The research question stemming from this hypothesis and addressed in this study was: What professional and personal impacts have elementary and secondary public-school principals in Washington State experienced resulting from the school closures due to COVID-19 in March 2020? Additionally, this study sought to develop an understanding of the extent to which these impacts affected building leaders in their decision to leave the principalship. The sub-areas of focus included:

- The level to which a range of personal and professional variables mitigated or exacerbated the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and resulting school closures.
- The specific physical and mental impacts experienced by principals leading through a crisis.
- The coping mechanisms principals engaged in resulting from these impacts.
- The support systems principals would have found helpful during a time of crisis.

These questions were themed into three categories. The first focused on specific factors associated with the workplace and school community such as the grade levels served, school and

district demographics including socioeconomic status, and the availability of supports within the school building. The second series of questions pertained to the personal circumstances of the individual including gender, high-risk for infection status, caretaker responsibilities, and personal living situation. The final category focused on the impacts associated with the physical and mental well-being of the individual, the coping strategies employed in the time of stress, and the availability of personal and professional support systems.

Rationale

Researching the impacts of the school closures continues to be timely and relevant as it evolves in "real time." While school closures have occurred previously in response to a variety of natural disasters, this is the first state and national school closure in response to a pandemic since the Spanish Flu in 1918 (Maher, 2020). As of this writing, the COVID-19 pandemic has not yet been eradicated, and health experts continue to assert that the impacts will persist until a vaccine, effective treatment, and adequate testing are readily available. Consequently, building leaders will likely continue to face uncertain professional and personal challenges and consequences for the duration of this global crisis.

Pandemics and natural disasters will continue to be a reality of our world even after the COVID-19 pandemic crisis has been contained. As a central focus of the community, schools will be affected by these local, national, or global events. Understanding the professional and personal impacts that COVID-19 school closures had on principals may provide district leaders and professional organizations valuable information for the future development of resources and guidance plans focused on supporting the building leader in a time of crises.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) is an acute respiratory illness that over a span of a few months early in 2020 became a global pandemic (WHO, 2020). The virus was reported to have originated in Wuhan, China in late 2019 with just under 10,000 cases reported in at least twenty-one countries as of January 30, 2020 (NEJM Group, 2020). The first case of the highly contagious respiratory illness in the United States occurred in Snohomish County, Washington on January 20, 2020 (CDC, 2020) even before the virus was officially named. Due to the extreme contagion factor, the severity of the disease, and the location of the first outbreak in the United States, the spread of the virus was a serious concern in Washington State (CDC, 2020). The first bulletin to school superintendents from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction concerning the newly named COVID-19 was distributed on February 26, 2020 (OSPI, 2020b). Shortly thereafter, the number of cases in the Puget Sound region began increasing particularly in the most populated areas of King, Snohomish, and Pierce Counties.

COVID-19, and the resulting mitigation strategies, has had significant impacts on businesses, communities, and schools across the state and the country. As a containment strategy, many states implemented closures of workplaces, businesses, schools, and other gathering locations to in-person interaction. Washington State Governor Jay Inslee mandated a "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order on March 23, 2020, with an anticipated reopening by May 4, 2020. However, due to the rapidly increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the State, Inslee announced on the first of May that the "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order was to be extended through May 31, 2020.

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are evolving in real time resulting in a scarcity of peer-reviewed research focused on the impacts of COVID-19 on school-based administrators

hence the focus of this study. Current literature at the beginning of this study took the form of bulletins, advisements, letters, news reports, and short articles with the intent of providing information and guidance to schools. As time has progressed from the initial phase of this inquiry, more information has become available and the researchers have worked diligently to include relevant material as it pertains to the focus of this study.

Pre-Existing Conditions in the Principalship

When considering the impact to student achievement in the educational system, research indicates the role of the principal is the most influential, second only to the impact of effective classroom teachers (Seaman, 2021; Viadero, 2009). The influence of the school principal is far-reaching with a growing list of essential responsibilities including the creation and promotion of a positive and supportive school culture, the assurance of equity and access to opportunities, the engagement of families and other stakeholders in the school community, and the continuous improvement of teaching and learning in service to student perseverance and academic success (Levin et al., 2020). The incessant and continuously shifting demands of the job combined with public criticism and accountability intensification has resulted in increased stress for principals and a heightened desire to leave the profession (Cushing et al., 2003).

A survey conducted by the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) in the summer of 2013 found that despite the many challenges and demands of the position, 81 percent of principals in Washington State indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the job (DeArmond, Denice, & Campbell, 2014). In the 2016-2017 school year, the national principal turnover rate as reported by the United States Department of Education was 18 percent (Maxwell & Superville, 2020). In 2019, a survey developed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) in collaboration with the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) found that

more than two out of five principals nationally, 42 percent, were considering leaving their position (Levin et al., 2020; Seaman, 2020c). Viadero (2009) asserts that principal burnout can be attributed to the relentless pressure from those outside the system, the unpredictability and increasingly more volatile nature of the workday, the exorbitant work hours, and the management of challenging human dynamics.

Cushing et al. (2003) questioned the adequacy of the system in recognizing the various health concerns ascribed to the job and whether the necessary supports were accessible to individuals experiencing these issues. Although the stress of the job is manifested in a variety of ways, high blood pressure and weight gain were determined to be prevalent physical maladies experienced by individuals in the position. Further, research indicated that increased levels of dissatisfaction and burnout were being reported among building principals (Stone-Johnson & Weiner, 2020).

In Time of Crises

Natural disasters, pandemics, and other crises have had a significant impact on educational systems across the nation and around the world (Uchida, 2012; Dooyema et al., 2014; Hens et al., 2009; Epson et al., 2015). Extended school closures have been a recurrent outcome of the damage caused by natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and wildfires similar to those occurring in Australia and California in 2020. Contagious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and various strains of the Influenza virus have also necessitated the extended closure of school facilities as a mitigation strategy to contain the spread of infection (Uchida, 2012; Dooyema et al., 2014; Hens et al., 2009; Epson et al., 2015). Each of these crises and the resulting school-based mitigation strategies required principals to essentially lead their buildings through uncharted territory. In the case of a pandemic or other health crisis, any plans that were

developed changed based on new information and the associated public health organization's evolving guidelines (Hauseman et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed the role of building leaders in the educational system and increased the workload exponentially. As stated by Harris (2020), "School leaders are working tirelessly to ensure that for the learners in their care, emotional, social and mental well-being is nurtured and supported. The scale of their effort and the extent of the leadership challenge are colossal and relentless" (p. 322). Emphasizing the importance of acknowledging the challenges inherent in leading through a crisis and sustaining momentum despite missteps is critical especially in the messiness of a global pandemic (Harris, 2020). The unpredictability of this crisis coupled with a changing format of how learning occurs, has created a significant impact to the development of relationships. This is profoundly difficult for building leaders as it strikes at the very heart of their purpose, connecting with and supporting students (Harris, 2020; Seaman, 2021).

Responsive School Closures

The Spanish Flu in 1918 is one of the first recorded pandemics that employed school closures as a mitigation strategy (Maher, 2020). According to the University of Michigan Medical School's Center for the History of Medicine, worldwide over 50 million people died because of the Spanish Flu pandemic with 675,000 of those deaths occurring in the United States. However, studies showed that cities implementing school closures during the Spanish Flu had an overall lower number of deaths (Maher, 2020).

Additionally, the H1N1 virus and other strains of Influenza have prompted temporary school closures around the globe. In the spring and fall of 2009, officials in Japan determined that the highly contagious H1N1 virus was spread primarily through the close contact of children

and young people. Consequently, either individual classes or entire schools were closed per the decision of the building principals however, studies showed that overall school closures, as opposed to individual classrooms, were more effective as a containment strategy (Uchida, 2012). Similarly, the H1N1 virus affected schools in the United States, with closures implemented in Michigan affecting 567 schools and 188,000 teachers in the fall of 2019 (Dooyema et al., 2014). Michigan schools simultaneously implemented a communication plan aimed at parents and the community stressing the importance of prevention strategies. These strategies included frequent hand washing recommendations, protocols for coughing and sneezing, and to reduce the spread of the illness, a symptom guide to help parents determine when an absence from school was necessary (Dooyema et al., 2014). Other states impacted by the H1N1virus included New York where the pandemic resulted in school closures in the spring and fall of 2019 (Hens et al., 2009).

School closures proved effective in slowing the contagion of Influenza in a Colorado school district in 2013. However, in that case it was determined there were unintended, adverse outcomes for children and adults, including educators; specifically, financial instability and personal stress (Epson et al., 2015).

In research conducted by Cauchemez (2009), additional school closures triggered by illness were highlighted:

- Kindergarten and Primary Schools were closed in Hong Kong in 2008 after two children died from Influenza.
- In January 2000, an Influenza outbreak occurred in Israel. Teachers worrying about the spread of the virus decided to strike forcing schools to close thereby decreasing the number of cases. However, when teachers returned to work, the number of cases increased but not at the same rate or levels as prior to the closure.

● In 1957, France formally closed schools due to a pandemic after a staggering 50-70 percent

 of students had become ill. It was later determined that officials were reluctant to close

 schools earlier because they did not want to incite a public panic.

In other cases, many schools have been forced to close in the aftermath of a natural

disaster. Students and staff were displaced for long periods of time, causing gaps in learning and

the loss of relationships between students and staff. For example, flooding in Minot, North

Dakota displaced students and schools for close to two years (Hintz, 2013) and in 2010,

earthquakes in Christchurch, New Zealand caused damage to schools, businesses, and the

community (Kuntz et al., 2013). These crises situations resulted in significant emotional impacts

for students and educators.

Work Intensification

When schools were closed for an extended period due to Hurricane Katrina, many

inequities were highlighted resulting in additional trauma for students and families (Marbley et

al., 2007). A lack of services for mental health counseling, accessible healthcare, and the

availability of basic needs such as food and shelter, led to secondary trauma and compassion

fatigue for volunteer workers and community members. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic

exposed and exacerbated existing disparities within the educational system (Harris, 2020). For

example, the transition to remote learning required students to have access to the appropriate

technology however, 35 percent of low-income families did not have Internet connectivity in

their home (Harris, 2020). Per Marbley et al. (2007) "multicultural and ethical" (p.2) issues must

be considered in responses to the trauma of a crises.

The primary focus of building principals during the COVID-19 school closures was to

provide the necessary supports for students, staff, and the school community. Hauseman et al.

(2020) assert this intention was reflected in a heightened awareness of accountability factors such as state assessments, school funding formulas based on attendance, and the administrator's responsibility to the community. Principals were required to implement continuously changing policies and processes, meet the immediacy of evolving job demands with little or no time, and provide consistent and transparent communication to parents and families (Hauseman et al., 2020). These conditions created a difficult set of circumstances for administrators specifically an inability to effectively plan for the year which led to increased community frustration with the blame being directed at principals (Maxwell & Superville, 2020).

Professional and Personal Impacts

In a typical year, teachers and school administrators are continuously engaged in relationships with students needing not only academic, but social, emotional, and behavioral support as well. The advent of a crisis, and the associated school closures as a mitigation strategy, intensifies the needs of students and families in these circumstances. Existing research on trauma highlights that students suffer from mental health and chronic stress due to disasters, home situations, financial circumstances, and health issues within families (Lai et al., 2018). Despite a lack of formal training in crisis response strategies, the professionals in the school community (e.g., teachers, principals) often respond by providing support to students' and families in crisis frequently causing secondary trauma to the educators (Lai et al., 2018). However, much of the available literature related to stress, coping, and trauma during a crisis is focused on those traditionally seen as frontline workers (e.g., emergency personnel, firefighters, hospital workers, first responders). Until recently, education professionals have not been included in any significant research related to secondary trauma or post-traumatic stress (Kees & Lashwood, 1996).

Research conducted at the University of Canterbury highlighted educator burnout and stress resulting from a series of earthquakes in Christchurch, New Zealand (Kuntz et al., 2013). The study found that disaster plans which were ineffective, along with the impacts of closed and displaced schools, left educators feeling discouraged, overloaded, and exhausted. Some educators reported depression and anxiety, along with the inability to sleep well and more than usual levels of stress. When schools closed in Africa due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, researchers determined that the amount of work and stress for educators increased significantly (Theron et al., 2008). Changes in the teacher/student relationship, substantial work demands, the responsibility to care for their own families, and a need for an "advanced repertoire of skills" (p.78) caused teachers to consider leaving the profession in greater numbers than before.

Physical and Mental Well-Being

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the tensions and stress of the job building leaders face daily in the principalship (Hauseman et al., 2020). On a personal level, administrators are concerned about their own physical and mental well-being and the health of their families especially those that are categorized as high-risk due to age or underlying conditions (Maxwell & Superville, 2020). To illustrate, a survey conducted in the 2017-2018 school year by the National Center for Education Statistics found that 27 percent of school principals in the United States are over the age of 55 (Bailey & Schurz, 2020). This is significant as this is the highest risk age group for contracting COVID-19 and experiencing life-threatening complications from the virus, thus validating the health concerns of administrators.

Communication to education professionals during the time of the COVID-19 highlights the importance for these individuals to attend to self-care, encouraging staff to watch for stress symptoms, decrease the amount of time spent watching media coverage, monitor sleep, get

exercise, manage time well, and not be isolated (Crepeau-Hobson, 2020). As Harris (2020)

further asserts, principals will be navigating the complexities of the COVID-19 crisis for the

foreseeable future and therefore, must prioritize self-care and their own well-being to effectively

support others.

CHAPTER 4: METHOD AND DESIGN

This study utilized a mixed-methods survey design to learn about the "trends, attitudes, and opinions" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) concerning the impact of school closures on principals and assistant principals in Washington state during the Spring of 2020. The rationale for this mixed-methods approach was to first gain a broad understanding of how building administrators experienced the consequences of the COVID-19 mitigation strategies. This is important because as of this writing, it is highly likely that schools will continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 virus until a thorough vaccination plan has been implemented. Understanding the themes of what went well and what noteworthy impacts the school closure had will inform decision makers regarding practices that limit negative effects on principals in the future. The qualitative approach via open-ended question responses provided specific information regarding how administrators had to adjust within their work and private lives with more detail. Rather than looking only at themes, specific practices within schools were considered if the research revealed they were substantially impactful to educators. To further delineate the data collected, one researcher investigated the impacts on elementary administrators during the school closures, while the other researcher focused on the impacts for secondary principals.

Population Sample

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) reports there are 3,605 PK-12 administrators in Washington State (M. Rogers, personal communication, December 29, 2020). Research participants were identified through the professional school administrators' organization, the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP), and only building administrators who experienced the school closures between March and June 2020 were asked to participate. During the collection timeframe, 507 building administrators voluntarily took part in

the survey, which, according to the Executive Director, was one of the largest survey responses to date in AWSP history (S. Seaman, personal communication, August 26, 2020). This suggests that administrators wanted to share their experiences and impacts as a result of the school closures.

Data Collection

Using the CCT and TMSC frameworks as guidance respectively, a survey (see Appendix B) was created using SurveyMonkey (2020) to measure the professional and personal impacts of the school closures on building principals. In collaboration with the Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP), specific questions were constructed to both understand the impacts to building administrators, and to gain information useful in learning how to better support administrators during a crisis. The survey was vetted by University of Washington professors from the School of Education, and leaders at AWSP, but due to time constraints, it was not tested prior to release.

The survey invitation was sent through a digital link to Washington State administrators in AWSP's weekly electronic newsletter, *Principal Matters,* to capture the current situation and the perceived impact in real time (see Appendix A). The initial survey link was emailed to all AWSP members on August 21, 2020 and the collection window was open through September 30, 2020. On Wednesday, August 25, 2020, AWSP sent an individual message to members' email with a link to the survey and an invitation to participate. The survey was subsequently highlighted in the AWSP digital newsletter September 9, 2020. Most responses (452) were collected in August, although an additional 55 responses were collected in September.

To facilitate the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, the survey, to be completed anonymously by respondents, had three distinct sections. The first section of the

survey asked 19 questions related to the personal and professional demographics of the participants. Role, gender, race/identity, experience, district and school information, and family responsibilities were addressed, allowing for the disaggregation of the collected data by these variables.

The survey's second section included four specific five-point Likert scale topics, each containing questions focused on personal impacts; professional impacts; physical and emotional impacts related to stress; and the coping mechanisms used by administrators during the school closures. The first two Likert scale questions were framed by the four life dimensions outlined in CCT specifically:

1. Physical: The aspects of a person's life involving basic needs, physical safety and comfort including, but not limited to, water, food, shelter, physical health, and financial security.

2. Psychological: This includes intrapersonal elements such as self-concept, emotional well-being, personal identity, self-esteem, and self-efficacy.

3. Social Relationships: The key factor is the dynamics of relationships with family, friends, co-workers, clients, and other social networks.

4. Moral/Spiritual: Issues related to integrity, belief systems, values, moral convictions, spirituality, and religious beliefs are crucial elements in this life dimension, (Myers, 2006).

The first of the Likert scale questions asked participants to rate statements regarding professional and personal impacts as *strongly agree*, *agree*, *neutral*, *disagree*, or *strongly disagree*. The second set of questions focused specifically on professional impacts and were rated as a *major concern*, *some concern*, *undecided*, *slight concern*, or *no concern*.

The third and fourth Likert scale questions were based on the coping resources and responses of the TMSC framework and themed by the physical and emotional effects from stress as well as the coping mechanisms employed by the individual. These were rated as *major increase*, *some increase*, *no change*, *some decrease*, or *major decrease*. Finally, an open-ended question was provided at the end of each Likert scale section for participants to elaborate or provide context and other information related to their scaled responses.

To provide context, the third section was qualitative in design using participant voice to gain more insight into the experience of administrators during the school closures. Respondents were asked a yes or no question about their plans to stay in their administrative role and if the school closure has increased their desire to leave the school principalship. Further, a Likert scale question was used to determine the level of job satisfaction prior to, and since the school closures with a response of *highly satisfied*, *satisfied*, *neither satisfied or unsatisfied*, *unsatisfied*, or *highly unsatisfied*. The final three questions asked participants the following: if they were considering leaving school administration; to share their primary reasons for making that decision; and what personal and professional supports would have been helpful during the school closures. A final open-ended question allowed participants to share additional relevant information that would provide context to their responses.

Data Analysis

Demographic, quantitative, and qualitative information was collected and triangulated to provide context, reduce bias, and ensure reliability of the data. Survey responses were analyzed for patterns, commonalities, and themes, using SurveyMonkey Premium and Microsoft Excel as well as a professional data analyst, and the researchers' practitioner lens for corroboration.

Quantitative

The data collection survey tool included 30 questions overall, with 26 questions collecting quantitative data. The first 18 questions focused on the unique personal and professional demographic data of each respondent. Likert scale questions 19, 20, 21, and 22 focused on the participant's perceived professional and personal impacts, concerns for school community, physical and mental well-being, and coping mechanisms. Questions 22-26 asked principals to respond to prompts regarding longevity and job satisfaction. The researchers were able to analyze each prompt both comprehensively and individually due to the assignment of anonymous response numbers. SurveyMonkey displayed the total responses collected for each prompt and the respondent's survey completion time, creating a table and graph for presenting the findings of each item.

Each Likert scale response was assigned a point value. The first series of Likert scale statements were rated on a 1-5 scale: *Strongly Agree* (5), *Agree* (4), *Neutral* (3), *Disagree* (2), *Strongly Disagree* (1). The second Likert scale questions also used a 1-5 rating scale however, the designations were *Major Concern* (5), *Some Concern* (4), *Undecided* (3), *Slight Concern* (2), and *No Concern* (1). The third and fourth Likert scale questions were rated *Major Increase* (5), *Increase* (4), *No Change* (3), *Decrease* (2), and *Major Decrease* (1). SurveyMonkey displayed minimum, maximum, mean, median, and the standard deviation for the data collected based on their algorithmic calculation for quantitative survey questions (see Appendix C).

Qualitative

The researchers utilized a phenomenological study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) when asking principals who responded to share their perceptions and experiences as a result of the school closings from March through June 2020. The school closures caused by the COVID-19

pandemic during this time presented a specific phenomenon, and it was an experience shared in-common by all respondents. Frankel, Wallen, and Hyun (2019) call this shared experience the "essence", or essential characteristics, of the phenomenological study. Since the CCT and TMSC frameworks were used in the creation of the survey, responding administrators shared their experiences, concerns, and coping mechanisms in the CCT four life dimensions and TMSC four stress and coping areas.

SurveyMonkey correlated the Likert scale open-ended responses with the connected quantitative questions, which were then themed using the CCT for questions 19 and 20, and the TMSC for questions 21 and 22. Additionally, questions 27-30 were specifically seeking principals' perceptions of why they might leave the profession, supports they would have found helpful, and a general open-ended response for principals to share any other insights on their experience. It is important to note that not all respondents answered each qualitative prompt.

The qualitative data collected for individual questions were tagged in SurveyMonkey using open-coding. Using the themes that emerged from the data, the researchers created a codebook for the qualitative responses based on the frequency and recurrence of words or phrases (see Figure 3). Many of the individual comments shared by respondents consisted of multiple themes resulting in more comments when totaled by theme as compared to total responses submitted. Typical comment samples (Frankel, Wallen, and Hyun, 2019) were used in the findings and discussion to highlight the sentiments of the representative group.

