

University of San Diego

Digital USD

Dissertations

Theses and Dissertations

1995

The Secondary School Assistant Principal

Victoria W. Halsey EdD
University of San Diego

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations>



Part of the [Leadership Studies Commons](#)

Digital USD Citation

Halsey, Victoria W. EdD, "The Secondary School Assistant Principal" (1995). *Dissertations*. 583.
<https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations/583>

This Dissertation: Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Digital USD. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital USD. For more information, please contact digital@sandiego.edu.

**THE SECONDARY SCHOOL
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL**

by
Victoria W. Halsey

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

University of San Diego

1995

Dissertation Committee

Mary Scherr Ph.D., Chair
William Foster Ed.D.
Edward Kujawa Ph.D.

THE SECONDARY SCHOOL ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL
HALSEY, VICTORIA WHITE., Ed.D. University of San Diego, 1995.
Director: Mary W. Scherr, Ph.D.

School leadership research typically centers around the high profile roles of the site level principal and the district superintendent. The resulting scarcity of information in regard to the role of the assistant principal is contributing to ineffective training, fewer initial guidelines and an overall lack of clear conceptualization of the position.

The purpose of this study was to construct a realistic portrayal of the assistant principal's daily professional life in the educational arena. This qualitative, ethnographic study stressed depth, richness and accuracy to depict the singular and collective voices of the participants. Eight practicing Junior and Senior High School assistant principals in San Diego County were interviewed individually as well as collectively in focus group interviews. In addition they completed a survey and were asked to complete two one-day logs documenting their activities and interactions.

Findings of the study showed that the world of the practicing assistant principal is in constant motion and filled with an amazing range of potentially volatile, thought provoking human interactions. There is a technical side where each decision is required to be made with skill, immediacy and a certain permanency. The role is unpredictable and while many assistant principals strive to accomplish leadership, the sheer number of disciplinary interactions and daily interruptions often supersede their attempts at impacting change.

The greatest challenges for practicing assistant principals include: accepting the continual lack of closure or time, accumulating the diverse knowledge-base needed to be responsive to the endless array of problem solving situations they encounter, and acknowledging

the public, political nature of their role. They strive to meet these challenges by building cohesive teams, sharing humor, celebrating successes, and readjusting their expectations of themselves and others. Suggestions for improved training programs and inservices specific to the role were abundant and were felt to be vital to the success