Figure 3

Qualitative Codebook Overview

Primary Framework: CCT	Primary Framework: CCT	Primary Framework: TMSC	Primary Framework: TMSC
Professional Impacts Work Intensification	**Professional Impacts** School Community Concerns	**Personal Impacts** Physical & Mental Well-Being	**Personal Impacts** Coping Mechanisms
CODE TAG	CODE TAG	CODE TAG	CODE TAG
Boundaries	Assessing Needs	Anger/Frustration	Connection/Relationships
Communication	Connection/Relationships	Apathy/Motivation	Exercise
Connection/Relationships	Engagement/Attendance	Depression/Hopelessness	Mindfulness/Faith
Decisions/Voice	Equity/Access	Fatigue/Exhaustion	Negative/Unhealthy
Health/Safety	Learning/Assess	Mental/Emotional	Physical Manifestation
Stress/Overwhelm	SEL/Mental Health	Physical Manifestation	Positive/Healthy
Support	Academic/Tech Skills	Stress/Overwhelm	Support Systems
Time	School Commuity Support	Value/Respect	
Value/Respect		Worry/Anxiety	
Workload			
# OF RESPONDENTS 110	# OF RESPONDENTS 187	# OF RESPONDENTS 84	# OF RESPONDENTS 39
% OF 507 TOTAL 21.70	% OF 507 TOTAL 36.88	% OF 507 TOTAL 16.57	% OF 507 TOTAL 7.70

QUESTION 27	QUESTION 28	QUESTION 29	QUESTION 30
Primary Framework: CCT	Framework: CCT & TMSC	Primary Framework: TMSC	Framework: CCT & TMSC
If you are considering leaving school administration, please share with us your primary reasons for making this decision.	Please share with us the PROFESSIONAL supports you would have found helpful during the school closures.	Please share with us the PERSONAL supports you would have found helpful during the school closures	Please provide other comments that help explain your experiences as a building administrator during the COVID-19 school closure.
CODE TAG	CODE TAG	CODE TAG	CODE TAG
Communication	Communication	Professional Connection	Anger/Frustration
Decisions/Voice	Connection/Relationships	Physical Supports	Apathy/Motivation
Family	Decisions/Voice	Family & Friends	Depression/Hopelessness
Health/Safety	District/OSPI Guidance	Mental Supports	Equity/Access
Lack of Joy/"WHY"	PD/Training	Hobbies/Activities	Fatigue/Exhaustion
Stress/Overwhelm	Resources	Compassionate Support	Health/Safety
Time	Support	Time	Mental/Emotional
Value/Respect	Time		Physical Manifestation
Workload			Stress/Overwhelm
			Value/Respect
			Workload
			Worry/Anxiety
# OF RESPONDENTS 234	# OF RESPONDENTS 266	# OF RESPONDENTS 228	# OF RESPONDENTS 194
% OF 507 TOTAL 46.15	% OF 507 TOTAL 52.50	% OF 507 TOTAL 45.00	% OF 507 TOTAL 38.26

Validity and Reliability

As recommended by Creswell and Creswell (2018), the researchers used three procedures for validity: an external auditor, inter-coder agreement, and triangulation of data. Once data was collected and analyzed in SurveyMonkey, the researchers hired a professional data analyst as an outside corroborator. This analyst assisted the researchers in creating a data analysis code book in Microsoft Excel used for cross referencing with the SurveyMonkey data. The themes and characteristics of the CCT and TMSC frameworks were used to provide the structure for the organization of the code book. Quantitative data was specifically analyzed for patterns as to the impact to principals in each of the CCT identified four life dimensions in both their professional and personal lives and the TMSC was applied in the analysis of the stress and coping data. Excel pivot tables were created in all areas to compare variables within the study. The data analyst helped the researchers to identify those coded comments which surfaced as the "essential" commonly shared experiences. These qualitative themes, in addition to the quantitative data, became the focus of the findings and discussion.

Additionally, the researchers cross-checked codes to ensure inter-coder agreement, each researcher agreeing on the identified code words and the criteria for each code. For example, it was agreed that all comments comparing the compensation of building administrators to long-tenured teachers were coded as representing "value/respect."

Triangulation of the data was the final procedure for ensuring validity. For a closer examination of the data, crosstabs and pivot tables were used to find areas of more complex comparison between multiple questions. A thematic analysis of the open-ended questions was used to find patterns and develop categories (see Figure 3) as this is the most efficient method for understanding the meanings of human experiences (Glesne, 2016). Creswell and Creswell (2018)

encourage the researcher to ask if the analysis makes senses and this simple but relevant lens was used to guide the triangulation of the data based on the researchers' own experience as building administrators during the time of the study. Furthermore, the identification and consideration of the researchers' bias was critical in the collection, analyses, and sharing the data to be certain to maintain validity.

Inclusion Criteria

Specific inclusion criteria were determined for both the quantitative and qualitative data collected. While tables are used to display the quantitative data in the findings, the items with the highest median scores per each Likert scale question were the focus of the discussion. Representative qualitative comments were included based on the prominent themes of the question series similarly expressed by more than ten respondents (N=>10).

The researchers found that in some categories, the number of respondents, although interesting, did not meet the confidentiality threshold or the number required for validity. Specifically, the lack of diversity in the principalship throughout Washington State overall was reflected in the study; therefore, disaggregation by race was challenging in the analysis. Elementary/secondary, rural/suburban/urban, male/female and job roles were categories reviewed to learn if the school closure from COVID-19 caused effects that may have been more impactful in specific groups.

Human Subjects/ Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations for this study were around the personal and sensitive nature of building principals and their willingness to admit or reveal their levels of comfort, competence, or significant impacts of their experience during the school closure due to COVID-19.

1. In the initial research for participants, the identification of educators was based on the

AWSP state association list.

2. A school principal in a position of power may not want to reveal information to researchers, based on perceived expectations.

3. The researchers each hold the position of principal and may have bias about how educators respond to the survey questions.

4. Educators may choose not to participate due to the traumatic effects they have experienced.

The researchers were committed to protecting human subjects in this study and completed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval process with the University of Washington. The IRB found the survey required no more than minimal risk to the participants, since they are disclosing their own perceptions during a specific event; therefore, the IRB was approved with an exempt status. Data collected through the survey will be securely stored and held for the three years.

Positionality

We, the researchers, two veteran building administrators in Washington State, experienced the impacts of COVID-19 in real-time with our colleagues, both professionally and personally. During the school closures, one of us was an elementary principal in a district of almost 8,000 students, and the other one of us served as a high school principal in a neighboring district of almost 24,000 students. Our leadership was challenged in new and unprecedented ways. The intensity of leading change in an evolving set of circumstances required an instantaneous response to meet the needs of students, families, staff, and the community, while also experiencing the pandemic with our loved ones. Adapting to the changing demands of the

situation, we often put the needs of our stakeholders ahead of our own, while attempting to create a balance between student learning and the staff's personal and professional needs.

We, as the researchers, are aware of the potential bias stemming from our positionality. We both identify as White, as women, and as building administrators. Using objective tools to collect and examine the responses, we triangulated the data with guidance from a data analyst, ensuring accuracy in the study. Not surprisingly, we discovered the findings in the data aligned with the personal and professional impacts we experienced firsthand.

Strengths and Limitations of the Design

A strength of this study was the partnership with AWSP, which allowed a large number of study participants. The timing of the survey was a benefit, since most data was collected before the advent of the 2020-21 school year, which brought other challenges to building administrators. Limitations of the study included the lack of research literature concerning principal responsibilities during the COVID-19 school closures, and the overall lack of information pertaining to COVID-19 itself. This was due to the ongoing nature of the pandemic. We were, however, able to utilize real time articles and studies as we were in the process of conducting our research.

Another limitation was clarity in the wording of questions 28 and 29, which asked about the personal and professional supports administrators *would have found helpful* during the school closures. It is unclear from some of the responses whether the participants answered as *would have been* or as supports that *were* helpful. This is an area that may have benefitted from having a trial run prior to sending the survey out for data collection. Finally, the amount of data that was collected was both a benefit and a limitation. We chose to write about the key findings that were significant and had common themes; however, our intent was not to exclude those who had

concerns that may have been shared by a few. Every survey we collected had important

information to be considered.

Delineation of Work

As this was a joint dissertation project, we determined early that we would work together

to research, study, and write equally, but then in the analysis and discussion, we decided to

divide the areas of focus by elementary and secondary. We met regularly, both in person

(following strict COVID-19 social distancing norms), over Zoom, by email, and by phone to

collaborate and work together. Both researchers reviewed literature, created the survey, and

wrote, using a shared Word document in a secure OneDrive folder. The entirety of the work was

developed collaboratively, as we edited and modified each other's work and contributions to

create a unified dissertation.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

As discussed in Chapter 1, the overarching intent of this study was to determine to what extent Washington State school administrators, both principals and assistant principals, were impacted personally and professionally during the Spring of 2020 due to the COVID-19 school closures. Additionally, this study sought to understand how these impacts potentially influenced building administrators in the decision to leave the principalship as well as to inform district leadership and professional associations in the development of resources and supports during a crisis. This chapter provides the findings of this study and is organized into four sections: Demographic Data, Professional and Personal Impacts, Longevity and Job Satisfaction, and Additional Open-Ended Responses.

The Demographic Data section is classified into two categories, the characteristics specific to the participant and the characteristics pertaining to the participant's district and school. The next three sections present the key findings and themes that emerged from the data collected. The Professional and Personal Impacts section is organized into four emergent themes: Work Intensification, School Community, Family and Home Circumstances, and Physical and Mental Well-Being. This section is further divided into the health impacts principals experienced due to the school closures and the coping mechanisms employed in response to these impacts. The Longevity and Job Satisfaction section reflects the potential influence of these factors on principal retention and persistence in the position.

As stated in Chapter 4, open-ended questions were included to capture specific experiences and provide context to survey responses. Each series of Likert scale questions included an open-ended response for survey participants to provide comments related to the theme of that series. The final section of the survey was comprised of four open-ended questions

that asked the respondents to share their perception of the impacts, identify professional and

personal supports they would have found helpful, and provided an opportunity for participants to

share general comments regarding their experience as a building administrator during the school

closures. Recognizing not all issues or impacts are represented in the survey questions, the final

open-ended prompt provides space for respondents to share additional impacts not otherwise

covered in the study. Finally, for clarification it is important to note the terms administrator and

principal are used interchangeably within the study and includes the assistant principals who

participated in the survey. When results were significantly different between principals and

assistant principals, it was explicitly noted.

Demographic Data

The first section of the survey asked for demographic information about the respondents

to aid in identifying trends and patterns based on the individual characteristics of the participants.

The rationale for each demographic question was to determine if the impacts experienced by

administrators were exacerbated or mitigated by factors such as role, gender, school size, number

of administrators in a building, or district demographics. Other areas of consideration included

personal high-risk status for contracting COVID-19, the age of children, if applicable, in the

home, and any additional caregiving responsibilities of the participants. These questions were

asked to ascertain if the additional factors may have increased any area of impact.

Participant Characteristics

In partnership with AWSP, a link to an anonymous survey was electronically delivered to

the 3,605 building administrators in Washington State between August 21 and September 30,

2020. The study survey collected data from 507 participants representing a 14% response rate

from K-12 school administrators (see Table 1). Building principals comprised 320 of the survey

contributors and 187 responses were provided by assistant/vice principals representing 15.36%

of building principals and 12.28% of assistant/vice principals overall in Washington State. Of

those that completed the survey, 306 identified as female and 196 identified as male representing

15.46% of women and 12.06% of men administrators in Washington State. Additionally, one

respondent identified as non-binary and three chose not to disclose.

Participants self-identified their race/ethnicity as follows: African American/Black

(1.78%), Asian (1.19%), Indigenous/Native American (1.19%), Latinx (1.58%), Multi-Race,

Pacific Islander (0.20%), and White (88.54%). A small number of participants (13) chose not to

disclose or skipped the question altogether, and six (6) identified as other, specifying via a write

in response: Asian, White; French; Hispanic; Viking; White-Native American-Upper Skagit

Tribe; and Human Being…"one race, one blood." The study participants generally aligned with

the demographic makeup of the principals in Washington State in the areas of gender and race,

as reported by OSPI (M. Rogers, personal communication, December 29, 2020). According to

OSPI, of the administrators in Washington State, 55% identify as female, while 45% identify as

male, in these race/ethnicity categories: African American/Black (4.6%), Asian (3%),

Indigenous/Native American (1%), Pacific Islander (.4%), and White (89%). As OSPI does not

break down the Latinx or Multi-race categories, this information was not available.

The building level at which participants were positioned as administrators was as follows:

224 elementary school, 102 middle/junior high school, 142 high school, 13 K-8 schools, 9 K-12

schools, and 17 Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) programs. In response to years of

experience, the participants characterized a balanced representation. New administrators with 0-1

years of experience were the smallest group with 45 respondents, while administrators with 2-5

years represented the largest group with 158 respondents. The 6-10 years of experience category

was represented by 146 responses and 72 respondents indicated their experience was in the 11-15

year range while the 15 years of experience or more option received 85 responses.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Data (Questions 1-5)

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Position		
Principal	320	63.12
Assistant/Vice Principal	187	36.88
Gender		
Female	306	60.47
Male	196	38.74
Non-binary	1	.20
Prefer not to disclose	3	.59
Race/Ethnicity		
African American/Black	9	1.78
Asian	6	1.19
Indigenous/Native American	6	1.19
Latinx	8	1.58
Multi-Racial	10	1.98
Pacific Islander	1	.20
White	448	88.54
Prefer not to disclose/skip	13	2.56
Building Level		
Elementary	224	44.18
Middle/Junior High	102	20.12
High	142	28.01
K-8	13	2.56
K-12	9	1.78
Alternative Learning Environments	17	3.35
Years of administrative experience		
0-1	45	8.89
2-5	158	31.23
Characteristics	**Number**	**Percentage**
6-10	146	28.85
11-15	72	14.23
> 15	85	16.80

District and School Characteristics

The next set of demographic questions asked respondents to identify specific characteristics pertaining to their district and school, as shown in Table 2. Almost half (48.12%) of the participants indicated their school was located in a suburban district, 19.01% selected urban, and 32.87% of the respondents selected rural. In response to the question pertaining to school size by student population, the breakdown was as follows: <150 = 3.16%; 150-300 = 7.69%; 300-600 = 44.97%; 601-900 = 19.53%; 901-1500 = 13.21%; and >1500 = 11.44%.

The Free and Reduced Lunch (F/RL) percentage is used by state and federal agencies as an indicator of the overall socioeconomic status of the school, specifically the level of poverty experienced by students and families in the school community. When reporting the F/RL at their individual buildings, 13.47% of administrators indicated they worked at a school with less than a 20% F/RL rate, while 23.15% reported a F/RL rate of 21-40%, 30.89% reported a 41-60% F/RL rate, 20% reported 61-80% F/RL rate, and 12.48% reported a Free and Reduced Lunch rate of more than 80% in their schools.

More than 60% of schools represented in the survey indicated less than 20% of the student population were identified as an English Language Learner (ELL), and 47.23% reported a Special Education population of between 11-15%. Respondents identified a variety of specific special programs in their buildings including programs for: Autism (40.21%), Deaf and Hard of Hearing (12.84%), Developmental Preschool (16%), Emotional Behavior Disability (41.05%), Life Skills (53.68%), and Preschool (16%). Moreover, respondents indicated their schools received additional categorical funding in the following areas: Learning Assistance Program (LAP), 366 respondents (75.4%); Title 1, 234 respondents (48.25%); Community Eligibility Program (CEP), 21 respondents (18.97%); and no additional funding, 92 respondents (18.97%).

The total number of staff within each respondent's school was reported as the following: fewer than 20 staff was 4.93%, those with 20-40 staff was 15.38%, the largest group reported between 41-70 staff at 40.63%, those with 71-100 staff was 23.47%, and 15.58% administrators reported having more than 100 staff members. This is noteworthy as administrators continued to be responsible for completing formal observations as part of the evaluation process during the COVID-19 school closures. As this is a time-intensive task, administrators were asked the number of certificated staff evaluations they were responsible for completing. Only 25 administrators (4.93%) had ten or fewer teachers to evaluate, 177 (34.91%) had between 11-20 certificated evaluations, 198 (39.05%) were responsible for evaluating 21-30 teachers, 69 (13.61%) had 31-40 certificated staff to evaluate, and 38 administrators (7.5%) had more than 40 certificated staff to evaluate during the school closure. When asked the number of administrators based in their building, 27.27% reported they were the only principal whereas 45.45% reported in addition to the principal there was one assistant principal, 13.44% reported a total of three administrators, and 13.83% reported they had four or more administrators in their building.

Table 2

District and School Demographic Data (Questions 6-15)

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
District		
Rural	166	32.87
Suburban	243	48.12
Characteristics	**Number**	**Percentage**
Urban	96	19.01
Student Population of School		
1-150	16	3.16
151-300	39	7.69
301-600	228	44.97
601-900	99	19.53
901-1,500	67	13.21

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
More than 1,500	58	11.44
Free/Reduced Lunch Percentage		
<20%	68	13.47
21-40%	117	23.10
41-60%	156	30.89
61-80%	101	20.00
More than 80%	63	12.48
Additional Categorical Funding		
Learning Assistance Program (LAP)	366	75.46
Title 1	234	48.25
Community Eligibility Provision	21	4.33
None	92	18.97
Other	17	3.51
School Special Programs		
Autism	191	40.21
Child Care	74	15.58
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	61	12.84
Developmental Preschool	76	16.00
Emotional Behavior Disability (EBD)	195	41.05
English Language Learner (ELL)	396	83.37
Life Skills	255	53.86
Preschool	76	16.00
Number of Total Staff		
<20	25	4.93
20-40	78	15.38
41-60	206	40.63
41-100	119	23.47
>100	79	15.58
Number of Certificated Evaluations		
<10	25	4.93
11-20	177	34.91
21-30	198	39.05
31-40	69	13.61
>40	38	7.50
Number of Administrators in Building		
1	138	27.27
2	230	45.45
3	68	13.44
4	70	13.83

Professional and Personal Impacts

The survey questions pertaining to the professional and personal impacts during the

COVID-19 school closures contained some of the most substantial findings of the study as

determined by the median score and the low standard deviation, revealing that many respondents

shared similar impacts. The quantitative findings of the Likert scale questions combined with the

identified impacts on the physical and mental well-being of the individual, and the coping

mechanisms employed, highlight the struggles principals experienced throughout the state as

they were tasked with leading their schools through the unprecedented crisis. The findings of the

survey are organized into four central themes: Work Intensification, School Community

Concerns, Home and Family Circumstances, and Physical and Mental Well-being, including the

aforementioned coping mechanisms.

The Likert scale series asked principals to rate statements related to how the school

closures affected them professionally and personally. The first series of Likert scale statements

were rated on a 1-5 scale: *Strongly Agree* (5), *Agree* (4), *Neutral* (3), *Disagree* (2), *Strongly

Disagree* (1). The second Likert scale questions also used a 1-5 rating scale however, the

designations were *Major Concern* (5), *Some Concern* (4), *Undecided* (3), *Slight Concern* (2), and

No Concern (1). The prompts in these questions were designed to gain a deeper understanding of

the worries and concerns administrators were experiencing as they led their buildings through the

school closure.

The survey produced a substantial amount of quantitative and qualitative data regarding

professional and personal impacts; therefore, the researchers created a table for each section,

displaying the responses in rank order from highest to lowest median score on the five point

Likert scale. Tables included in the data synthesize the question prompt, number of responses

and percentages or median response (*M*), and standard deviation (*SD*). Representative qualitative comments were selected based on the prominent themes of the question series similarly expressed by more than ten respondents (N=>10). These representative comments are shared within the findings of the data to elevate administrators' voices and provide a more robust understanding of their experiences as a result of the school closures. At the end of each section, a complete Likert scale question table displays every question and frequency of responses.

Work Intensification

The primary focus of building principals during the COVID-19 school closures was to provide the necessary supports for students, staff, and the school community. Principals were required to guide their school communities through the continuous revision of policies and processes, meet the changing demands of the job in a severely limited timeframe, and provide timely and consistent communication to parents and families. These factors combined with a heightened awareness of accountability stemming from state assessments, school funding formulas based on attendance, and the administrator's responsibility to the community led to work intensification.

Table 3

Perceived Impacts of School Closures (Question 19)

Item	Statement	M	SD
Professional			
p	My workload increased because of the school closure.	4.31	0.97
g	I had adequate technology to communicate with staff during the school closures.	4.04	0.94
h	My school had adequate Wi-Fi.	4.02	1.02
k	I felt I had adequate access to my school building and resources during the school closure.	3.93	1.09
n	I felt supported by my colleagues and district.	3.67	1.10
a	I was expected to work from home during the duration of the school closure.	3.51	1.10
j	I believe I was able to effectively engage staff during the school closure.	3.35	1.00

Item	Statement	M	SD
o	My work performance has been negatively impacted by the school closure.	3.31	1.19
m	I had adequate communication from my central/district office since the school closure.	3.26	1.29
l	My teachers and other staff had adequate access to my school building and resources during the school closure.	3.06	1.32
i	I had adequate training to facilitate remote/virtual meetings.	2.83	1.19
e	I was able to set appropriate boundaries for my work time.	2.27	1.31
Personal			
f	I had adequate financial resources available to me and my family.	4.24	0.86
d	I was comfortable having some of my home environment visible during video conferencing.	3.90	0.94
c	I had the needed knowledge and resources to support my own child(ren)'s learning at their level.	3.33	1.06
b	I was responsible for teaching my own children while working from home.	3.21	1.41

M=Median; SD=Standard Deviation

When asked to rate their level of agreement on the question "My workload increased because of the school closure," 82.18% of building administrators responded *agree* or *strongly agree* (see Table 4)*.* More elementary principals selected *strongly agree* (61.61%), than their colleagues in middle/junior high and high school (57.27%). When *agree* and *strongly agree* were combined, the average for elementary principals remained higher with 85.71% over middle/junior high school principals (79.41%) and high school principals (78.88%). One elementary principal stated their perception of the workload:

> I just felt really exhausted and found myself sitting at my computer from 8 AM to 9 PM either Zooming, calling parents, emailing, reading emails, reaching out to support services for our families, etc. My eyes were extremely strained, and I had a hard time finding personal time for me and my family and friends.

Building principals indicated they *agree* or *strongly agree* to having an increased workload at 87.74%, compared to that of assistant principals, who responded with a combined total of 72.72%. In reference to the workload, one administrator wrote:

For the first time in my admin career, I cried in front of my staff. I don't feel defeated. I

feel completely overwhelmed. I am an organized person and always meet deadlines. I

have countless emails I haven't opened. Two days ago, I only spent 3 hours of the time I

was awake not working. My husband is frustrated with the time I am devoting to my

work.

Interestingly, 12.30% of assistant principals *disagree* or *strongly disagree* that the

workload increased, compared to only 3.81% of building principals. As one might predict, the

workload responses decreased exponentially with more than one administrator in the building.

Singleton administrators indicated they *strongly agree* (63.04%), while 57.02% of buildings with

two administrators responded *strongly agree*, three administrators in a building *strongly agree* at

a rate of 54.41% and only 47.14% of schools with four administrators *strongly agree* that the

workload had increased. The disaggregation of the data by gender revealed women reported a

higher increase in workload (82.27%) then their male counterparts (75%). When considering

district demographics, it was found that rural, suburban, and urban principals universally *agree*

or *strongly agree* at a rate above 80%.

In addition to an increased workload, the requirement to either do their job from home or

in the school building appeared to intensify the work. To mitigate the spread of COVID-19, on

March 23, 2020, Washington Governor Jay Inslee enacted the "Stay Home, Stay Safe" order

requiring everyone to remain home with the exception of essential workers (Office of the

Governor, 2020b). When asked if they were expected to work from home when schools closed,

approximately one third of principals (32.15%) indicated they *disagree* or *strongly disagree*,

suggesting they were expected to go into their schools. When comparing the responses to those

that were required to work from school versus those that had a choice, the data was statistically

even across Elementary (M=3.52, SD=1.52), Middle/Jr. High (M=3.27, SD=1.43), High School (M=3.63, SD=1.47) building levels, and by principal (M=3.51, SD=1.5) and assistant principal (M=3.53, SD=1.45) roles. However, rural principals (M=3.14, SD=1.55) responded they *disagree* or *strongly disagree* (42.17%) to the expectation to work from home at more than twice the rate of urban administrators (15.62%, M=4.04, SD=1.25) and more than suburban school leaders (31.68%, M=3.56, SD=1.45). Black administrators reported a higher rate of working from home (M=4, SD=1.41) than other races, however, due to the small number of respondents, this may not be representative of all Black administrators.

In the open-ended response section, one administrator commented, "Our district allowed administrators to come to work as they saw fit. I chose to come to my building every day!" Whereas another wrote, "Administration in our district was expected to work at school, even having in person meetings." A different principal commented, "I am being forced to come work from my building while teachers are being allowed to work from the location that works best for them."

Given the changed and increased workload, and the expectation to work from home, 67.13% of principals report they were not able to set appropriate boundaries for their worktime. While principals (69.28%) did *disagree* and *strongly disagree* with being able to set boundaries more that assistant principals (63.44%), the difference was not significant. Similarly, elementary principals reported a slightly higher inability to set boundaries (68.47%) than their middle/junior high (64.17%) and high school (65.50) counterparts. No significant findings appeared between district demographic groups; however, women indicated they *strongly disagree* (42.11%) they were able to set boundaries at a higher rate than men (29.59%). Buildings with principals and

assistant principals did not report an increased ability to set work boundaries. For example, one high school principal commented:

> Although there is often a lack of boundaries between work and personal life, during COVID-19 closures, it seemed there were no parameters. Calls came in from teachers after 8:00 p.m., calls I left for parents on my cell phone were returned after 6:00 p.m. It seemed I lived at my job 24/7.

Undoubtedly principals faced challenges during the school closures; however, administrators did respond favorably to questions related to the availability of resources during this time. Principals acknowledged they had adequate financial resources for their families (86.59%), adequate technology to communicate with staff (82.65%), adequate Wi-Fi at school (79.68%), and access to their buildings, if necessary (78.11%). Two-thirds (66.27%) of building administrators reported feeling supported by colleagues and the district. Conversely, building and resource access for teachers was a concern for 46.35% of principals, and only 42.06% of administrators felt they had adequate communication from their district/central office during the school closures.

Overall, the impacts have been substantial as supported by the findings in the next series of responses. When *strongly agree* (31.16%) and *agree* (38.46%) were combined, just under 70% of administrators in Washington State indicated their attitude about their work, responsibilities, and/or job role has been adversely impacted by the school closure. Additionally, 51.87% of all school principals disclosed they felt their work performance has been negatively impacted by the school closure.

When provided the opportunity to comment on the theme of Question 19 series, 110 administrators (rate of response = 21.69%) shared their perceptions of the workload, their

environment, and their inability to set boundaries. Principals at all levels wrote about the challenges the school closures had created, proportionately to the responses received, as did women and men both in principal and assistant principal roles. Fifty-two comments pertained to the workload, while 22 were related to the demands felt by principals. Twenty-eight administrators commented on district support as a whole, whereas others specified the need for more communication, a lack of feeling valued, and their desire to leave the profession. This comment captured the theme of the vast number of responses:

> The amount of work being pushed down to the school level is enormous and unbearable. I honestly want to quit. I am being forced to come work from my building while teachers are being allowed to work from the location that works best for them. I'd like the flexibility to do that as well. Teachers get to be there for their own children and family, but I am not.

While most comments described the difficulties administrators faced, a few expressed hope for change in the public education system and their resolve to navigate school closures. One such administrator wrote:

> This is hard on everyone. No one, despite outward appearances, has been unaffected by this. It is hard. But, I am honored to do this work and do not complain about the load. I have worked more hours and have had a more challenging work environment the last 6 months than at any period in my 20-year career. And yet, I am honored to do it. There is no blame to be set on anyone. This is a challenging time, and we will rise above!

Table 4

Question 19 Frequency Data

Please respond to the following statements using the following Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, or Strongly Agree. Mark only one box per row.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
p. My workload increased because of the school closure.	1.58% 8	5.35% 27	10.89% 55	25.15% 127	57.03% 288	505	4.31
f. I had adequate financial resources available to me and my family.	1.38% 7	3.16% 16	8.88% 45	43.39% 220	43.20% 219	507	4.24
g. I had adequate technology to communicate with staff during the school closures.	1.58% 8	8.48% 43	7.30% 37	49.51% 251	33.14% 168	507	4.04
h. My school had adequate Wi-Fi.	2.76% 14	8.68% 44	8.88% 45	43.59% 221	36.09% 183	507	4.02
k. I felt I have had adequate access to my school building and resources during the school closure.	4.54% 23	9.47% 48	7.89% 40	45.17% 229	32.94% 167	507	3.93
d. I was comfortable having some of my home environment visible during video conferencing.	2.38% 12	6.73% 34	15.64% 79	49.31% 249	25.94% 131	505	3.90
q. My attitude about my work, responsibilities, and/or job role has been adversely impacted by the school closure.	3.94% 20	13.02% 66	13.41% 68	38.46% 195	31.16% 158	507	3.80
n. I felt supported by my colleagues and district.	4.76% 24	12.70% 64	16.27% 82	43.45% 219	22.82% 115	504	3.67
a. I was expected to work from home during the duration of the school closure.	13.61% 69	18.54% 94	8.48% 43	21.50% 109	37.87% 192	507	3.51
j. I believe I was able to effectively engage staff during the school closure.	4.55% 23	18.02% 91	22.57% 114	47.92% 242	6.93% 35	505	3.35
c. I had the needed knowledge and resources to support my own child(ren)'s learning at their level.	6.40% 30	12.58% 59	36.03% 169	31.34% 147	13.65% 64	469	3.33
o. My work performance has been negatively impacted by the school closure.	7.30% 37	21.89% 111	18.93% 96	36.09% 183	15.78% 80	507	3.31
m. I had adequate communication from my central/district office since the school closure.	12.03% 61	20.12% 102	15.78% 80	34.32% 174	17.75% 90	507	3.26
b. I was responsible for teaching my own children while working from home.	18.26% 88	11.83% 57	24.90% 120	20.95% 101	24.07% 116	482	3.21
l. My teachers and other staff had adequate access to my school building and resources during the school closure.	13.02% 66	29.98% 152	10.65% 54	31.16% 158	15.19% 77	507	3.06
i. I had adequate training to facilitate remote/virtual meetings.	14.48% 73	31.15% 157	18.65% 94	28.77% 145	6.94% 35	504	2.83
e. I was able to set appropriate boundaries for my work time.	37.43% 189	29.70% 150	8.12% 41	17.62% 89	7.13% 36	505	2.27

Open Ended Response Prompt		Total Responses	Rate of Response
Q19	Professional Impacts: Other and/or comments	110	21.70%

School Community Concerns

In addition to administrators expressing their feelings of being overloaded, they also shared considerable concerns regarding student attendance, engagement, and personal and educational well-being during the school closures. The Likert scale question responses, which focused on these areas of concern, had few variations between responses, regardless of school levels, roles, gender, and district demographics. As displayed in Table 5, it is evident in the findings that all building administrators that responded to the survey shared concerns about individual learning needs, equity, technology, and the social emotional well-being of students, families, and staff. Additionally, accountability factors such as grading and graduation requirements, were critical areas of concern for administrators.

Table 5

School Community Concerns (Question 20)

Item	Statement	M	SD
l	Supporting individualized student learning needs (e.g., IEP, LAP, ELL)	4.73	0.65
i	Engaging student in remote learning	4.72	0.56
m	Supporting the social-emotional needs of students	4.68	0.64
a	Equity of student educational experience	4.67	0.67
k	Student attendance in a virtual learning environment	4.60	0.67
n	Supporting the social-emotional needs of families	4.51	0.76
f	Effectively assessing student progress	4.50	0.77
o	Supporting the social-emotional needs of staff	4.46	0.80
q	Student/family access to support services (e.g., mental health, social workers)	4.40	0.81
b	Student access and/or connectivity to technology	4.34	0.90
g	Grading and/or reporting practices during virtual learning	4.24	0.92
d	Teacher technology skills	4.02	0.96
e	Student technology skills	3.82	1.03
j	Weekly communication with students and/or families	3.74	1.11
p	Teacher/Staff evaluation process and completion	3.58	1.26
h	Meeting and/or adjusting graduation requirements	3.40	1.26
c	Teacher access and/or connectivity to technology	3.22	1.33

M=Median; SD=Standard Deviation

Supporting students with identified learning needs such as English Language Learners (ELL), those receiving services from the Learning Assistance Program (LAP), and students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for Special Education was rated the highest area of concern by all participating administrators (94.64%) with 80.16% rating it as a *major concern* and an additional 15.48% rating it as an area of *some concern* (see Table 6). More than 85% (85.27%) of elementary principals responding to the survey indicated individualized student learning needs as a *major concern* (85.27%) and at a higher level than their middle/junior high (76.47%) and high school colleagues (75.35%); however, with combined ratings of *major concern* and *some concern*, all building level leaders rated the concern near 95%. One principal captured a recurring sentiment of those that responded, "I cannot do all the things all the time. I have so many concerns and no clear guidance on how to help the students."

Once schools closed and learning shifted to a virtual model, student attendance and engagement, or lack thereof, became a critical concern for responding administrators. When the total responses for *some concern* and *major concern* were combined, administrators at all building levels shared they were concerned about attendance ($\geq$95%), and academic engagement ($\geq$97%). Twenty-one respondents (4.17%) rated attendance in a virtual learning environment as a *slight concern* or *undecided*, and only one respondent reported having *no concern* about students' attendance. Irrespective of gender, role, or district demographic all 507 respondents rated engagement as a concern at some level, with only nine selecting *slight concern*, and the rest indicating it was an area of *some concern* or *major concern*. This is a substantial finding as every administrator throughout the state that responded to the survey reported they had some level of concern with student engagement during the school closure. Comments referring to this issue included, "I am very concerned about the amount of trauma impacting our students. Many of our

students are not able to fully engage in online learning and even if they are, it is not fulfilling any of their social or emotional needs," and "Capacity for students to engage with other students to develop and maintain social skills, problem solving, etc. is hampered due to school closure. I am concerned about how they will show up when we return to schools."

Equity of students' educational experience was also a critical concern for administrators: 75.05% rated it as a *major concern*, 20.40% rating is as *some concern* and 4.56% rating it a *slight concern* or *undecided*. Equity, along with engagement, was the only other area where 100% of the respondents had some level of concern. One principal concisely stated, "Equity and access are what I am most worried about." The data suggest that one of the most concerning equity issues was technology, with 91.49% of all building administrators being worried about student access and/or connectivity to technology. District demographics did appear to influence this concern with over 66% of rural principals citing student connectivity as a *major concern*. Additionally, 76.79% of principals were concerned about the lack of students' technological skills. However, it is not just the students that principals were concerned about in this area; 83.54% of building leaders rated teacher technological skills either as a *major concern* or *some concern*, and almost 60% report concern for teacher connectivity when teaching from home. When asked what would have been helpful, one principal suggested, "Technology Training like advanced features of Zoom and effectively engaging others in small and large group online professional development and meetings."

In addition to an equitable education, concern for the social-emotional needs of students was rated extremely high among respondents. High school principals were the most concerned about student well-being with 77.30% selecting *major concern*, although it was closely followed by administrators at the middle/junior high (75.25%) and elementary (74.55%) levels. When

major concern was combined with *some concern*, greater than 93% of all leaders agreed that the social-emotional needs of students was concerning, with elementary principals having the most overall concern at 97.76%. Principals and assistant principals were equally worried about students in this area, although urban administrators reported the social-emotional needs of students as a *major concern* (81.25%) greater than rural principals (77.58%) and suburban administrators (70.66%). Connecting with mental health services, counselors, and social workers was a concern for 91.68% of all building leaders. As one building principal questioned, "Who is checking on the well-being of our children?"

Social-emotional concerns were not just reserved for students. Overall, building administrators had substantial concerns (93.84%) for the well-being of families as well. "Our concern is the access to our families to support them. We can't go into homes and are limited with the number of staff who are available to visit students and families," one principal wrote. The number of responses indicating *major concern* and *some concern* were relatively equal for families when compared to concern for students. Regardless of building level, specific job role, or district demographics, the data suggests that the needs of students and their families was a common concern for administrators.

Building principals were also concerned (92.48%) for the social-emotional needs of their staff during the school closures. While the percentage of *major concern* (59.14%) was less than for students and families, when combined with *some concern*, almost every administrator irrespective of group classification, was concerned their staff was also adversely impacted by the school closures. When *some concern* and *major concern* were combined, elementary principals conveyed the highest level of concern for their staff (95.09%), although middle/junior high (90.10%) and high school administrators (88.65%) indicated a high-level of concern for the well-

being of their faculty as well. The data showed these concerns were shared regardless of gender, job role, or district demographics. As one assistant principal commented:

> The stress of staff has been high and trying to support them has been draining to say the least. Now as we work to implement the return of students to our school, the stress on staff is heightened, and that concerns me.

In addition to providing ongoing support to students and other members of the school community, administrators were charged with managing other responsibilities significantly impacted by the school closures. These responsibilities included assessing student learning, grading, and graduation requirements. Effectively assessing student learning was a concern for 94.26% of principals, with 71.43% of elementary principals stating it was a *major concern*, as opposed to 53.47% of middle/junior high and 49.65% of high school administrators expressing a similar level of concern. However, when *some concern* and *major concern* were combined, all levels reported higher than a 90% level of concern, which is substantial. The process of grading during the school closures ranked second in administrators' list of concerns, with all levels, district demographics, and genders reporting a combined (*some concern* and *major concern*) level of concern at 85.74%. The findings from the data collected in this area suggests virtually all respondents agreed that the grading process during the school closures was a major concern. Interestingly, building level and district descriptor (rural, suburban, and urban), rated grading as a *major concern* at almost an equal 47% and only two percentage points separated men (46%) and women (48%) on this same question.

Graduation requirements, student accumulation of credits, and culminating events such as commencement ceremonies were all impacted by the school closures. When asked if meeting and/or adjusting graduation requirements was a concern, predictably high school administrators

ranked the highest with 77.76% indicating it was *some concern* or *major concern*. This is substantially higher than the 35.72% represented at the middle/junior high level and the 35.61% level at elementary. This data indicates that school closure related stressors and concerns are unique to the building level served.

The open-ended prompt for Question 20 generated 187 comments (rate of response = 36.88%) indicating the intensity of the concern for the well-being of students and the school community. One building leader encapsulated their concern for all stakeholders and the burden felt by many principals:

Our neediest students, families, and staff are the ones that absolutely need human contact. They need someone to give them a hug or a high-five. They need someone to have eyes on them. No matter how much we reach out in the virtual space, it's just not the same. These folks are drowning, and I don't know how to help them.

The responses provide evidence to support the assertion that administrators across all groups were worried about the well-being of their students as well as the potential health impacts to self, their family, and the school community stemming from exposure to COVID-19. One administrator's comment provide context to this assertion:

I am struggling with not being able to connect with my families in person. I know there is so much going on in each home (positive, negative, struggles, unrest, trauma) but I don't have the opportunity to see what is happening, so I do not believe that I have a plan that adequately supports staff, students, and families. I did several home visits in the spring. But after being exposed to COVID positive families twice, this became an unsafe practice for my family. I just want to be able to see my students, staff, and families again.

Another principal questioned, "How am I going to support everybody; my staff, my students, my

community, and not entirely lose myself/my family in the process?" while another simply stated,

"I am less concerned about what we are teaching and more concerned with helping everyone feel

connected and valued." As one veteran administrator powerfully articulated, "All of these

questions kept me awake at night worrying about families and my staff. ALL so important."

Table 6

Question 20 Frequency Data

Please respond to the following statements as they apply to your school context, using the following Likert Scale: No Concern, Slight Concern, Undecided, Some Concern, or Major Concern. Mark only one box per row.

	NO CONCERN	SLIGHT CONCERN	UNDECIDED	SOME CONCERN	MAJOR CONCERN	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
l. Supporting individualized student learning needs (e.g. IEP, LAP, ELL).	0.20% 1	2.78% 14	1.39% 7	15.48% 78	80.16% 404	504	4.73
i. Engaging students in remote learning.	0.00% 0	1.79% 9	0.40% 2	21.87% 110	75.94% 382	503	4.72
m. Supporting the social-emotional needs of students.	0.20% 1	2.57% 13	0.99% 5	21.19% 107	75.05% 379	505	4.68
a. Equity of student educational experience.	0.00% 0	3.37% 17	1.19% 6	20.40% 103	75.05% 379	505	4.67
k. Student attendance in a virtual learning environment.	0.20% 1	2.78% 14	1.19% 6	28.97% 146	66.87% 337	504	4.60
n. Supporting the social-emotional needs of families.	0.40% 2	3.78% 19	2.98% 15	29.62% 149	63.22% 318	503	4.51
f. Effectively assessing student progress.	0.40% 2	4.55% 23	0.79% 4	33.47% 169	60.79% 307	505	4.50
o. Supporting the social-emotional needs of staff.	0.59% 3	4.36% 22	2.57% 13	33.07% 167	59.41% 300	505	4.46
q. Student/family access to support services (e.g. counselors, mental health, social worker).	0.59% 3	4.75% 24	2.97% 15	37.03% 187	54.65% 276	505	4.40
b. Student access and/or connectivity to technology.	1.58% 8	6.53% 33	0.40% 2	39.41% 199	52.08% 263	505	4.34
g. Grading and/or reporting practices during virtual learning.	1.19% 6	6.73% 34	6.34% 32	38.61% 195	47.13% 238	505	4.24
d. Teacher technological skills.	0.40% 2	13.49% 68	2.58% 13	50.60% 255	32.94% 166	504	4.02
e. Student technological skills	1.79% 9	15.87% 80	5.56% 28	52.58% 265	24.21% 122	504	3.82
j. Weekly communication with students and/or families.	4.76% 24	13.89% 70	7.94% 40	49.01% 247	24.40% 123	504	3.74
p. Teacher/staff evaluation process and completion.	7.54% 38	16.67% 84	13.29% 67	35.12% 177	27.38% 138	504	3.58
h. Meeting and/or adjusting graduation requirements.	10.87% 54	10.87% 54	29.38% 146	25.15% 125	23.74% 118	497	3.40
c. Teacher access and/or connectivity to technology.	14.46% 73	22.57% 114	3.76% 19	44.95% 227	14.26% 72	505	3.22

Open Ended Response Prompt		Total Responses	Rate of Response
Q20	When I think about Social/Emotional concerns during this time, I have these concerns.	187	36.88%

Home and Family Circumstances

The survey included three questions pertaining to the participant's current home and family situation to allow for the analysis of the data in the context of administrators experiencing the personal impacts of the school closures while simultaneously leading their school through the crisis. The collected data is displayed in Table 7.

Table 7

Home and Family Circumstances (Questions 16-18)

Characteristics	Number	Percentage
School-aged Children in Household		
None	134	26.48
Non-school aged	102	20.16
Primary	127	25.10
Intermediate	67	13.24
Middle/Junior High	115	22.73
High School	152	30.04
*Note total is greater than 100% due to administrators with multiple children.		
Primary Caregiver for Others		
Yes	145	28.77
No	359	71.23
High Risk for COVID-19 for self or other in household		
Yes	193	38.07
No	314	61.93

The first question asked administrators to identify the number of school aged children currently living in their household. The options included *no children, non-school age, primary* (generally kindergarten through 2nd grade), *intermediate* (generally 3rd through 5th grade), *middle/junior high*, and *high school.* Just over 20% (20.16%) of the respondents indicated they had non-school aged children living in the home whereas 25% (25.10%) reported having primary students, 13.24% reported intermediate students living in their home, 22.73% had middle/junior

high aged students, and 30% (30.04%) of administrators indicated they had high school aged

students living in their home during the school closure.   When the data from these categories

was disaggregated by the participant's gender, building level, or district demographic, no

significant difference existed. However, of the 134 administrators (26.48% of total respondents)

that reported no children living in the home, 76% identified as women while only 24% identified

as men.

Forty six percent (45.02%) of administrators responded they were responsible for

teaching their own children while working from home and leading their schools. These responses

were equally divided between males and females. Comments from respondents are indicative of

the difficulties this presented for principals, especially if they were also required to work in the

building. The following comment is representative of several others:

As an administrator, I HAD to work from the building in order to call it a work day and

not be required to take leave. My challenge was that I was NOT allowed to work

remotely during distance learning; not given flexibility for working remotely vs. in the

building. This lack of flexibility is what caused hardship when it came to supporting my

own children who were learning from home. Worksite flexibility during distance learning

would have made a HUGE difference in my ability to balance work and the needs of my

own school-aged children.

Another administrator shared similar sentiments:

Admin is required to work in the building. No work from home option for principals

which is a big challenge as I have two primary aged children of my own. Virtually no

empathy from the district for principals with children while teachers were provided many

options to meet the needs of their own families.

Moreover, 28.77% of administrators reported they were also the primary caretaker for an adult child, spouse, or parent. Disaggregated data revealed this to be equally distributed between women and men nor was there any statistical difference by building level, district demographic, or number of administrators in the building. One administrator commented:

> Caring for my ill, elderly, and limited mobility parents has been an added challenge. Time off to care for them even if it was an hour of uninterrupted time each day to bathe and help them with daily living would have been helpful.

When asked if they, or someone in their home, is considered high-risk (e.g., over age 60 with underlying health issue, cancer survivor, etc.) for infection from COVID-19, 43.46% of women and 29.56% of men responded this was true for them. While no statistical difference existed between those at different building levels or job roles, it is noted that urban principals reported a higher level of concern (43.75%) in this area, than their colleagues in rural and suburban settings.

The data revealed that when compared to female administrators, males reported more children living in the household although men and women were equally responsible for taking care of other adults. Further, more women (43.46%) reported they, or someone in their home, was at higher risk for contracting COVID-19, than male (29.59%) principals.

Physical and Mental Well-Being

The final two Likert scale series of questions focused on the physical, mental, and emotional health of building principals (see Table 8) as well as the coping mechanisms used in response to stress. Participants were provided a list of statements that completed the following: "As a result of the school closures, I experienced." For each of the options, participants were asked to select either *Major Decrease* (1), Some *Decrease* (2), *No Change* (3), *Some Increase*

(4), or *Major Increase* (5). Both tables reveal that there is relatively low variability in these items.

Table 8

Physical and Mental Well-Being (Question 21)

Item	Statement	M	SD
j	Increased feelings of stress	4.38	0.71
e	Anxiety/panic/worry	4.12	0.77
b	Issues with sleeping (too much/too little)	4.02	0.90
d	Fatigue/unexplained tiredness	3.98	0.80
a	Physical aches and pains (e.g., headaches, eyestrain)	3.93	0.80
g	Difficulties concentrating	3.83	0.77
i	Irritability/lack of patience	3.79	0.80
c	Changes in appetite and/or eating patterns	3.76	0.83
f	Depression/sadness, grief, and/or hopelessness/despair	3.72	0.77
h	Apathy/lack of interest in work	3.55	0.86
k	Difficulties in personal relationships	3.37	0.84
	M=Median; SD=Standard Deviation		

When respondents were asked if they had "increased feelings of stress," almost 90% of participating administrators (88.67%) indicated they experienced an increase, with 49.90% reporting it as a *major increase* (see Table 9). Not surprisingly, building principals responded *major increase* (55.35%) at a higher rate than assistant principals (40.54%). Elementary, middle/junior high, and high school administrators responded similarly to the increase in stress, as did principals in varying district demographics. More women administrators (55.78%) responded a *major increase* of stress than their male counterparts (41.03%). When given an opportunity to comment, one administrator shared how her stress manifested into a health concern, "High blood pressure became Hypertensive Urgency. Stress caused." Another wrote, "I

actually called my doctor to run blood work because I thought something was so off with me.
My family has noticed changes in my health and behavior. The stress is too much."

Participants also reported a substantial increase in anxiety levels, panic, and worry due to
the school closures with 78.64% of building leaders reporting *some increase* or *major increase*.
Women indicated a higher rate (40.73%) in the *major increase* category with a total combined
increase of 83.45% as compared to men who reported *major increase* at 24.23% and the overall
combined increase of anxiety, panic, and worry at 72.07%. These results were similar when the
data was disaggregated by building level, role, and district demographics. A male elementary
principal's comment is representative of the data:

> The lack of predictability in the schedule has upended my ability to plan self-care such as
> exercise and food planning in ways I used to be able to accomplish. Stress and anxiety
> are increased as we face multiple challenges as a system. We are often expected to
> provide calm support to our staff and community through pandemic and social challenges
> while still meeting the fast-changing requirements of our typical jobs.

Another administrator summarized her personal experience as, "Feelings of isolation, loneliness,
hopelessness, despair."

Issues with sleeping (too much or too little) were reported by 74.01% of administrators
because of the school closures. More building principals (77.04%) reported issues with sleeping,
compared to assistant principals (68.81%), and more women (80.59%) experienced sleep issues
than men (63.10%). Just over 30% of men reported *no change* in their sleep during this time.
One building leader stated, "Lack of sleep has been the biggest [issue]."

Many of the respondents (70.83%) reported experiencing increased physical aches and
pains as a result of the school closures. More women (80.92%) reported *some increase* of aches

and pains, including headaches and vision issues. Almost half of men reported *no change* in aches and pains (41.54%) compared to only 17.43% of women reporting *no change*. Similar results were reported by rural, suburban, and urban principals, as well as all levels of building leaders. "Physical issues during so much time behind the screen, back, neck etc." was noted by one administrator, while another disclosed, "Stress hives for over a week in mid-April covered 75% of body."

As a result of the school closures, 65.21% of building leaders reported an increase in difficulties concentrating, while 32.80% reported *no change* and 1.99%, or 10 principals, stated they saw *some decrease* or *major decrease* in difficulties concentrating. One administrator commented, "I can't think anymore. So much info coming in, all the time." Another shared, "I am surprised and alarmed at my cognitive decline over the last few months and I attribute that to being under chronic stress since March."

Although the percentage of administrators reporting did not meet the researcher's threshold, it is important to note that the response rate of high school principals was higher than their elementary and middle/junior high colleagues in three areas of physical and mental well-being. When asked about depression/sadness/grief/hopelessness/despair, high school principals reported a *major increase* (24.29%) at almost twice the rate of elementary (12.5%) and middle/junior high (12.87%). When *some increase* and *major increase* were combined, high school (61.43%) and elementary (63.32%) were almost equal, with middle/junior high principals reporting an overall increase of 55.07%. "I have experienced stress, anxiety, and depression. I am not a new administrator and I can usually handle the stresses of the job fairly easily, but it was becoming very difficult to manage," according to one high school principal.

Apathy and a lack of interest in work was reported as a *major increase* by 18.71% of high school administrators. This represents a *major increase* of apathy in almost 1 in 5 high school principals who responded. When *some increase* and *major increase* were combined, over half (53.24%) of high school principals report feelings of apathy and lack of interest in work had increased due to the school closures. The final area where high school principals indicated a comparative *major increase* was correlated with difficulties in personal relationships. While elementary principals reported a *major increase* of only 4.46% in this area, high school principals reported a *major increase* of 15.71%, more than three times higher than their elementary counterparts. Middle/junior high administrators also reported a statistically higher *increase* (14.85%) than elementary principals.

Eighty-seven (87) administrators commented in the open-ended response section of Question 21 regarding physical and mental well-being (response rate = 17.15%). These comments characterized the impacts, "For the first time in my life I'm on anti-anxiety medication BECAUSE OF WORK [*sic*]," and "Body aches from so much sitting." Only three comments indicated improved health benefits due to the school closures as captured by one principal's comments, "Not commuting was really good for my health."

Table 9

Question 21 Frequency Data

Please respond to the following statements using the following Likert Scale: Major Decrease, Some Decrease, No Change, Some Increase, or Major Increase. Mark only one box per row. As a result of the school closures, I experienced:

	MAJOR DECREASE	SOME DECREASE	NO CHANGE	SOME INCREASE	MAJOR INCREASE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
a. Physical aches and pains (e.g. headaches, eyestrain)	0.60% 3	1.79% 9	26.79% 135	45.63% 230	25.20% 127	504	3.93
b. Issues with sleeping (too much/too little)	1.19% 6	3.57% 18	21.23% 107	40.08% 202	33.93% 171	504	4.02
c. Changes in appetite and/or eating patterns	0.00% 0	4.17% 21	36.71% 185	38.10% 192	21.03% 106	504	3.76
d. Fatigue/unexplained tiredness	0.60% 3	0.79% 4	27.38% 138	42.66% 215	28.57% 144	504	3.98
e. Anxiety/panic/worry	0.20% 1	1.00% 5	20.16% 101	44.11% 221	34.53% 173	501	4.12
f. Depression/sadness, grief, and/or hopelessness/ despair	0.40% 2	2.78% 14	36.90% 186	44.44% 224	15.48% 78	504	3.72
g. Difficulties concentrating	0.20% 1	1.79% 9	32.80% 165	44.73% 225	20.48% 103	503	3.83
h. Apathy/lack of interest in work	2.39% 12	4.77% 24	41.35% 208	38.77% 195	12.72% 64	503	3.55
i. Irritability/lack of patience	0.60% 3	3.38% 17	30.82% 155	46.72% 235	18.49% 93	503	3.79
j. Increased feelings of stress	0.00% 0	0.99% 5	10.34% 52	38.77% 195	49.90% 251	503	4.38
k. Difficulties in personal relationships	2.58% 13	5.95% 30	53.17% 268	28.57% 144	9.72% 49	504	3.37

Open Ended Response Prompt		Total Responses	Rate of Response
Q21	Other physical and/or emotional problems or symptoms and/or other comments.	84	16.57%

      Coping Mechanisms. During the school closures, administrators engaged in various activities, behaviors, and strategies to cope with the changes in their work environment, job demands, and increased stress resulting from the school closures (see Table 10). When asked to rate coping and mitigation strategies, respondents shared both increases and decreases in coping resources and responses, as described by Folkman (1984) in the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (TMSC). Coping resources represent the primary ways in which a person mitigates their stress, while coping responses are secondary, often emotional, short term strategies used. The disaggregated data by role, district demographics, gender, and race revealed few areas of

difference between groups, meaning that these strategies were employed or reduced by

administrators evenly across the state. Interestingly, while coping resources increased for some,

they decreased for others.

Table 10

Coping Mechanisms (Question 22)

Item	Statement	M	SD
Resources			
e	Gardening and/or home improvement	3.65	0.92
j	New learning (e.g., self-help, podcasts, webinars)	3.53	0.94
g	Connection with nature (e.g., hiking, camping)	3.38	0.90
b	Regular exercise (e.g., walking, weights, sports)	3.18	1.23
f	Mindfulness-based practices (e.g., meditation, yoga)	3.15	0.77
a	Journaling	3.07	0.54
d	Counseling support	2.98	0.51
c	Hobbies (e.g., art & crafts, music, cooking)	2.95	1.03
i	Social activism (e.g., volunteering, protesting, campaigning)	2.82	0.83
h	Connecting with personal support system (e.g., friends, family)	2.73	1.12
Responses			
m	Using food to cope (e.g., comfort foods, sugar)	3.60	0.79
n	Engagement with Social Media	3.49	0.82
l	Alcohol/substance consumption	3.43	0.69
o	Gaming/TV	3.30	0.74
k	Retail purchasing/shopping	3.05	1.01
	M=Median; SD=Standard Deviation		

Coping Resources. During the school closure, gardening and/or home improvement was

the most substantial area of increase (see Table 11). While 48.10% reported *some increase* in

engagement with these activities, 14.57% reported a *major increase*, implying 62.67% of

administrators reduced stress by working in their yards and homes during the school closures.

Conversely, 8.58% of principals indicated decreased engagement in gardening and home

improvement. New learning, including self-help, podcasts, webinars, and training opportunities,

also increased (54.18%), although decreased for 10.56% of the respondents. Connecting with

nature (e.g., hiking, camping) was another resource employed by participants to mitigate stress

with almost half (49%) of the administrators reporting increased engagement with the outdoors

when schools were closed, although 13.25% of principals indicated a decrease in these activities.

Regular exercise through participating in sports, walking and/or working out increased by

48.01%, although 33.86% of administrators indicated a decrease in regular exercise during this

time. One principal commented, "I am a positive minded, workout warrior! This crap is not

going to defeat me!!" Conversely, another shared, "A lack of exercise. I was at my desk a major

amount of time."

Mindfulness practices, journaling, and counseling support showed a minimal increase or

decrease when schools closed and social activism, including volunteering, protesting, and

campaigning, declined slightly as well. However, responding administrators indicated there was

a considerable decrease (42.28%) in their connection with a personal support system such as

family and friends, which may be attributed to the COVID-19 restrictions and the

aforementioned increased workload.

Coping Responses. The use of food as a coping response to stress was employed by

participants resulting in an overall increase of 51.10%, with 13.57% indicating it was a *major*

increase. One principal commented he experienced, "tremendous weight gain" while others

reported, "gastrointestinal issues," "IBS [Irritable Bowel Syndrome]," and "significant ulcers."

Principals further revealed engagement with social media increased by 48%, followed by an

increase in alcohol consumption by more than 40% of principals. While 34.07% of principals

reported *some increase* of alcohol use, 6.61% reported *major increase*. One principal

commented, "Weight gain and increased use of alcohol; lack of motivation; heightened

emotions; I spent a week mostly in bed which I now realize was depression." Another

administrator disclosed the following:

> I told my wife... I don't want any alcohol in the house for August and September to help
>
> healthy habits. I've never had to say that before. I've also been talking to my staff about
>
> making healthy decisions regarding alcohol. This is the most stressed I have ever been in
>
> my career... also the most middle management I've felt in my career. It is hard to lead
>
> right now with every decision under the microscope.

There was no statistical difference by gender or job role in food, social media and/or

alcohol consumption. Each of these coping responses were reported to have increased or had no

change, with fewer than 7% reporting a decrease. Gaming and TV watching was reported to have

increased for 38.32% of administrators. While 25.80% of administrators responded they

experienced no change in retail/shopping habits, 32.20% of administrators shared their shopping

increased, and conversely, 24% of responding principals indicated it had decreased.

In the open-ended response section of Likert Scale Question 22, additional coping

strategies shared by participants and included crossword puzzles, reading, prayer, and getting a

new pet. However, of the 39 comments collected (response rate = 7.69%), this one is

representative of most:

> The challenge of this pandemic has been that many of us already had our typical, healthy
>
> coping mechanisms in place like regular gym time and coffee with those for which we
>
> could vent and release. Much of this is now lost and it is hard to not replace it with easy
>
> to find, quick escape patterns that are often among the less healthy variety.

Table 11

Question 22 Frequency Data

Please respond to the following statements using the following Likert Scale: Major Decrease, Some Decrease, No Change, Some Increase, or Major Increase. Mark only one box per row.

	MAJOR DECREASE	SOME DECREASE	NO CHANGE	SOME INCREASE	MAJOR INCREASE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
a. Journaling.	2.25% 11	2.87% 14	82.99% 405	9.84% 48	2.05% 10	488	3.07
b. Regular exercise (e.g. walking, weights, sports).	10.16% 51	23.71% 119	18.13% 91	33.86% 170	14.14% 71	502	3.18
c. Hobbies (e.g. art & crafts, music, cooking)	11.95% 60	16.93% 85	38.84% 195	29.08% 146	3.19% 16	502	2.95
d. Counseling support.	3.00% 15	3.80% 19	87.00% 435	4.80% 24	1.40% 7	500	2.98
e. Gardening and/or home improvement.	3.99% 20	4.59% 23	28.74% 144	48.10% 241	14.57% 73	501	3.65
f. Mindfulness-based practices (e.g., meditation, yoga).	4.39% 22	6.79% 34	61.28% 307	24.55% 123	2.99% 15	501	3.15
g. Connecting with nature (e.g. hiking, camping).	4.42% 22	8.84% 44	37.75% 188	42.37% 211	6.63% 33	498	3.38
h. Connecting with personal support system (e.g. friends, family).	16.73% 84	25.50% 128	28.88% 145	25.50% 128	3.39% 17	502	2.73
i. Social activism (e.g. volunteering, protesting, campaigning).	10.98% 55	10.58% 53	64.67% 324	12.57% 63	1.20% 6	501	2.82
j. New learning (e.g. self-help, podcasts, webinars)	3.78% 19	6.77% 34	35.26% 177	41.04% 206	13.15% 66	502	3.53
k. Retail purchasing/shopping.	8.40% 42	16.40% 82	43.00% 215	25.80% 129	6.40% 32	500	3.05
l. Alcohol/substance consumption.	0.60% 3	2.81% 14	55.91% 279	34.07% 170	6.61% 33	499	3.43
m. Using food to cope (e.g. comfort foods, sugar)	0.60% 3	3.79% 19	44.51% 223	37.52% 188	13.57% 68	501	3.60
n. Engagement with social media.	2.20% 11	4.79% 24	44.71% 224	38.32% 192	9.98% 50	501	3.49
o. Gaming/TV	2.62% 13	3.02% 15	61.49% 305	27.02% 134	5.85% 29	496	3.30

Open Ended Response Prompt		Total Responses	Rate of Response
Q22	Other coping strategies used and/or comments.	39	7.69%

Longevity and Job Satisfaction

Attrition and turnover of administrative staff has been an ongoing concern for school

districts for many years (Cushing, Kerrins, and Johnstone, 2003). When the following question

was posed, "In your current plans, how many more years do you anticipate being a school

administrator after the 2020-21 school year?" 2.78% of administrators replied they intended to retire at the end of the current (2020-2021) school year. This finding was consistent across building levels and district demographics. Several participants stated that their retirement plans were made prior to COVID-19 and the school closures, however, some indicated they were retiring earlier than originally planned as illustrated by the following comment, "It is an incredibly stressful job and I am at the age I would like to enjoy my retirement early and maybe return as a substitute admin or assistant principal long term sub in the future." Other respondents (3.98%) indicated they were not planning to retire but instead, intending to leave school administration altogether after the 2020-21school year. Urban principals reported a higher rate (7.45%) of planning to leave school administration as compared with those located in suburban areas (2.48%). In the open-ended responses, a number of these principals referenced the absence of support and the overwhelming amount of work. "In a nutshell: The job has become simply too much. Instructional leader, equity warrior, social worker, arbiter of adult drama, Covid [*sic*] coordinator, etc. with the feeling of little support from central and lots of families pointing fingers. Brutal.," stated one urban principal. Others commented on the lack of feeling valued, either by compensation, or by outward disregard from district leaders/decision-makers, families, or staff. One stated, "My current workload is not sustainable. I do not feel supported by my superintendent. Negative views/comments from the community begin to feel like personal attacks," while another shared, "… a highly paid teacher on my district who coaches and who is on a few committees makes almost as much as an Elementary AP. That is unfair. I'm sad at the lack of leadership, decision making, and alignment." Another wrote:

> I feel my school district has lost their vision of what a school administrator does. I feel
>
> disrespected on a daily basis. I have no interest in continuing the work of being a building
>
> manager as opposed to an educational leader.

Another administrator disclosed their reasons for planning to leave the position after the 2020-21

school year:

> Disrespectful central office. Workload increase. Parents [*sic*] lack of support. Teachers
>
> burning out. I only want to do this job because of students and I never see them. My job
>
> changed significantly with the best part being the furthest away from what I do each day.
>
> I HATE my job and I get no support from my supervisor! They just heap more, more,
>
> more on me. I hope I survive this year. We are saving every penny so I can quit at the
>
> end of my contract. I wish I hadn't signed this year's contract.

> Almost one-fifth (19.09%) of participants responded they planned to leave school

administration within one to four years. Building principals responded at a higher rate in this

category (22.16%), as compared to assistant principals (8.65%). At the opposite end of the scale,

30.42% of the administrators that responded overall indicated they planned to stay in their career

an additional 15 years or more. Of note, when disaggregated by job role, 22.96% of principals

disclosed they intended to stay in the job role more than 15 years, and 43.26% of assistant

principals intended to stay in the profession for the same duration. "[I have] no plans to leave

administration," wrote a middle/junior high level assistant principal. Another administrator

stated, "I won't [leave] because I love my students too much. But the uncertainty mixed with the

politicizing of my job and my students is infuriating. I could do it all no question if politics

would stay out."

Figure 3 displays an average of 19.5% of building leaders will leave school administration annually within their first ten years. This is slightly higher than the current average of 18 percent (Maxwell & Superville, 2020).

Figure 4

Current Plans to Remain in School Administration

In your current plans, how many more years do you anticipate being a school administrator after the 20-21 school year?

Answered: 503   Skipped: 4
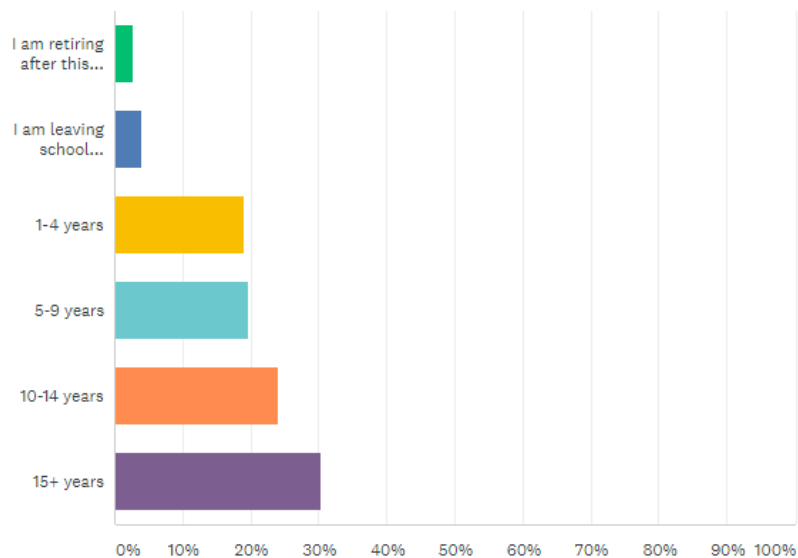
Longevity

Prior research posited 42% of administrators nationally were considering leaving their school leadership position before the COVID-19 school closures (Levin et al., 2020; Seaman, 2020c). This study found the number of responding principals in Washington State with the desire to leave the profession during and since the COVID-19 school closures as appreciably higher at 57.82% (see Figure 4). When disaggregated by building level, the findings were almost identical, with only a one percent difference between elementary, middle/junior high, and high school administrators. Although principals may experience different stressors and concerns, the

school level of administration did not impact the desire to leave the profession. Moreover, no

statistical difference was found when the data was disaggregated by district demographic or race.

However, 64.38% of principals indicated a desire to leave in comparison to 46.49% of assistant

principals, and those who identified as women had a slightly higher desire to leave (60.78%)

versus those who identified as men (53.09%).

Figure 5

Desire to Leave School Administration

Has the school closure increased your desire to leave school administration?

Answered: 505   Skipped: 2
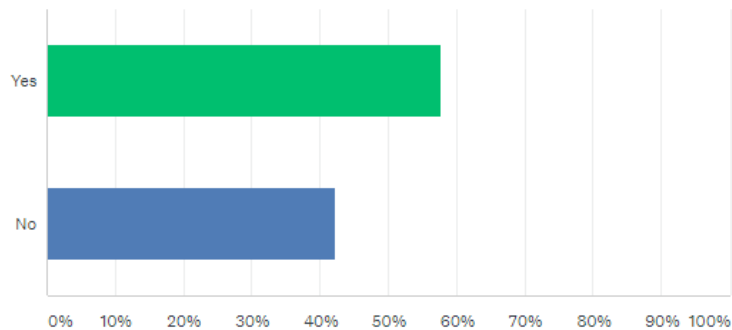
Question 27 of the survey asked participants to respond to the following, "If you are

considering leaving school administration, please share with us your primary reasons for making

this decision." In addition to the many comments embedded in other questions in the key

findings, 234 (rate of response = 46.15%) administrators responded to the prompt (see Table 12).

Some comments were unique to a principal's personal experience or context however, general

themes emerged from the data, including work demands, demonstrating strength for others'

benefit, district/central office concerns, enjoyment of the role, compensation and teacher unions,

value of the principalship, and balance/health.

Table 12

Open-Ended Questions Rate of Response (Questions 27-30)

Open Ended Response Prompt		Total Responses	Rate of Response
Q27	If you are considering leaving school administration, please share with us your primary reasons for making this decision.	234	46.15%
Q28	Please share with us the PROFESSIONAL supports you would have found helpful during the school closures.	266	52.47%
Q29	Please share with us the PERSONAL supports you would have found helpful during the school closures	228	44.97%
Q30	Please provide other comments that help explain your experiences as a building administrator during the COVID-19 school closure.	194	38.26%

- 1,342 total comments written
- 378 (74.55%) of respondents had at least one comment.

Work Demands. As written about extensively earlier in the findings, the data suggests the workload of principals has increased and/or changed during the school closures. As one respondent bluntly stated, "I'm exhausted and burnt out," a sentiment repeated in 31 of the comments. Additionally, one principal wrote:

> The job currently feels undoable. I take my role as an educator seriously, and I am constantly overwhelmed with feelings of inadequacy, fear, and the knowledge that we will be further harming students farthest from educational justice during closure.

Another principal shared:

> This job takes way too much time and I have small children now. The demands on me for evenings and time connected to work are too great for me to feel like I am serving them well. I am going to go back to teaching when we move. Hoping for three years.

Strength for the Benefit of Others. Building leaders reported that it was challenging to remain strong during the COVID-19 pandemic. One administrator commented, "…I know a lot of our staff are struggling and we have had to hide our feelings and struggles to stay strong for our students and community."

As one principal reflected:

> … I feel like the building principal gets the output of all of those anxieties and then there
> is no systemic place for us to put our anxieties that's acceptable within the system. I think
> we're stuck in the place of having to be strong and calm for everyone.

Another principal commented:

> It would have been nice to feel trusted to work from home (we had to check in regularly)
> and to be supported emotionally. Spring was tough and we were expected to be tough for
> our staff (which we were) with no regard to how we were coping.

Central Office Level of Support. The perceived district-directed workload and the
relationship with their supervisors were also a focus of comments made by building
administrators. One principal cited, "Inadequate support and communication from Central
Office" as their rationale for wanting to leave, while another shared:

> So many issues need to be dealt with at the building level. District level decisions that
> create the framework for building decision and systems. Those district level plans are not
> coming to the buildings in a timely manner or, if they do, the district level guidance
> changes so that principals are not given time to enact the systems in the building in an
> effective manner.

Still another wrote, "I have felt more pressure and stress and not as much care or support from
my district. We are in an impossible position and I don't feel as if our school board understands
or respects what they are asking of us." One assistant principal simply stated his reason as, "My
superintendent and principal," while another leader noted, "High level district leadership doesn't
support me with timely information, too much silence."

Lack of Enjoyment. The overall sentiment that the principalship is not enjoyable was shared in comments regarding the desire to consider other careers. "The negative, not being able to support my staff, students and families at the same level, too many hours of work, the job never being done" was noted by one principal. Another stated, "Lack of Support. Over stressed. Workload." Still another administrator shared the sentiments of many in her comment, "I just do not feel that I am making a difference and being effective. The best part of the job is contact with kids, and in the remote setting, I have none at all." An additional principal shared her reasoning as, "We signed up to work with kids and staff, feels like all we do is put out fires for families, and staff because they are upset or frustrated about something... Not nearly, and [as] satisfying as it once was." This comment shed light on the perception of loneliness in the principalship during this time, "I now know what it feels like to be dropped off on a deserted island...minus the sunshine."

Compensation and Teacher Unions. One issue that was noted by 27 administrators throughout the study is the increasing salaries of teachers and the current state of administrator compensation, in addition to stressors related with teacher unions. "The salary/stress level does not equal out. I have teachers in my building making as much as my Asst. Principals. I can work 180 days, coach and advise a club and make a similar wage with half the work," stated one administrator. Another wrote, "Teacher pay continues to catch up to administrators. We are expected to do more and are not supported. Teachers are given everything they ask for and more." Two other administrators also shared their rationale to leave administration with their comments; "Our teachers just got another 5% raise. I want to leave admin and go back to teaching," and "Our teachers make more per day than 80% of our principals. I had two days off this summer."

In reference to teacher unions, one administrator shared:

The biggest challenges are related to meeting the demands of certificated staff. I am very

frustrated with the teachers' unions. We have a system that has devalued the lives of

other employee groups over the teachers. Our teachers refused to interact with the public,

which placed our para-educators working in higher risk situations.

Another principal also voiced teacher union concerns, "Not strongly considering, but working

with Union constraints is adding to my frustration." Adding to the comments, one administrator

wrote, "I would better [*sic*] with my own classroom teaching remotely. Also, the entitlement that

has come out with teacher unions versus classified unions has been sickening." Another principal

shared this commentary, "It has become increasingly clear it is an is [us] versus them regarding

teachers and admin across our district."

Value of the Principalship. Numerous administrators (17) commented that they did not

feel valued and their job role was not respected. One respondent stated, "Top

down decision making when all signs pointed to collaboration and teamwork." An assistant

principal wrote, "Lack of value in the assistant principal role. Feel like we are only valued as a

disciplinarian. This is draining with the increase of the severity of behaviors seen on a daily

basis." Another principal shared they may leave due to, "…Lack of respect from the WEA for

the work administrators do in support of teachers and staff for students."

Health. Although health has been addressed in a previous section, it was also cited as a

reason to consider leaving administration, with one participant commenting, "Health

deterioration. High blood pressure, stomach ulcers and internal bleeding, anxiety, depression.

I'm only 40. I'm also considered a principal leader in Ed tech and have been consumed helping
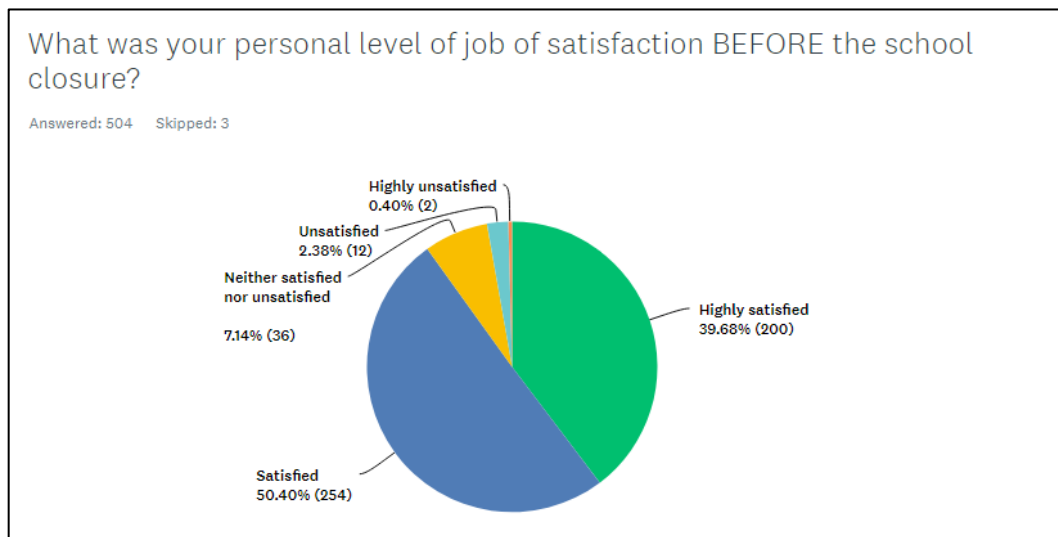
build capacity in our district. It's overwhelming." Another principal, in sharing their reason for leaving stated, "Impacts of stress on health and personal life."

Job Satisfaction

Administrators were asked to rate their level of job satisfaction before the school closures (see Figure 5). Of the total respondents, 39.68% were *highly satisfied,* 50.40% were *satisfied*, 7.14% were *neither satisfied nor unsatisfied*, 2.38% were *unsatisfied*, and 0.40% were *highly unsatisfied*. Disaggregated data showed the levels of job satisfaction were not statistically different between administrators of different levels, district demographics, role, or gender.

Figure 6

Job Satisfaction Before School Closure

What was your personal level of job of satisfaction BEFORE the school closure?

Answered: 504   Skipped: 3

Highly unsatisfied 0.40% (2)
Unsatisfied 2.38% (12)
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied 7.14% (36)
Highly satisfied 39.68% (200)
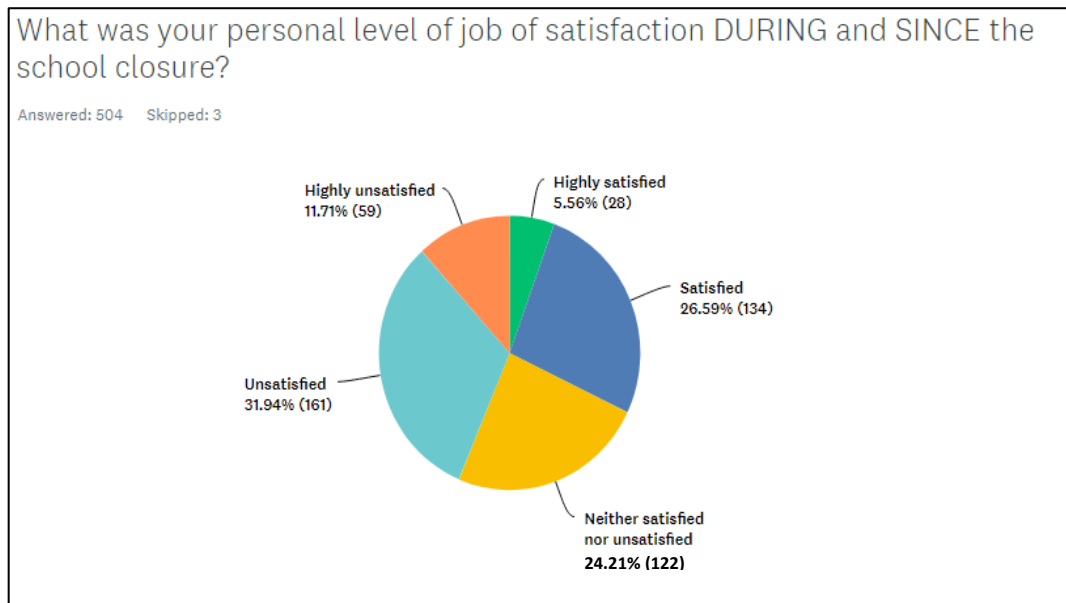Satisfied 50.40% (254)

Principals were then asked to rate their level of job satisfaction during and since the school closures (see Figure 6). Of the total respondents, only 5.56% indicated they were *highly satisfied*. This represents a substantial decrease of *highly satisfied* administrators by 34.12% as a direct result of the school closures (see Table 13). Only 26.59% rated their job satisfaction as *satisfied*, also a significant reduction at 23.81%. Those who reported they were *neither satisfied*

nor unsatisfied increased by 17.07% to 24.21%, whereas 31.94% of the participants reported being *unsatisfied*, an increase of 29.56%, and those who reported being *highly unsatisfied* increased by 11.31% to 11.71%. Statistically, disaggregated data continued to show no significant differences between the sub-groups.

Figure 7

Job Satisfaction During/Since School Closure

Table 13

Job Satisfaction Rate of Change

Job Satisfaction Rate of Change			
Indicator	Before	During/ Since	Difference (+/-)
Highly Satisfied	39.68%	5.56%	-34.12%
Satisfied	50.40%	26.59%	-23.81%
Neither Satisfied nor Unsatisfied	7.14%	24.21%	+17.07%
Unsatisfied	2.38%	31.94%	+29.56%
Highly Unsatisfied	0.40%	11.71%	+11.31%

Professional Supports. Administrators were asked what professional supports they would have found helpful during the school closures. This open-ended question received 266 responses (rate of response = 52.47%). Upon analysis, 56 comments contained the phrase "needed support", which suggests needed supports from their supervisors, district, staff, family, and guidance from OSPI and the state. Tech support, support groups, a mentor or ongoing collaboration with colleagues were requested by some respondents. One principal shared, "Anything would have been good. We had nothing. I would like to have had small group weekly check-ins with other administration, learning about how to support teachers, and how to provide learning for teachers about technology." Another principal responded, "Support group that I could call into and listen/talk." "What professional supports?" asked one administrator, while another suggested, "Access to support groups without having to 'search out' would have been helpful."

Some principals chose to write about supports they did find helpful. "My colleagues. We have a great League Principal group and I have friends that are in Admin in other areas of the state. AWSP has been a great support also :) We have leaned on you guys quite a bit in the last 8 months," and "My principal colleagues have been a tremendous support." One administrator shared at length:

I think I had about the most robust supports I could have asked for - my superintendent called to check on me just to see how I was doing, my direct supervisor was always available, district meetings were frequent (sometimes too frequent...but I shouldn't complain) and modeled what we should do with our staff. The biggest help would have been more time to just talk through the day-to-day issues with my peers in the district. We got high-level messaging and support but didn't get a lot of 'trenches' talk during

meetings. We created this on our own, but that was outside of and in addition

to district run meetings.

Time was identified as another support that would have been helpful during the school

closure. Administrators referenced needed "support to find boundaries between personal and

work time. Communication and team collaboration and process time to create systems for

implication [implementation] that are thought out." Additionally, the concept of time was

referenced repeatedly as in timely communication, more time to process information to make

changes, and time for collaboration with colleagues and district office staff, and less time in

meetings.

Increased staffing in specific job roles during the closures would have been helpful,

according to some principals. Additional counselors, social workers, and administrators were

suggested for additional follow up with families and students. One principal wrote:

Answers....but that wasn't possible. A timeline...but that isn't possible. Set hours. I found

myself working at 5:30 in the morning and 11:30 at night.... a lot more often. I couldn't

turn off or unplug from work.... families and staff needed to [*sic*] much support. EACH

SCHOOL NEEDS A SOCIAL WORKER to help connect with families.

Training in technology and how to support teachers was also suggested in the comments.

One administrator shared:

Increased resources for schools to adequately respond to the new needs in a

crisis. Training and coaching for district and building staff on how to manage the

situation in a healthy way. Earlier and clearer guidance from OSPI for decision making.

Personal Supports. Question 29 prompted participants to identify the personal supports

that would have been helpful during the school closures resulting in 228 respondents (rate of

response = 44.97%) sharing their suggestions. Personal connections with loved ones, friends, and colleagues were mentioned as the most critical personal supports. Many principals shared they were fortunate to have these in place, with comments such as, "I walk with a friend every night. She is a lifesaver," and "My family has been very important during this time, I have been able to have more time with my kids." One respondent commented engaging in the following supports was helpful, "Hiking, exercising, staying connected with fellow administrators, family and friends."

Colleagues and professional collaboration were mentioned most, only after family and friends. One principal referenced the importance of collegial relationships:

I'm in a small district and am the K-8 principal and one of my dearest friends is the HS principal. We understood what each other was going through and helped each other keep our chins up and work through the challenges of running our schools and supporting our staff, students, and families from home.

Many administrators shared they would have benefitted from connecting with other colleagues. One stated they would have appreciated, "Superintendent or Asst Superintendent reaching out on a personal level to check in," a sentiment that was shared by over 20 respondents. One principal wrote:

I think knowing that my safety and well-being were valued by my school district would have gone a long way towards feeling personally supported. Other than that, I have a wonderful and loving family, my health, a beautiful area in which to live, and the ability to social distance. I feel I have plenty of personal support in place.

Counseling, therapy, faith, and hobbies were personal supports which were also mentioned, presumably as supports that did help during the school closures as opposed to what

would have helped. Several administrators would have liked to have the flexibility for principals

to bring their children to school, if required to work in the building, as a helpful support. Another

request was the flexibility of time to care for family members during the quarantine.

Additional Open-Ended Responses

The final series of survey questions were an open-ended prompt, asking principals to

provide additional information for clarity and context regarding their experiences as a building

administrator during the COVID-19 school closure. A total of 194 administrators (response rate

= 38.26%) shared written responses with an array of topics addressed.

Although the survey collected a total of 1,342 comments, fewer than 2% (n = <26) of

shared messages could be characterized as hopeful in this final response item. When referring to

her experience during the school closure, one building leader disclosed, "It actually brought our

staff closer together. We were able to delve more deeply into social justice issues and created

greater partnerships with our families through home visits. Our teachers' technological skills

improved drastically as well." Another principal responded, "This pandemic served as a

reminder for me the role that a building principal has in the lives of the school community, both

teachers and families." Still another administrator noted:

> I actually had a chance to re-set and re-establish a better work life balance. I gained a lot
>
> of weight but have recently put myself back on track with eating healthy and exercising.
>
> My building principal have also started creating better boundaries with our staff to show
>
> a work life balance to help model, i.e., not sending emails at night or on weekends.

Another principal encouraged the continuation of collaboration:

> Collaborating with other principals across the state and getting ideas on how to support
>
> staff, take care of self, and learn about others' systems and supports they have put in

place to rally through this incredibly challenging time. Keep up more collaboration opportunities!

More than 98% of all comments centered on the themes of work intensification, concern for students, the challenges of caring for family, and personal well-being, which have been addressed and embedded in context. Overall, the additional comments conveyed frustration, anger, and disappointment at the inability of principals to effectively support the students and staff in their care. One principal's comment encapsulates what many other respondents shared:

The ripple effects of Covid-19 throughout the landscape of everything we do is unimaginable and becomes more and more complex every day. It feels as if we are on a path towards incredible inequity for kids and that too much attention is paid to adult problems instead of what kids need.

Summary

The findings reveal that principals were impacted substantially in both the volume of work and the concerns for students and staff, which caused a great deal of stress to administrators. Additionally, many principals incurred physical and mental health impacts resulting in the utilization of various coping mechanisms. Job satisfaction of study participants decreased while the desire to leave administration increased because of the school closures. Comments from administrators point to the lack of ongoing professional supports and relationships as a primary reason for their dissatisfaction, in addition to the lack of feeling valued, the lack of boundaries, and a feeling of isolation.

Chapter 6 will first present the context of other issues and events that occurred concurrent to the school closures. The purpose of setting this context is to inform readers that other factors may have impacted principals within the same timeframe when schools were closed. The

researchers then summarize and discuss the findings of this study, connecting the professional

and personal impacts to job satisfaction and the desire to remain in the principalship.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

As of this writing, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a persistent and evolving global crisis. As the data implies, the impacts are ongoing and the collective trauma is significant however, it has not occurred in isolation. Other local, national, and world events have also transpired which may have contributed to the stress and concerns that school principals experienced thereby potentially influencing survey participants' responses. Crises are experienced in layers based on proximity, the unique response of those involved, the interaction of relationships, the degree of change, and the ensuing timeframe (Myer & Moore, 2006). As previously discussed, the Crisis in Context Theory (CCT) provided one of the frameworks for the data analysis specifically the significance of the interaction of individuals within the environmental context as well as the reciprocal influence of reactions resulting from a crisis. This is the crux of the CCT which is illustrated by the COVID-19 crisis and the resulting impacts to the four life dimensions of PK-12 building administrators.

The intent of this study was to focus exclusively on the impacts resulting from the spring of 2020 school closures; however, principals were challenged with additional crises within the six month time period between March 13th when schools were first ordered to close, and September 30th, when the survey officially ended. The challenge of pivoting to a new instructional model focused on distance learning combined with providing support to the school community during the building closures was exacerbated by the ongoing political, social, and cultural landscape marked by fears of the virus, racial tensions, natural disasters, civil unrest, and political upheaval. The purpose of this chapter is to acknowledge the contexts, discuss the findings, and provide insights into the result of the study.

Acknowledgement of Current Contexts

When initially identified early in 2020, news outlets and other forms of media were immersed in issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic including reports of increasing rates of infection and fatalities. Communities across Washington state were directed to quarantine at home initiating the school closures, with only essential workers (e.g., medical care givers, emergency services, food supply support) being permitted to continue working outside the home. The statewide shutdown triggered hoarding in response to the fear of a scarcity of critical supplies such as food, disinfectants, and toilet paper. Consequently, school buildings became hubs for distribution of food and other necessary items as well as becoming providers of childcare for essential workers.

As the pandemic continued to escalate, the murder of George Floyd, a Black man, on May 25, 2020 took center stage with a video recording his death at the hands of Minneapolis police officers. The video captured his multiple declarations that he could not breathe and pleas for his life as an officer knelt on his neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds. The recording of George Floyd's death permeated mass media platforms amplifying already existing racial tensions, initiating daily demonstrations and protests focused on police brutality and racial injustice across the country.

In March of 2020, wildfires began to occur in the Pacific Northwest with these devastating events becoming another component of the landscape impacting communities throughout the State of Washington. As the season progressed, more fires occurred in Washington than any other previously recorded year ultimately resulting in the decimation of two towns and the destruction of homes across the state. Moreover, the wildfires that raged up

and down the Pacific Coast in Washington, Oregon, and California created major air quality

issues in the region with many cities experiencing record air pollution levels.

Additionally, 2020 was a year of considerable political turmoil due to a highly

contentious presidential campaign and the politicizing of the pandemic and racial injustice. The

president's words and actions were inflammatory in reference to the origin of COVID-19,

causing a rise in discrimination and hate crimes toward those of Asian descent. Furthermore, the

president and other political leaders downplayed the magnitude of the pandemic and the

importance of safety strategies to mitigate contagion, causing confusion and distrust of

quarantine and mask requirements, (Harris, 2020). This confusion and distrust resulted in

frequent public confrontations between those attempting to enforce the mask requirements and

the anti-masker contingency. One building administrator commented in the study:

> I am also fed up with the Trump culture of racism, disrespect, lying, and the approval to
>
> be hateful. He has truly made schools and the virus political issues and it is hurting my
>
> staff by causing division and modeling impoliteness and a huge decline in civility and a
>
> rise in bullying among children and adults.

The aforementioned events intensified the concern of building principals regarding the

well-being of students and families experiencing trauma as a result of the multiple crises

occurring simultaneously. One high school principal shared:

> I worried that students are not getting the emotional support that many of our students
>
> rely on. They are also getting bits of pieces of information and seeing the chaos in our
>
> world and many have no one to process with.

In a typical year, schools become a primary provider of resources and supports when a

crisis occurs however, the inability to connect with students, families, and the school community

was severely restricted due to the pandemic. If schools had been operating normally, building leaders would have been available to provide support and guidance through connection with students and staff. The frustration and the feelings of helplessness that administrators experienced highlights the reality that building principals are often the individuals that support and lead others in the school community in times of crisis.

While some administrators expressed the desire to conduct home visits and check on families, others worried that would increase their risk of becoming infected with the virus and passing it to loved ones. Ultimately, principals were also dealing with the traumatic effects of COVID-19 themselves while continuing to lead their schools through the crisis. "Beliefs about personal control are heavily implicated in stress and coping" (Folkman, 1984, p. 839). This statement captures a central theme of the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (TMSC) framework and is further illustrated in the comments submitted by survey takers as exemplified in the following response:

> My dad died from COVID at the end of April. It's been super hard to deal with that while also dealing with all of the COVID bs [*sic*] and personal feelings/beliefs around if COVID is real and now requiring masks and such.

Compounded by the perceived lack of autonomy and control, the impact of multiple crises occurring concurrently exacerbated the feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness of the respondents.

Although the focus of this study was the impact of the initial school closures in the spring of 2020, the survey window was open August through September 2020, just as building principals were preparing for the reopening of schools. Administrators spent much of the summer months traditionally reserved for personal family time and practicing self-care,

facilitating reopening teams. These teams were tasked with developing plans for meeting the

academic and social-emotional needs of students while ensuring the safety and health of students

and staff in the learning environment amidst ongoing concerns of COVID-19. It is probable that

survey responses were influenced by the multiple variables and crises which were occurring

simultaneously as respondents completed the survey. As stated by Myer and Moore (2006) "The

concept of an ecological perspective is based on the idea that crises do not happen in a vacuum

but are shaped by the cultural and social contexts in which they occur" (p. 139).

Discussion of Findings

As a building leader in the public school systems, principals directly experienced the

COVID-19 crisis on a professional and personal level when school closures were implemented

as a containment strategy across the state. Further, as evidenced by the survey results, the

relationship between district decision-makers, community members, and building leaders was in

some cases strained because of the ever-changing circumstances, conflicting perceptions, and

resulting fluctuation in interactions. The needs of the constantly evolving situation and the

truncated timeframe necessitated an immediate and adaptive response from building leaders, and

the school system as a whole, virtually eliminating the opportunity to collaboratively develop a

comprehensive plan of action. As suggested by participants' response to the survey, this resulted

in considerable professional and personal impacts to building administrators leading through a

crisis.

The data collected in this study concludes that school leaders experienced substantial

professional and personal impacts which affected their overall well-being and job satisfaction,

ultimately influencing their decision to continue, or not, in the principalship. Additionally, the

survey results suggest that the intensified and changing work conditions, in addition to

administrators' concerns for students, are impacting the joy of the job thus creating an increased

desire for school administrators to leave the position. The discussion of the findings, therefore,

will specifically highlight these major elements: Elementary and Secondary Comparison, Work

Intensification, Concern for Students, and Physical and Mental Well-being. Focus will then shift

to how these elements impact job satisfaction and a higher than ever desire to leave the

profession, concluding with professional recommendations based on what principals stated

would have been helpful during this time of crisis.

Elementary and Secondary Comparison

The challenges faced by principals during the COVID-19 school closures are aligned

with all four life dimensions of the CCT: Physical, Psychological, Relational, and Moral (see

Figure 1). Furthermore, the data from this study indicates administrators throughout the state

regardless of school level, gender or racial identity all struggled with the same challenges

resulting from the school closures. Prior to the study, we had hypothesized numerous differences

would be revealed when comparing the experiences of leaders at different building levels,

specifically elementary versus secondary. This was partially true. While the data pertaining to

the personal and professional impacts of the work did not vary greatly, the stressors faced by

administrators were specific to the grade levels served.

Elementary. As evidenced by the data, elementary principals overall indicated their

work had intensified at a higher rate when compared to their colleagues at other building levels.

Elementary schools are predominantly led by a singleton principal as compared to secondary

schools which are frequently staffed with an administrative team. Working in solitary conditions

and being separated from others contributes to loneliness and feelings of isolation (Drago &

Pecchia, 2014). These feelings intensified with the advent of COVID-19, where principals may

have had little to no contact with others due to working from home, quarantining, and socially

distancing. One elementary principal in the study listed, "Isolation from students and staff; risk

of contracting COVID; lack of district leadership through the pandemic" as his rationale for

considering leaving the principalship altogether. Additionally, elementary administrators may

have been assigned tasks and responsibilities for which they were not prepared or sometimes

adequately trained. For example, as directed by the Washington governor, many elementary

schools became childcare centers for first responders while others were expected to create

schedules for lunch sites and technology pick-up stations. Many were required to do it all. As a

result of these tasks and responsibilities, administrators were expected to be onsite and work in

the building, while others, including their teachers, were able to work from home, adding to

feelings of isolation and overwhelm.

Elementary principals expressed their many concerns for their students including the lack

of technological skills for the five to ten-year-olds which made the implementation of learning

platforms and remote conferences challenging for teachers to meet the needs of their students.

Over time, paper packets and work pick up and drop off became an option however, often the

principal was often the only staff in the building available to provide access and meet those

needs. In addition to academic concerns, many elementary principals expressed their fears for the

welfare of the students they serve. One worried elementary principal shared:

> Several of our students dropped off the radar completely. We had several staff members
>
> do home visits and were still unable to locate students and families. Not sure if they went
>
> to live with other family members etc. However, there was no attempt by several families
>
> to pick up digital devices, school work packets, free internet hotspot or free internet sign

up events. I am very worried if these students are receiving any SEL or academic

instruction.

Finally, the majority of respondents at the elementary level identified as women, a group

that according to survey results also reported a higher level of stress and impact from the school

closures. Hochschild (2012) reports that professional women, more than men, also have what

she calls a "second shift," the extra responsibility to care for the household chores, childcare, and

caregiving to others in addition to their work required by their career. The data in this study

showed that, although men and women reported children in the home, women reported a higher

rate of responsibility for caregiving while also indicating they were considered a higher risk for

contracting COVID-19. One elementary administrator who is also a caregiver stated, "The job

has become too difficult and consumes all my time on weekdays and Saturdays. I don't have

enough time to adequately care for my mother and to have any semblance of balance in my life."

Secondary. Secondary administrators faced many of the same challenges as their

elementary counterparts in attempting to balance their work and home lives and responsibilities.

The data indicated that student learning, social-emotional health, attendance, and engagement

were major concerns across all building levels. However, issues related to the grading process,

graduation requirements, commencement ceremonies, and the overall mental and physical health

of adolescents including depression, suicidal ideation, and self-harm added stressors to an

already full workload for secondary principals.

Of the high school administrators that participated in the study, 85.33% indicated grading

as a concern. In April of 2020, OSPI issued guidance that specified the grading process for

grades 9-12 which also applied to any middle school student enrolled in credit-bearing high

school courses. The primary edict in this document emphasized, "Do no harm!" (p. iii) which

was met with mixed reviews by principals and stakeholders throughout Washington (OSPI,

2020d). One high school principal shared the following thoughts on the COVID-19 grading

guidance:

> I think the politicians at OSPI made decisions too quickly that crippled us later on.
>
> Everyone was in a tough spot but seriously let's take some time before we bungle the
>
> whole thing by saying grades don't matter. Can't get a do over on that one.

A middle/junior high school principal added, "Last spring when our governor and superintendent

of public instruction froze grades in March and told students they could not fail, it immediately

disengaged half of my student population." Conversely, Kurt Hatch, Associate Director of

AWSP and a member of the OSPI workgroup on grading, wrote:

> This is not business as usual and we should not act as though it is. At a time when our
>
> system-wide instructional capacity has been severely hindered, our equity-centered
>
> mission should ensure, first and foremost, all decisions **do no harm**. We must adhere to
>
> an educational version of the Hippocratic Oath (Hatch, 2020, para. 4).

> Embroiled with post-secondary institutions, secondary grading policies are immersed in

the status quo, that when challenged, strike at the very core of many educator's firmly

entrenched belief systems (Folkman, 1984; Seaman, 2020b). This created further distress for

building principals as they were tasked with enforcing the grading guidance as outlined by OSPI

and mandated by their individual districts. One high school assistant principal shared this

reflection, "While I know OSPI didn't have a road map, there were some decisions that came out

of Olympia that ADDED stress. The grading issue alone created a huge wave of challenges."

> Although overall 48.89% of respondents indicated graduation requirements were of *Some*

Concern or a *Major Concern*, when the data was separated by building level the number

increased substantially to 74.86% in the combined categories for high school administrators. OSPI once again provided guidance for meeting and/or adjusting graduation requirements based on the decision made by the Washington State Board of Education on March 26, 2020 (OSPI, 2020e). Managing the adjustment to grading practices and graduation requirements was a multi-faceted, complex, and time-consuming process for high school administrators as it necessitated engaging with an array of stakeholders adding to an already overwhelming workload.

Furthermore, many of the secondary administrators expressed concern for students missing out on the many traditions such as athletics and graduation ceremonies that are a rite of passage and hallmarks of the high school experience. One high school assistant principal shared his thoughts and concerns:

Students have lost many of their athletic/activities that help them connect to school. Students identified isolation as the main struggle in being engaged last spring. My concern is how do we build culture with students and provide them a high school experience while we are out?

On May 14, 2020, the Washington State Department of Health issued guidance for conducting commencement exercises for the Class of 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The belated issuance of this guidance was frustrating for high school administrators tasked with creating an experience that honored the achievements of graduating seniors while maintaining mandated social distancing and safety protocol requirements with only a few weeks to make it happen.

As with administrators at the elementary level, the overall mental-physical health and social-emotional well-being of students were the overriding concerns for secondary administrators particularly when it involved access to support services. One high school principal detailed a problematic issue:

Students feeling connected to support staff (counselor, drug & alcohol counselor, &

outside agency that come to school to support students.) Support was just cut off & staff

lost connections with many of the students that they'd been working with all year.

Students feeling connected with peers and not being lonely and depressed. I was also

worried about some of the students being put in situations at home they are usually able

to get away from because school is their "safe space".

Further extending this concern, another administrator worried, "I also know that our local CPS

has the lowest number of referrals they have ever experienced over a three-month period. And,

yet parent stress and other factors intensified home lives of our children."

Student safety, mentally and physically, was a predominant theme of many of the

comments submitted by respondents such as the following shared by a high school assistant

principal:

I worry about students in homes that are not safe or being stuck with someone at home

that has harmed the student. I worry about depression in students due to not having

contact with friends or others outside the home. I worry about the overall disengagement

of students from education.

Another high school assistant principal acknowledged the role the school serves in the lives of

students beyond the academics, "Students need support from staff. Many students do not have a

healthy home life and now they have been in those difficult situations for months; school is their

safe outlet."

With 96.24% of respondents selecting *Some Concern* or *Major Concern*, effectively

supporting the social-emotional needs of students was a predominant worry for all

administrators; however, adolescent depression when coupled with suicide ideation produced

devastating circumstances in some cases. One middle school principal disclosed, "Two of my students died by suicide and our community was in a great deal of pain, I felt highly responsible for tending to the emotional support of my community while trying to provide a meaningful educational experience." The impact to the mental health of the entire school community as a result of a tragedy of this magnitude, especially in the midst of a pandemic, is clearly at the forefront of this high school principal's mind:

> Kids, parents, teachers, coaches, and administrator's [*sic*] mental health is being stretched to the limit. Self-esteem and depression are obvious. We had a student suicide last spring. If we think we are meeting the needs of our students we are kidding ourselves. We are doing the best we can but this is certainly not equitable. Very obvious of the "haves" and the "have nots."

Not surprisingly, according to the data collected in the survey, high school principals reported higher rates of depression/sadness/grief, and/or hopelessness/despair as well as apathy/lack of interest in work and difficulties in personal relationships as compared to their elementary colleagues.

Professional Impacts

Previous research discusses the many challenges incumbent in the principalship in a typical year including the need to be an instructional leader, resource manager, change agent, and personnel director under relentless public scrutiny (Malone & Caddell, 2000; Viadero, 2009; Maxwell, 2015).

> Principaling [*sic*] in the time of COVID-19 may be the death of me. I am being dramatic, but, really, the last six-and-a-half months have been absolutely over-the-top. I have re-invented what I am doing every two to three weeks since we left in-person school on

March 13, re-calibrated my and my staff's expectations and re-framed our goals to

families and students. I know I am not alone in this feeling, but at the same time, this has

been one of the loneliest times in my professional career (McGroaty, 2020).

Simply put, all principals are struggling. It was a hard job before the pandemic (Maxwell, 2015).

Now, principals are reporting that the demands of the job, lack of boundaries, and the feeling of

not being valued are impacting their mental and physical health, causing almost 6 out of 10

principals to consider leaving their position, and perhaps the field of education altogether.

Work Intensification. Professional demands and concerns, within the context of

COVID-19 in addition to all of the other crises and impacts described above, created unfamiliar

and challenging work conditions, largely without what many administrators consider to be the

most enjoyable part of the job, the presence of students. Additionally, with only half of building

leaders feeling they effectively engaged their building faculty, relationships with staff were also

diminished. This "relationship gap" (Seaman, 2021) means that leaders, who used to feel driven

by their influence on students and staff, were finding it hard to meet the new demands of their

work. With the work being boiled down to a myriad of remote meetings, preparation of new

schedules, becoming COVID building managers, and facilitating all forms of electronic

communication, principals were lacking the day-to-day interactions with their students and staff.

One high school administrator shared:

My workload has increased exponentially. For example, I build the high school master

schedule. The district and teacher's union negotiated an entirely new bell schedule in

mid-August. In addition, budget and projected enrollment declines has impacted building

staffing. My building allocation was decreased by 3.6 certificated FTE since May 11. I

have had to re-staff and reconstruction the master schedule multiple times. I still have yet

to run student schedules due to the ever changing situation and school starts in 8 day. I

am working 18 hours a day and am worried about not getting all that needs to be done.

All of these factors combined has resulted in nearly 7 out of 10 principals reporting their

attitude was adversely affected by the added responsibilities of their role. In short, it is hard to

love your job when the part you enjoy most, the relationships and connections with kids, is non-

existent.

The lack of boundaries, specifically the inability to separate demands of work and home,

were reported by administrators at all levels and in all demographic groups as a major stressor

and contributor to job dissatisfaction. Almost 7 out of 10 principals stated that it was challenging

to keep normal hours while working during the school closures. Phone calls, email, and tasks

continued into the evenings and over the weekends, as reported by many principals. A principal

captured the constant demand with her comment:

> You cannot get away from the job. Everyone has an opinion about what should be done
>
> and you can't get away from it. Night and day stress. Weekend stress. Emails keep
>
> coming round the clock and no one shuts off for a few minutes to take a breath.

Another principal bravely shared:

> I worry constantly about our students. They feel comfortable emailing me directly with
>
> informal questions and are open with their loneliness and their concern for their
>
> education. School is no longer fun and our students who found comfort in the safety and
>
> stability of our school and staff are left to fend for themselves. I can't even imagine what
>
> it is like for elementary principals who have to worry about young students who need
>
> their teachers in a completely different way. It makes me emotional just thinking about
>
> this question. I also worry about social and emotional needs of my staff. I feel less

effective as a leader because I don't have the ability to touch base with staff in an informal way like I used to. I worry that we as educators won't last much longer like this. As an administrator I often turn my camera off during district meetings because I don't want people to see me crying. It feels like the hits keep on coming and the expectations are beyond what they have ever been. My district is in an 18 million dollar deficit and I have had to layoff, furlough, and reduce hours for many of my staff. My director asked us in a meeting yesterday to let him know if something he asked was too much, and I know that I was not alone in thinking that it was "too much" a long time ago.

While two thirds of building leaders felt supported by colleagues and their "district," it is clear from the data that principals across the state shared a lack of feeling valued that can be attributed to several factors. Survey participants reported communication with their supervisors and being included in decision making was very important. However, survey participants reported that their districts created reopening teams with limited principal participation contributing to feelings of no control and not being valued. As one elementary principal simply stated, "Little voice in decision-making process."

Another elementary principal shared her frustration:

This has got to be one of the hardest jobs right now. Trying to remain positive - district expectations do not allow for us to be the leaders in our building and do what is best for our students. Things are only getting more micro-managed. Principals need to have some autonomy but it seems that is being stripped away. Decisions are being made at the district level and handed down to us without us being able to have a voice. We feel like we should be included in the decision making right now but only select people are on the committees making the decisions. Our voices count; or they should.

Another administrator commented, "We are pulled in multiple directions and have too little voice in decisions that we have to implement and support."

School principals additionally responded that they do not feel valued due to increases in teacher salaries, with building administrators were not receiving similar gains. One principal asked this study to inform others:

Please help our district and state admin understand that all the protections, concern, support, salary increases, etc. shouldn't just go to teachers. A school is successful based on strong leadership, we need to show building administrators are truly valued.

Another administrator simply stated, "I'm exhausted. I don't feel supported or valued. I'm overworked!!" Finally, one building administrator summed up the sentiments of many regarding all of the elements of work intensification best when she said:

Where do you even begin? It feels like we are completely on our own for the start of school. It's the wild west out here. Without a strong federal or state response, parents are blaming schools, schools are trying to do their best, principals are making decisions we probably shouldn't be tasked with making, the inequities are insane, teachers still want to grade kids, no one's internet is awesome, kids are at home supervising other kids, there's no $$ to feed 1-5 year olds [*sic*], our district says admin must report to the building despite having our own children at home, the teeniest details of how to do school have to go online, every single aspect of school must be translated to multiple languages and created in a video format, the list goes on and on. My whole team is working 70+ hours a week and we are nowhere near ready. It's a total shitshow.

School Community Concerns. It is evident that principals reported their ongoing workload was too much; however, the level of worry that principals felt about their students was

far greater than their concern for their own workload. In fact, 100% of principals that responded

to the survey shared some level of concern for student engagement and equity. This concern was

clear, and it makes sense considering as previously stated, while principals are tasked with lists

of duties and management of buildings, students are their purpose.

> To illustrate, when commenting about what she missed most without students in the

building, one principal noted, "Connect[ing] with students in a meaningful way without seeing

them in the lunchroom!!!" Another administrator commented on the impact of a lack of

connection:

> One of my major concerns is students not engaging in their education and seeing a
>
> significant drop in enrollment. I am spending the majority of my time at this moment
>
> working to create a school community that students can feel connected to from home.

Another administrator shared his frustration further emphasizing the importance of connection

by responding:

> Uninspired when students not in building. Lack of desire to continue in WA as
>
> neighboring states continue activities and in person instruction while our kids slip into
>
> mental health problems and increased drug/alcohol use.

> Although attendance, individual learning needs, and technology access were concerns

noted by the participants of the study, the social-emotional health and well-being of students

were paramount. To support this assertion, an elementary principal at a school located in an

urban area wrote:

> I am very concerned for the students whose home and household situations are stressful.
>
> This includes students that already had a home life that was not ideal prior to COVID-19
>
> and the students whose families were negatively impacted by the closures of businesses

and school. My other concerns are for the isolation that all students and staff are feeling

during this time. Basically, I'm concerned for everyone!

The collective worry for the social-emotional needs of students and the impact of multiple crises

was reinforced by the comments from another principal:

I am very concerned about the about [*amount*] of trauma impacting our students. Many of

our students are not able to fully engage in online learning and even if they are, it is not

fulfilling any of their social or emotional needs.

Personal Impacts

The collective trauma that has resulted from the school closures has affected students,

families, teachers, and administrators in different ways. Almost 90% of administrators reported

an increased level of stress, which is noteworthy since it was already stated that being a school

principal is challenging in a typical year (Maxwell, 2009). As mentioned previously, the

heightened stress associated with the principalship during a crisis has to do with the continuously

changing expectations, lack of adequate training, hours of additional tasks increasing the

workload, and concern for students and staff. Additionally, principals often must choose between

the needs of their own families and the responsibilities of their jobs (Sasangahor et al., 2020).

The fact that 9 out of 10 respondents reported a substantial increase in stress should be

noteworthy to district and state leaders moving forward. Those who guide the overall success of

our public schools are being pushed to their breaking point in managing, organizing, and

communicating, while still connecting, inspiring, and holding high standards for student

learning. The stress of principals has been reported for years; however, this new level of

pressure is causing alarming physical and mental health issues for building leaders.

Physical and Mental Well-Being. The Transactional Model of Stress and Coping (TMSC) was the primary framework applied in this area. The TMSC defines stress as derived from the interaction between the environment or event and an individual's unique perception of the situation (Folkman, 1984). Similar to the CCT, the TMSC is relational and grounded in perceptions, beliefs, and sense of personal control subsequently impacting the individual's application of coping mechanisms in response to stress. As revealed by the survey responses, anxiety, panic, and worry are plaguing almost 8 out of 10 principals. Leaders who previously felt competent in their jobs are now feeling ineffective.

The data shows that the concern for the well-being of students and staff is constant. Almost three-quarters of principals are reporting issues of too little sleep or sleeping too much, while more than 6 out of 10 reported difficulties in concentrating. Being a principal on a healthy day is not always easy; but to be challenged by tiredness, cloudy thinking, and ongoing concern for a long duration will take its toll on the effectiveness of the work, and the health of the principal. Overall, this can lead to burnout (Sasangohar et al., 2020) and a significant decrease in the number of principals who are willing to stay in the job.

A number of principals shared comments that relationships with colleagues, strong support from family members, and setting boundaries actually helped them to cope, and the data reveals that these administrators continued to report they were satisfied or highly satisfied with their jobs. Self-care is essential in this challenging profession. One principal commented, "Setting work boundaries, talking with colleagues, and sharing ideas, spending time (virtually) with loved ones" was possible for some, and those who did reported it was one way to care for themselves.

Over one-third of principals, however, reported that they used coping responses such as increased uses of food, social media, and alcohol to mitigate their stress. Principals shared concern about themselves and each other, "I worry about myself and my leadership colleagues, and many staff members being able to take care of our own mental health and be flexible enough to adjust to the changing dynamics." Another principal shared this reflection:

> My sense of self-efficacy has diminished and I, like my colleagues, have experienced depression as a result. I have also felt targeted and blamed for the closure of schools. This really is not rational but I imagine that I am not the only one. Our community is mad and as the face of the school I have felt personally responsible for decisions made at the federal and state level. It is a heavy burden for us to shoulder.

A common adage says, "You can't pour from an empty cup." School principals are working harder and carrying greater stressors, "emptying" their wellness cups at a higher rate than ever before. This is negatively impacting their health, job satisfaction, and potentially their continued commitment to their chosen profession.

Longevity and Job Satisfaction

Principals are often seen as cheerleaders for their students and staff as well as expected to be the change agents who create positive school environments. This is because they generally love their jobs and feel passionate about their work. "The call to leadership is special and comes deep from within. It's a driving force that is hard to describe, but it centers on the unwavering dedication to make a difference for the greater good" (Seaman, 2021). However, the data reveals that principals are not feeling the same levels of contentment from their jobs compared to before the school closures. In fact, results from this study show a sizable decline in the satisfaction that principals now feel about their positions.

Respondents to the survey were asked about their job satisfaction before COVID-19 school closures, and an overwhelming 87.08% (454) reported they were S*atisfied* or *Highly Satisfied* with their career choice (see Table 9), divided between *Highly Satisfied* (200) and *Satisfied* (254). Even with the difficult demands typical of their everyday work and responsibilities, participants reported high levels of fulfilment in their roles. It is important to note that only 2.78% (14 respondents) reported to be unsatisfied (12) or highly unsatisfied (2), while 7.14% (36 respondents) selected they were neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied. In commenting about the importance of their job, one principal commented, "I feel very fortunate to have continued working and being gainfully employed during this time, in a profession that makes a difference in our students' lives and community."

It might be expected that principals' enjoyment of their jobs has diminished, given the lack of student interactions, increased workload, and concerns for student equity, engagement, and social-emotional well-being; yet the extent of the decrease surprised the researchers. When asked about job satisfaction during and since the school closures, only 28 respondents stated they were *Highly Satisfied* as opposed to 200 that originally indicated they were *Highly Satisfied.* This is a substantial decrease. Even more startling is the fact that this decrease compounds as those that previously indicated they were *Highly Satisfied* dropped into the *Unsatisfied* or *Highly Unsatisfied* levels. Previously there were 254 principals who reported they felt *Satisfied* and after the closures that number fell to only 134. Only 162 principals of the 454 who previously were either *Highly Satisfied* or *Satisfied* continued to feel positive about their jobs: roughly two thirds of principals who used to identify their job positively no longer do.

Conversely, while only 14 principals of the 504 who responded to these questions identified they were *Unsatisfied* or *Highly Unsatisfied* prior to the school closures, an enormous

number of principals (120) selected those options after the school closings, generating an almost

900% increase in the level of dissatisfaction. Additionally, the number of those who reported

they were *Neither Satisfied, nor Unsatisfied* rose from 26 to 122, more than four times the

number who had previously selected this indeterminate response. All of the data from this study

supports the assertion that school principals are considerably less satisfied in their job now,

conceivably less than ever before.

Table 14

Level of Job Satisfaction Before and After by Number of Responses

Level of Job Satisfaction	Before School Closures	During and After School Closures
Highly Satisfied	200	28
Satisfied	254	134
Neither Satisfied, nor Unsatisfied	36	122
Unsatisfied	12	161
Highly Unsatisfied	2	59
Total Respondents	**504**	**504**

Research shows that principals have one of the most important roles in the public

education system, creating the climate and culture of a school to affect the largest amount of

change to create strong student learning environments (Wallace Foundation, 2011). Their

leadership, management, organization, and encouragement are essential to an effective school. It

is hard to imagine how schools can operate without the skilled professionals who are dedicated

to the success of all students. Yet, many principals want to quit.

High levels of strain from the COVID-19 pandemic, challenging and ever-changing

work, along with frustration concerning the decisions being made, and lack of respect from

multiple directions are just some of the reasons causing principals to leave their jobs earlier than

originally planned (Maxwell & Superville, 2020). This is a complicated time to be a school

leader, with school closures, shifting reopening plans, struggles with teacher unions, and mounting pressures, combined with feeling less autonomy and an even less sense of being valued. These issues are causing principals to re-examine their career choice, at alarming rates. In this study, we found that almost six out of ten participating principals revealed an increased desire to leave the profession. If this were to happen, the public education system would spiral into a crisis because research has shown that next to effective teachers, principals are the people that have the most influence on student learning (Fullan, 2014; Seaman, 2021).

The quantity of responses submitted by principals regarding their desire to leave the principalship was substantial, and virtually impossible to adequately capture. Over 250 of the comments left by administrators shared some variation of these sentiments:

> The work is too much; The compensation is not enough for the workload; I don't even like my job anymore; I am worried for my health; I can't find a balance between work and home; I'm expected to have it all together, and I don't; My district does not communicate; I am not seen as anything other than a building manager; I just want to work with kids; I want to enjoy my family; I'm exhausted and burnt out; Little voice in decision making process; Lack of support and information; and, I don't have the energy to continue.

One principal shared:

> I used to love my job, and I know I still do, but honestly this whole thing has really taken a toll. I know that we have to remain positive but one of the biggest challenges for me is that I feel there is no outlet. As administrators we are expected to put on the persona that we have it all together and we can do it. That certainly impacts mental health and general well-being when there is no outlet for stress, concern, and other emotions. I also feel

there is a large disconnect between work being asked and what is possible. Additionally,

the workload multiplied and there is no talk of additional compensation for time, stress,

etc. It makes the classroom look much more appealing.

While another commented, "I may simply be in the wrong job. It's stressful and confining. I am

looking to leave education, but it's a complicated path." Yet another respondent noted, "We are

already stretched thin. Now we are stretched to the max and with the weight of the world on our

shoulders with unreasonable timelines. The job is becoming impossible."

The data is clear. Principals and assistant principals throughout the State of Washington

care deeply about their students. They worry about their staff. Equity and engagement are

paramount concerns. The social-emotional well-being of everyone they are charged to care for is

a critical concern, therefore a legitimate question may be, can principals stay on the job with this

level of stress?

With the majority of principals feeling this level of pressure and desire to leave, the alarm

bells should be going off in every school district across Washington State. This is a crisis.

Building leaders are clear. They want to do their jobs. They desire to serve students. They are

passionate. But they are also weary, disillusioned, frustrated, troubled, and burnt out.

Participant Feedback for Desired Support

Principals are professionals and leaders who seek to find solutions to problems. Heifetz

(1994) promotes adaptive leadership as a way of approaching leading to find a counterbalance,

and to regain stability, when a system is in disequilibrium. He stated that throughout time,

species have had to adapt to survive. Likewise, schools have changed over decades, moving from

one room schoolhouses of mixed grades to sophisticated new buildings filled with technology,

safety, and instructional materials that could only have been dreamed of many years ago. Over

the years, teachers and administrators have had to change their practices to meet the evolving

needs of students and the growing federal and state mandates. In order to keep evolving,

administrators need to find solutions to, and opportunities within, the problems created by the

school closures and other crises. Principals want to have the solutions and supports needed

because they understand that when they are successful, their schools are thriving, and ultimately

their students are flourishing, academically and socially. When principals do not feel they have

the correct supports, resources, or knowledge to manage the ever growing demands of the job,

they want to leave.

When asked what professional and personal supports principals needed during these

unprecedented times, it came down to a few common themes: relationships, connection, and

networking; collective problem solving and training; flexibility and balance with time and work

responsibilities; and a focus on supports and resources for physical and mental health. The most

common support recommended involved connection with others, such as Professional Learning

Communities (PLC) to collectively problem solve and manage the many demands of leading

during a crisis. Other suggested supports included partnering with mentors, serving on district

committees to be in the know, quality time with a supervisor or superintendent, and casual get

togethers, even virtually, with peers. Many participants shared that these supports already existed

in their district and they had found these gatherings and connections to be supportive and

comforting. Other participants revealed they wished there would have been opportunities or

systems to facilitate more connection and communication with others. In response to what

supports would have been helpful, one principal wrote:

Peers who are having the same self-doubts. When you talk with STELLAR people who

are having the same struggles, it puts a new spin on things -- "Maybe I don't suck as

badly as I thought." The AWSP staff has been incredibly supportive and positive, as has

senior leadership in my district.

However, an assistant principal reported an opposite experience:

My principal and district was [*sic*] really focused on connecting with our teachers,

families, and students, but my principal never reached out to me...I called our PA's to

check in, but my building administrator or secondary school coordinator never gave me

or my peers a call to see how we were doing...

Additional recommendations included collective problem solving and training

specifically as it related to district level decisions and directives. There were numerous

comments pertaining to feeling involved, included, and valued. Principals repeatedly shared they

felt relegated to carrying out controversial mandates without participating in the decision-making

process to provide context and proactively identify barriers to implementation. One

representative response captured a common frustration, "Having principals involved in the

decision making process rather than only on the receiving end of the decisions - then having to

fix them because there was no principal perspective," while another simply exclaimed, "Open

Communication!!! Recognize us as leaders!" Yet, another principal suggested:

Clear directives from upper level administration. Autonomy is great, but it further

deepens the inequity that already exists. A statewide, or regional, directive for what

school should look like and a firm "until at least this DATE". Families, students, and staff

are all putting off changing behaviors based on an unknown end date, so there's little

urgency to shift.

Another support identified that would have been helpful involved the availability of

training, specifically in programs and technology essential in the remote learning format. Several

principals commented they would have appreciated, "Technology tutorials. Sharing ideas and resources with all members regarding how other school's best practices are," and "Technology help to be able to help students and teachers. Also-another phone line to contact parents and students." One principal even offered this suggestion, "Trainings for principals prior to teachers being trained."

Based on survey responses, time and work balance combined with personal schedule flexibility during the school closures would have been beneficial to many. Several principals commented they were required to be at school to care for the children of others, while leaving their own children at home to do their learning without guidance. A principal who is also a parent wrote:

> More clarity and support for working from home from the district to support my family. Messaging around this was vague at best and left a lot of opportunity to worry about whether the work being done was sufficient when I know that I was working more than the normal 50-60 hours/week.

Another principal shared:

> It's not really a support, but not being able to work at school was really difficult for me and it was confusing for my family. I was home, but I wasn't truly available. Being able to work at school would have helped to create a better work/home balance. I felt like I was never off the clock.

A focus on health and wellness would have been helpful to some colleagues who shared, "…Take care of yourself was a common refrain while at the same time demanding more with little clarity on what that was or how it should be accomplished." Other principals offered, "Freedom to work from home," and "1. Childcare."

Summary

To accurately assess the impact of a crisis it is necessary to identify the areas of an individual's life that are affected (Myer & Conte, 2006). Based on the data analysis, the impacts that building administrators experienced due to the school closures were clearly aligned with the four life dimensions outlined in the Crisis in Context Theory (CCT). Further, the barrage of unprecedented challenges created by a continuously evolving crisis and the inability for many to sustain a work/home balance dramatically decreased job satisfaction while substantially increasing the desire to leave the principalship for many responding administrators.

In a typical year, the responsibilities of the building principal are daunting and overwhelming leading to a lack of longevity in the position and a shortage of applications from viable candidates to fill the many openings (Malone & Caddell, 2000; Cushing et al., 2003; Viadero, 2009; Maxwell, 2015). The advent of a pandemic, political turmoil, and social unrest created a perfect storm of challenges that intensified the work of the already overloaded principalship to unsustainable levels. The psychological impact was expressed by one administrator as, "I feel rage and I don't know how to release this," and by another as, "I end the day mentally and physically drained." Using the CCT and TMSC (Folkman, 1984) frameworks as a lens for analyzing survey responses in their respective areas of focus, it is not surprising that many of the respondents expressed a strong desire to leave the profession. To help stem the mass exodus from the principalship as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, study participants identified fundamental themes to guide district leadership and professional agencies in the development of structured support systems including collegial connection, professional trust, autonomy and flexibility, and personal and professional self-care.

CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The overarching research question in this study focused on identifying the professional and personal impacts experienced by building administrators in Washington State as a result of the COVID-19 school closures in March 2020. The rationale of this research was to understand to what extent a range of variables mitigated or exacerbated these identified impacts and influenced job satisfaction and longevity in the principalship. Further, this study sought to provide recommendations for district leaders, professional organizations, and state agencies in developing structured supports for building administrators in times of crisis. In addition to recommendations, this chapter addresses the study limitations and other considerations as well as offers suggestions for future research.

Recommendations

The responses to the open-ended questions included in the survey not only provide context but speak volumes about the impacts to, and needs of, building administrators. As one respondent aptly stated, "The principalship is a convergence zone for many stressors." Leading through a crisis adds to the already overloaded proverbial plate of the principalship. As posited by Myer and Moore (2006) the relationship between systems (e.g., education) and individuals (e.g., administrators) within the system is reciprocal. "The reactions of the individual directly affected the system, and system's actions immediately influenced the individual...If these relationships are supportive, the impact of the crisis can be reduced; if they are obstructive, the impact has the potential to be more severe" (Myer & Moore, 2006, p. 143).

This affirms the need for providing structured support systems not only during unforeseeable calamities but more importantly, as a consistent and sustainable resource in support of the principalship as a whole. Using the TMSC framework as a lens to analyze the

findings, this study offers recommendations for school districts, professional associations, and state agencies in an effort to increase job satisfaction thereby increasing longevity in the principalship.

Principal Voice

Many of the respondents indicated that the absence of a voice at the table where decisions were being made was a critical concern indirectly communicating a lack of trust and confidence in the leadership abilities of the principal. This lack of agency and collaborative practices not only impacted the work at the building level, but also undermined the professional rapport between district leadership and building principals. This statement by a survey participant captures this sentiment, "In the middle of this chaos, decisions about what is best for kids were never given to the people in direct control of 'making it happen'… totally devalued the experiences of administrators…" Additionally, clear communication and timely decision making were noted as areas which could be improved.

Based on the findings in this study, the researchers recommend that those in central leadership roles seek to develop intentional processes and opportunities for the inclusion of a broader representation of the principal voice in central decision-making that will impact schools. Listening sessions, like facilitated focus groups, are opportunities for participants, in this case, principals, to share information and knowledge regarding a specific issue, with the goal of the leadership understanding circumstances and challenges (OHSU, 2021). While all administrators cannot participate in every decision making process, the researchers recommend routinely providing opportunities for building leaders to provide insight and share their expertise regarding the unique needs of their school community.

Additionally, regular informal check-ins from supervisors and district leadership will support building administrators with not feeling isolated or abandoned. Weekly calls, zoom meetings, or emails which have no agenda other than to check on the well-being of the principal would demonstrate a commitment to the administrator as a person, and not just an employee. These recommendations would convey to those in the principalship that the experiences, ideas, and viewpoints of building leaders are essential and valued. Feeling valued, respected, and genuinely supported will likely encourage individuals to remain in the principalship.

Safe Spaces and Connection

"I miss the face-to-face interactions, and this takes a toll on my emotional need for human connection," captures a common theme intertwined in participants' responses." There is no shortage of research supporting the significance of connection in the social-emotional wellness of human beings, and as the data from this study revealed, the relationships with kids and the school community are the very reason many participants initially chose to pursue a career in education. Further, numerous respondents shared a fear of showing any form of vulnerability, especially when for some they felt it was viewed as a sign of weakness for those in a leadership capacity. As one respondent shared, "...We are supposed to be the rocks of the school."

As per the findings of this study and the feedback submitted by participants, the researchers recommend districts and professional organizations be the conduit to establishing safe space networks for principals to share concerns and vulnerabilities in a mutually supportive environment. Scheduling dedicated time, ensuring confidentiality, and facilitating connections with colleagues provides principals the opportunity to engage in empathetic conversations with others that are currently experiencing the joys, challenges, and complexities of the job role

(Farag, 2019). Further, a collaborative network provides an opportunity to develop valuable friendships and informal peer groups to combat loneliness and isolation in the principalship and can be leveraged for support in a crisis situation.

The ability to express doubts, needs, and concerns in a safe space without fear of judgement or breach of confidentiality provides building principals an opportunity to connect with other leaders experiencing similar feelings and circumstances as well as engage in collective problem-solving that has the potential to promote professional growth and well-being. Fostering network learning and conversations on social-emotional needs and self-care will encourage building leaders to dedicate time and efforts toward their own well-being (Farag, 2019). District leaders and professional agencies establishing network opportunities communicates the principal is valued and their well-being is a priority thereby building trust, increasing job satisfaction, and encouraging longevity in the position.

Self-Care and Compassionate Support

The final recommendation offered is for districts and state agencies to provide self-care resources and compassionate support for principals. Creating routines and healthy coping resources as aligns with the TMSC, can help to reduce stress and anxiety associated with the challenges that occur between a person and their environment. This can be done by intentionally establishing wellness support systems in the workplace through deliberate planning by district leadership to help principals implement healthy habits connected to nutrition, sleep, exercise, and mental well-being. For example, per numerous reports, engaging in endless hours of remote meetings without breaks has a detrimental impact to the physical health of administrators. Scheduling meetings with adequate time for meals and brain breaks can limit screen fatigue and potential long-term physical health issues. Additionally, purposeful movement activities, and

opportunities to socialize for brief periods of time in meetings can be beneficial, if even momentarily, to help principals to step out of the intensity of the work. Offering meditation, mindful moments, and opportunities for reflection are also strategies which can be utilized for self-care.

Creating a culture of wellness can also include supporting the efforts of principals to set appropriate boundaries between work and home. It may not be popular to delay responding to email or returning phone calls after a certain time of day, but building leaders need time to decompress and spend time with family and friends, void of work responsibilities. One principal in the study shared that his supervisor would encourage engagement in self-care, while simultaneously increasing work expectations beyond what was feasible. If districts want building administrators to remain in their positions, it must be communicated that down time and not being on the clock is valued and supported at the highest levels. Research shows that when reasonable limitations are placed on work time, employees are more focused and therefore more productive (Hauseman et al., 2020). Furthermore, when principals have dedicated personal time outside of the workplace, they are better able to engage in healthy coping resources such as hobbies and physical activities, which supports the management of work stress in a more positive manner.

Flexibility and understanding (Harris, 2020) are compassionate supports that must be considered, as each leader is also a human being with their own needs, struggles and demands, not only in the midst of the pandemic, but in life as well. Issues related to family, physical and mental health, caregiving, teaching children at home, and childcare must be centered on a balance between the expectations of professional obligations and the needs of self and personal responsibilities. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) school

administrators work tirelessly at an average of 59 hours per week (NCES, 2004). Principals were clear in this study that they felt they were sacrificing their family and relationships for the work. Harris (2020) states that "empathy, gratitude, and kindness are now the leadership currency to get things done." Employee Assistance Programs, while often provided to administrators, should be prominently promoted, and encouraged to support administrators through challenging personal times.

Limitations/Considerations

Several limitations and considerations were identified as they pertained to this study including the persistence of the COVID-19 crisis. As stated within the context of the discussion, while the aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the perceptions of principals regarding the impact of the school closures in the Spring of 2020, the continuing nature of the pandemic beyond the initial timeframe has created an intertwined series of challenging circumstances. When the survey window was originally opened, six months had passed since the school closures were first implemented. A great deal was asked of principals during those months and throughout the summer, including planning for the 2020-2021 school year while the crises raged on. This survey collected data regarding the perceptions of school administrators based on their experiences during this time therefore it is important to note that due to concurrent crises happening in the same timeframe, principals' feelings of stress may have been intensified thereby impacting responses. The researchers acknowledge that the school closures in the spring of 2020 presented impacts that were uniquely true for that specific time period alone and may not necessarily be extended to the later periods of the pandemic.

While the response rate for this survey was amongst the highest for a survey sent out to all members of AWSP, it is acknowledged that the 14% response rate is a limitation and cannot

be considered representative of all principal voices. Furthermore, the researchers acknowledge

the potential for bias within this sample and cannot rule out that respondents could represent a

sub-sample within a system. For example, the timing of the study, in August and September

while principals were preparing for the next school year in the midst of a continuing pandemic,

was not the most ideal time to ask busy administrators to take time to respond to a survey

regarding work intensification and stress. Another example may have been based on the nature

of the survey relative to something so personal and challenging.

      Although it mirrors the demographics of Washington State, people of color were

underrepresented in this study, limiting the disaggregation of the data by race. It was the

intention of the researchers to highlight the data related to the experience of BIPOC (Black,

Indigenous, People of Color) administrators, but to protect the confidentiality of participants, it

was seldom possible. Additionally, as posited by Bailey and Schurz (2020), individuals 55 years

of age and older are considered to be most at risk for contracting COVID-19 with 25% of the

principals in the State of Washington falling into this age range. While years of experience aided

in approximating the relative age of some participants, the researchers acknowledge the

exclusion of a question related to age in the survey was a limitation.

      Moreover, the lack of available peer-reviewed literature related to the COVID-19 global

pandemic and associated school closures was a limitation of the study as the crisis was occurring

concurrent to the research. Peer reviewed literature concerning previous school closures as a

mitigating strategy during a crisis and focused on the ongoing challenges of the principalship

were accessible.

      Finally, the mutually beneficial partnership forged with AWSP was a consideration of

this study as the questions were formulated with the input of AWSP. While it was theorized that

many of the demographic questions asked would be useful in disaggregating the data for this study, ultimately it was determined that several demographic categories did not correlate with the purpose of this study.

Suggestions for Future Research

As the COVID-19 pandemic has persisted for a complete calendar year at the time of this writing, the impact of the mitigations strategies has changed public education. As previously stated, the focus of this study was the impacts to building principals during the initial school closure timeframe between March and June 2020. It is suggested that further research be conducted regarding the continued impacts of the global pandemic including vaccinations and virus variances. Furthermore, while this study focused on the impacts to building principals, further study on the effects to teachers and support staff will be important, as they served on the "front lines" of providing education to students both in Spring 2020 and into the 2020-21 school year. Instructional design in shortened timeframes, methods and modalities of instructional delivery, equitable grading procedures in remote/hybrid learning, and the effective use of technology platforms and virtual learning and the influence on instructional pedagogy are suggested as potential areas of research. Additionally, student learning, the impacts on families, and the effects of the pandemic to jobs, housing, and transitions during the school closures would also be important to study. Many students were affected by family movement, unfinished learning, and the expectations of learning from daycare or other remote locations, while also having to learn how to utilize technology for learning.

The experience of administrators of color is another area of research that should be considered. Specifically, with the racial tensions and political upheaval in our country during 2020, it is hypothesized that BIPOC principals may have had additional stressors during the time

of this study. Although it may be challenging to collect data specific to the school closures of

2020, a broader study of BIPOC principals that included the 2020-21 school year could provide a

broader timeframe to capture similar challenges, while also recognizing ongoing social justice

concerns. A study of this nature would be important to capture the unique and specific challenges

that administrators of color face, in addition to learning supports that may promote retention in

the principalship.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

This study sought to identify the professional and personal impacts to elementary and secondary school principals in Washington State due to the sudden school closures in March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We, the researchers in partnership with AWSP, collected data through a survey based on the CCT and TMSC frameworks with the intention of determining both the demands and concerns experienced by building administrators leading through the COVID-19 shutdown. The survey was primarily comprised of multiple-choice questions however, several open-ended response opportunities were included to allow for the collection of qualitative data to provide context to the quantitative responses.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant, and potentially long-term, impact on those that lead in the PK-12 public education system. Already a difficult job, the principalship has not emerged unscathed as the professional demands during a crisis and the impact to the social-emotional and physical well-being of administrators was substantial. The results of the study were separated into two overarching themes: 1) leading through a pandemic and the resulting school closures was extremely challenging and exacerbated desires to leave the principalship, and 2) building leaders predominantly prioritize, and care more about their school community (e.g., students, families, and staff) than their own personal concerns and well-being. Data collected by the survey revealed the intensification of an already challenging workload as administrators often were tasked with leading their school community from their homes. Further, the line between professional and personal responsibilities became more blurred until the boundaries associated with work and time were virtually non-existent.

Caring for the needs of their own family and teaching their own children at home continued, while many principals felt isolated and ineffective in both their personal and

professional lives. This led to employing various coping mechanisms including healthy resource options such as gardening, exercise, and connections with family and friends as well as less positive coping responses such as unhealthy eating, harmful overuse of social media, and an increased use of alcohol. Almost all principals reported their concerns for the well-being of students at rates that was consistent across all grade level bands, demographic groups, and districts across the state. Equity, engagement, attendance, and social-emotional well-being were identified as administrators' greatest areas of worry for their students during the school closures.

Feeling no longer connected to their purpose, exhausted, and ineffective, many principals suffered mentally, emotionally, and physically, leading to disturbingly low rates of job satisfaction and alarmingly high rates of those indicating they desire to leave the principalship altogether. As building principals during the initial school closures, we, the researchers, were not surprised by the findings as they confirmed our perceptions centered on our experiences. We were not alone.

Based on the survey data and prior research focused on the complexity of the principalship and leading through a crisis, this study offers recommendations for districts, professional associations, and state agencies to develop structured opportunities for collaboration to include the principal voice in decision-making, create safe spaces and networks for collegial connections, and provide self-care resources and compassionate support of principals. The purpose of these recommendations is to suggest the development of systemic structures with the potential to not only support building leaders in a time of crisis but to more importantly, increase overall job satisfaction and longevity in the principalship.

References

Bailey, J. P., & Schurz, J. (2020). COVID-19 is creating a school personnel crisis. *American Enterprise Institute.* Retrieved from https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606250.pdf

Busby, E. (2019). Teachers suffer more stress than other workers. Retrieved from https://www.stress.org/teachers-suffer-more-stress-than-other-workers-study-finds#:~:text=Teachers%20are%20more%20likely%20to,Foundation%20for%20Educational%20Research%20revealed.

Campbell, C., DeArmond, M., & Denice, P. (2014). *School leadership in Washington State: Today's leaders and key challenges they face*. Retrieved from University of Washington, Center for Reinventing Public Education: www.crpe.org

Cauchemez, S., Ferguson, N.M., Wachtel, C., Tegnell, A., Saour, G., Duncan, B., & Nicoll, A. (2009). Closure of schools during an influenza pandemic. Retrieved from www.thelancet.com/infection Vol 9. 473-482

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020a). Healthcare Professional Preparedness Checklist for Transport and Arrival of Patients With Confirmed or Possible COVID-19. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/hcp-personnel-checklist.html.

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020b). New ICD-10-CM code for the 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/icd/Announcement-New-ICD-code-for-coronavirus-3-18-2020.pdf.

Crepeau-Hobson, F. (2020). Coping with the COVID-19 Crisis: The Importance of Care for Caregivers. National Association of School Psychologists Communique. Vol. 48;7.

Creswell, J.W. & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches.* (5th edition). Sage.

Cushing, K. S., Kerrins, J. A., & Johnstone, T. (2003). Disappearing principals: what is the real reason behind the shortage of applicants for principal positions across the state and nation? It's the job, stupid! *Leadership*, *32*(5), Retrieved from https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A112686943/AONE?u=wash_main&sid=AONE&xid=33f5df0c

DeArmond, M., Denice, P., & Campbell, C. (2014). Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE): Missing Out on Strong School Leaders? A Survey of Principal Hiring and Support in Washington State. Retrieved from https://www.crpe.org/sites/default/files/CRPE_Strong-school-leaders_Survey-of-principal-hiring-and-support-in-wa-state.pdf

Drago, A. B., & Pecchia, V. (2016). From Isolation to Collaboration: School Principals. (Doctoral Dissertation). Retrieved from https://digitalcommons.tacoma.uw.edu/edd_capstone/5

Epson, E.E., Zheteyeva, Y.A., Painey, J.J., Gao, H., Shi, J., Uzincanin, A., & Miller, L. (2015). Evaluation of an Unplanned School Closure in a Colorado School District: Implications for Pandemic Influenza Preparedness. Disaster Medicine and Emergency Preparedness. Vol. 9:1. 4-8

Farag, A. (2019). How school leaders manage stress and stay focused. Learning Forward: The Professional Learning Association. Retrieved from https://learningforward.org/journal/resilient-leadership/how-school-leaders-manage-stress-and-stay-focused/

Folkman, S. (1984). Personal control and stress and coping processes: A theoretical analysis.

　　　Journal of Personality and Social Psychology., 46(4), 839-52.

Fraenkel, J.R., Wallen, N.E., Hyun, H.H. (2019). *How to Design and Evaluate Research in*

　　　Education. McGraw Hill Education.

Fullan, M. (2014). *The Principal: Three Keys to Maximizing Impact.* Jossey-Bass.

Glesne, C. (2016). *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction* (5th ed.). Pearson.

Harris, A. (2020). COVID-19 – school leadership in crisis? *Journal of Professional Capital and*

　　　Community. Retrieved from

　　　https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JPCC-06-2020-0045/full/html

Hatch, K. (April 17, 2020). How do we grade during the shutdown? "Do No Harm" is the

　　　answer. Retrieved from https://www.awsp.org/informed-principal/blog/blog-detail/awsp-

　　　blog/2020/04/17/how-do-we-grade-during-the-shutdown-do-no-harm-is-the-answer

Hauseman, C., Darazsi, S. & Kent, S. (2020). Collaboration, communication, and wellness:

　　　Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Manitoba School. *Journal of the*

　　　Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration & Management. 48(2, p. 70-77).

　　　Retrieved from http://cceam.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ISEA-2020-48-

　　　2.pdf#page=76

Hens, N., Ayele, G.M., Goeyvaerts, N. Aerts, M., Mossong, J., Edmunds, J.W., & Beutels, P.

　　　(2009). Estimating the impact of school closure on social mixing behaviour and the

　　　transmission of close contact infections in eight European countries. BMC Infectious

　　　Diseases; 9.187.

Heifetz, R. A. (1994). *Leadership Without Easy Answers.* Belknap Press of Harvard University

　　　Press.

Kees, N., & Lashwood, P. (1996). Compassion Fatigue and School Personnel: Remaining Open
to the Affective Needs of Students. *Educational Horizons*, 75(1), 41-44.

Kuntz, J.R.C., Naswall, K., & Bockett, A. (2013). Keep Calm and Carry On? An Investigation of
Teacher Burnout in a Post-disaster Context. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*. 42;2.
57-68

Lai, B.S., Osborne, M.C., Lee, N., Self-Brown, S., Esnard, A., & Kelley, M.L. (2018). Trauma
Informed Schools: Child disaster exposure, community violence, and somatic symptoms.
Journal of Affective Disorders. 238. 586-592.

Levin, S., Scott, C., Yang, M., Leung, M., & Bradley, K. (2020). National Association of
Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and Learning Policy Institute (LPI): Supporting a
Strong, Stable Principal Workforce. (2020). Retrieved from https://www.nassp.org/wp-
content/uploads/2020/08/LPI-and-NASSP-Research-Agenda-Final-Report.pdf

Maher, J. (2020). Closing Schools Saved Lives During the Spanish Flu. Can It Work for
Coronavirus? Education Week. Retrieved from
https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/03/04/closing-schools-saved-lives-during-the-
spanish.html

Malone, B.G., & Caddell, T.A. (2000). A Crisis in Leadership: Where Are Tomorrow's
Principals? *The Clearing House, 73(3),* 162-164.

Marbley, A.F., Denham, A. & Simpson, D.J. (2007). Special Issue on Hurricane Katrina:
Schools, Culture, and Trauma. *Multicultural Education*. Winter. 2-3.

Maxwell, L. A. (2015). Report Summary: Do principals have an impossible job?
Education Week, *34*(18), 2-3.

Maxwell, L. A. & Superville, D. R. (2020). The Pandemic May Drive Principals to Quit.

Retrieved from https://www.edweek.org/leadership/the-pandemic-may-drive-principals-to-quit/2020/08

McGroarty, M. (2020). Principaling in the tie of COVID-19: Exhausted? You're not alone. Retrieved from https://magazine.awsp.org/principaling-in-the-time-of-covid-19

Myer, R. & Conte, C. (2006). Assessment for crisis intervention. *Journal of Clinical Psychology: In Session,* 62(8), 959-970. Retrieved from https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/doi/pdfdirect/10.1002/jclp.20282

Myer, R. & Moore, H. (2006). Crisis in Context Theory: An Ecological Model. *Journal of Counseling and Development., 84*(2), 139-147.

Myer, R., Conte, C., & Peterson, S. (2007). Human impact issues for crisis management in organizations. *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal*, 16(5), 761-770.

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). (2004). Schools and Staffing Survey. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass/tables/sass_2004_31.asp.

NEJM Group. (2020). First case of 2019 Novel Coronavirus in the United States. *The New England Journal of Medicine.* Retrieved from https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2001191

Office of the Governor. (2020a). Inslee announces school closures in King, Snohomish, and Pierce Counties. Retrieved from https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-announces-school-closures-king-snohomish-and-pierce%C2%A0counties.

Office of the Governor. (2020b). Inslee announces statewide school closures. Retrieved from https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-announces-statewide-school-closures-expansion-limits-large-gatherings

Office of the Governor. (2020c). Inslee extends school closures. Retrieved from

https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-extends-school-closures-rest-2019-20-

school-year

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). (2020a, March 12). Novel Coronavirus

(COVID-19) Guidance & Resources. Retrieved from https://www.k12.wa.us/about-

ospi/press-releases/novel-coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-resources

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). (2020b, March 20). Guidance for Long-

Term School Closures #3: Bulletin No. 022-20 Executive Services. Retrieved from

https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/bulletinsmemos/bulletins2020/3_Guidan

ce%20for%20Long-term%20School%20Closures%20as%20of%20March%2020.pdf

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). (2020c, April 6). Continuous Learning

2020: Resources and Planning Tools. Retrieved from

https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/communications/OSPI%20Publication%

20-%20Continuous%20Learning%202020.pdf

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). (2020d, April 21). Student learning and

grading guidance. Retrieved from

https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/communications/OSPI%20Student%20L

earning%20and%20Grading%20Guidance_4-21-2020.pdf

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). (2020e, April 29). Class of 2020

Graduation Requirements: Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieved from

https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/communications/Class%20of%202020%

20Graduation%20FAQ_OSPI%20April%202020.pdf

Oregon Health and Sciences University (OHSU). (2021). Community Listening Sessions.

Retrieved from https://www.ohsu.edu/university-center-excellence-development-disability/community-listening-sessions

Sasangohar, F., Jones, S., Masud, F., Vahidy, F., & Kash, B. (2020). Provider Burnout and Fatigue During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Lessons Learned from a High-Volume Intensive Care Unit. *Anesthesia and Analgesia*, 2020.

Seaman, S. (2020a, April 16). The Principal Sandwich. Retrieved from http://www.awsp.org/informed-principal/blog/blog-detail/awsp-blog/2020/04/16/the-principal-sandwich

Seaman, S. (2020b, April 24). More thoughts on grading. Retrieved from https://www.awsp.org/informed-principal/blog/blog-detail/awsp-blog/2020/04/24/more-thoughts-on-grading

Seaman, S. (2020c, May 21). Principal stress at an all-time high. Retrieved from http://www.awsp.org/informed-principal/blog/blog-detail/awsp-blog/2020/05/21/principal-stress-at-an-all-time-high

Seaman, S. (2021). Patience, perseverance, and persistence: Your students need you now more than ever. Retrieved from http://magazine.awsp.or/from-the-exec.dir

Stone-Johnson, C. & Miles Weiner, J. (2020), Principal professionalism in the time of COVID-19. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, Vol. 5 No. 3/4, pp. 367-374. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1108/JPCC-05-2020-0020

SurveyMonkey Inc. (2020). *www.surveymonkey.com.* San Mateo, California, USA

Theron, L. (2008). "I have undergone some metamorphosis!" The Impact of REds on South African Educators Affected by the HIV/Aids Pandemic: A Pilot Study. *Journal of Psychology in Africa, 18*(1), 31-42, DOI: 10.1080/14330237.2008.10820169

Theron, L., Geyer, S., Strydom, H., & Delport, CSL. (2008). The Roots of Reds: A Rationale for

the Support of Educators Affected by the HIV and AIDS Pandemic. Health SA

Gesondheid. Vol. 13;4. 77-88

Trombrella, A., (2020). Revising your teaching philosophy for this crisis. Retrieved from

https://www.edutopia.org/article/revising-your-teaching-philosophy-crisis

Uchida, S., Tsukahara, T., Kaneko, M., Washizuka, S., & Kawa, S. (2012). Effect of short-term

school closures on the H1N1 pandemic in Japan: a comparative case study. Infection.

40;5. 549-556.

Van Lancker, W. & Parolin, Z. (2020). COVID-19, school closures, and child poverty: a social

crisis in the making. *TheLancet.com/public-health*. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-

2667(20)30084-0.

Wallace Foundation. (2011). The school principal as leader: Guiding schools to better teaching

and learning. Retrieved from http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school

-leadership/effective-principal-leadership/Documents/The-School -Principal-as-Leader-

Guiding-Schools-to-Better-Teaching-and-Learning.pdf

Washington State Department of Health. (2020). Guidance for Graduation Ceremonies during

the COVID-19 Pandemic. Retrieved from

https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/GraduationGuidance.pdf

World Health Organization. (2020). Timeline: WHO's COVID-19 response. Retrieved from

https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/interactive-timeline#!

Appendix A: Survey Invitation

An Important Survey

COVID–19: Impacts to Building Administrators

Based on the current reality of schools during the COVID–19 pandemic, the mandate by the Governor to close all school buildings in March 2020 created immediate and significant professional and personal impacts on administrators throughout our state. These impacts included, but were not limited to, the social-emotional and physical well-being of educators, the technological and learning challenges associated with delivering remote instruction, and inequities of student and educator access. These impacts were often compounded by challenging work-at-home environments, and the necessity of caring for and educating their own children.

This survey is intended to measure impacts from the COVID–19 pandemic to administrators serving in a school setting in grades PK–12 in Washington state in March 2020, as well as the coping strategies used to manage the impacts.

Take the survey. The feedback will be instrumental in helping us move forward.

Appendix B: Survey

COVID-19: Impacts to Building Administrators

Based on the current reality of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, the mandate by the Washington State Governor to close all school buildings in March 2020 created immediate and significant professional and personal impacts on administrators throughout the State of Washington. These impacts included, but were not limited to, the social-emotional and physical well-being of educators, the technological and learning challenges associated with delivering remote instruction, and inequities of student and educator access. These impacts were often compounded by challenging work-at-home environments, and the necessity of caring for and educating their own children.

This survey is intended to measure impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic to administrators serving in a school setting in grades PK-12 in Washington State in March 2020, as well as the coping strategies used to manage the impacts.

1. What was your job role in March 2020?
   - o   Building principal
   - o   Assistant/vice principal

2. At what building level were you an administrator in March 2020?
   - o   Elementary
   - o   Middle/Jr High
   - o   High
   - o   K-8
   - o   K-12
   - o   Alternative Learning Environment (ALE)

3. How do you identify?
   - o   Female
   - o   Male
   - o   Non-binary
   - o   Prefer not to disclose

4. With what group/category do you most identify?
   - o   African American/Black
   - o   Asian
   - o   White
   - o   Latinx
   - o   Indigenous/Native American
   - o   Multi-Racial
   - o   Pacific Islander
   - o   Prefer not to disclose.
   - o   Other (please specify):

5. How many years TOTAL have you been a building administrator?

- o 0-1
- o 2-5
- o 6-10
- o 11-15
- o More than 15

6. How would you describe your district?

- o Urban
- o Suburban
- o Rural

7. What is the student population of your school?

- o 1-150
- o 150-300
- o 300-600
- o 601-900
- o 901-1,500
- o More than 1,500

8. What is the Free and Reduced lunch percentage in your school?

- o Less than 20%
- o 20-40%
- o 41-60%
- o 61-80%
- o More than 80%

9. What is the English Language Learner (ELL) percentage in your school?

- o Less than 20%
- o 21-40%
- o 41-60%
- o 61-80%
- o More than 80%

10. What is the Special Education percentage in your school?

- o 0-3%
- o 4-10%
- o 11-15%
- o 16-25%
- o More than 25%

AWSP/Survey/COVID-19:Impacts_to_Building_Administrators

11. What special programs are represented in your school? (Select all that apply.)
- o Autism
- o Child Care
- o Deaf/Hard of Hearing
- o Developmental (DD) Preschool
- o Emotional Behavioral Disability (EBD)
- o English Language Learner (ELL)
- o Life Skills
- o Preschool
- o Other (please specify):

12. Does your school receive additional categorical funding?
- o Learning Assistance Program (LAP)
- o Title I
- o Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)
- o None
- o Other (please specify):

13. What is the total number of staff assigned to your building?
- o Fewer than 20
- o 20-40
- o 41-70
- o 71-100
- o More than 100

14. How many of the CERTIFICATED staff in your building do you evaluate?
- o Fewer than 10
- o 11-20
- o 21-30
- o 31-40
- o More than 40

15. How many ADMINISTRATORS are assigned to your building?
- o 1
- o 2
- o 3
- o 4 or more

16. What is the school age of the child/children living in your household? (Check all that apply)
    o No children
    o Non-school age
    o Primary
    o Intermediate
    o Middle/Jr High
    o High School

17. Are you the primary caregiver for other individuals (e.g. parent, spouse, adult child)?
    o Yes
    o No

18. Are you, or someone in your home, considered high-risk for infection of COVID-19 (e.g. over age 60 with underlying health issue, cancer survivor, etc.)?
    o Yes
    o No

19. Please respond to the following statements using the following Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, or Strongly Agree. Mark only one box per row.
    a. I was expected to work from home during the duration of the school closure.
    b. I was responsible for teaching my own children while working from home.
    c. I had the needed knowledge and resources to support my own child(ren)'s learning at their level.
    d. I was comfortable having some of my home environment visible during video conferencing.
    e. I was able to set appropriate boundaries for my work time.
    f. I had adequate financial resources available to me and my family.
    g. I had adequate technology to communicate with staff during the school closures.
    h. My school had adequate Wi-Fi.
    i. I had adequate training to facilitate remote/virtual meetings.
    j. I believe I was able to effectively engage staff during the school closure.
    k. I felt I have had adequate access to my school building and resources during the school closure.
    l. My teachers and other staff had adequate access to my school building and resources during the school closure.
    m. I had adequate communication from my central/district office since the school closure.
    n. I felt supported by my colleagues and district.
    o. My work performance has been negatively impacted by the school closure.
    p. My workload increased because of the school closure.
    q. My attitude about my work, responsibilities, and/or job role has been adversely impacted by the school closure.
    Other and/or comments:

AWSP/Survey/COVID-19:Impacts_to_Building_Administrators

20. Please respond to the following statements as they apply to your school context, using the following Likert Scale: No Concern, Slight Concern, Undecided, Some Concern, or Major Concern. Mark only one box per row.

    a. Equity of student educational experience.

    b. Student access and/or connectivity to technology.

    c. Teacher access and/or connectivity to technology.

    d. Teacher technological skills.

    e. Student technological skills

    f. Effectively assessing student progress.

    g. Grading and/or reporting practices during virtual learning.

    h. Meeting and/or adjusting graduation requirements.

    i. Engaging students in remote learning.

    j. Weekly communication with students and/or families.

    k. Student attendance in a virtual learning environment.

    l. Supporting individualized student learning needs (e.g. IEP, LAP, ELL).

    m. Supporting the social-emotional needs of students.

    n. Supporting the social-emotional needs of families.

    o. Supporting the social-emotional needs of staff.

    p. Teacher/staff evaluation process and completion.

    q. Student/family access to support services (e.g. counselors, mental health, social worker).

When I think of social and emotional needs during this time, I have the following concerns. (Please answer in complete sentences):

21. Please respond to the following statements using the following Likert Scale: As a result of the school closures, I experienced: Major Decrease, Some Decrease, No Change, Some Increase, or Major Increase. Mark only one box per row.

    a. Physical aches and pains (e.g. headaches, eyestrain)

    b. Issues with sleeping (too much/too little)

    c. Changes in appetite and/or eating patterns

    d. Fatigue/unexplained tiredness

    e. Anxiety/panic/worry

    f. Depression/sadness, grief, and/or hopelessness/ despair

    g. Difficulties concentrating

    h. Apathy/lack of interest in work

    i. Irritability/lack of patience

    j. Increased feelings of stress

    k. Difficulties in personal relationships

Other physical and emotional problems or symptoms and/or comments:

AWSP/Survey/COVID-19:Impacts_to_Building_Administrators

22. Please respond to the following statements using the following Likert Scale: Major Decrease, Some Decrease, No Change, Some Increase, or Major Increase. Mark only one box per row.

    a. Journaling.

    b. Regular exercise (e.g. walking, weights, sports).

    c. Hobbies (e.g. art & crafts, music, cooking)

    d. Counseling support.

    e. Gardening and/or home improvement.

    f. Mindfulness-based practices (e.g., meditation, yoga).

    g. Connecting with nature (e.g. hiking, camping).

    h. Connecting with personal support system (e.g. friends, family).

    i. Social activism (e.g. volunteering, protesting, campaigning).

    j. New learning (e.g. self-help, podcasts, webinars)

    k. Retail purchasing/shopping.

    l. Alcohol/substance consumption.

    m. Using food to cope (e.g. comfort foods, sugar)

    n. Engagement with social media.

    o. Gaming/TV

Other coping strategies used and/or comments:

23. In your current plans, how many more years do you anticipate being a school administrator after the 20-21 school year?

- I am retiring after this year.
- I am leaving school administration after this year.
- 1-4 years
- 5-9 years
- 10-14 years
- 15+ years

24. Has the school closure increased your desire to leave school administration?

- Yes
- No

25. What was your personal level of job of satisfaction BEFORE the school closure?

- Highly satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied
- Unsatisfied
- Highly unsatisfied

AWSP/Survey/COVID-19:Impacts_to_Building_Administrators

26. What was your personal level of job of satisfaction DURING and SINCE the school closure?
    - o   Highly satisfied
    - o   Satisfied
    - o   Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied
    - o   Unsatisfied
    - o   Highly unsatisfied

27. If you are considering leaving school administration, please share with us your primary reasons for making this decision.

28. Please share with us the PROFESSIONAL supports you would have found helpful during the school closures.

29. Please share with us the PERSONAL supports you would have found helpful during the school closures.

30. Please provide other comments that help explain your experiences as a building administrator during the COVID-19 school closure.

Appendix C: Statistical Significance Calculation

SurveyMonkey Premium – Statistical Significance Calculation

We calculate statistical significance using a standard 95% confidence level. When we display an answer option as statistically significant, it means the difference between two groups has less than a 5% probability of occurring by chance or sampling error alone, which is often displayed as p < 0.05.

To calculate the statistical significance between groups, we use the following formulas:

Statistic	Description	Formula
a1	The proportion of the first group answering a question a certain way multiplied by the sample size of that group.	$a_1 = p_1 * n_1$
b1	The proportion of the second group answering a question a certain way multiplied by the sample size of that group.	$b_1 = p_2 * n_2$
Pooled Sample Proportion (p)	The combination of the two proportions for both groups.	$p = \dfrac{a_1 + b_1}{n_1 + n_2}$
Standard Error (SE)	A measure of how far your proportion is from the true proportion. A smaller number means the proportion is close to the true proportion, a larger number means the proportion is far away from the true proportion.	$SE = \sqrt{(p * (1 - p)) * (\dfrac{1}{n_1} + \dfrac{1}{n_2})}$
Test Statistic (t)	A t-statistic. The number of standard deviations a number is away from the mean.	$t = \dfrac{p_1 - p_2}{SE}$
Statistical Significance	If the absolute value of the test statistic is greater than 1.96* standard deviations of the mean, then it's considered a statistically significant difference.	$|t| > 1.96$

*1.96 is a number used for the 95% confidence level since 95% of the area under a student's t-distribution function lies within 1.96 standard deviations of the mean.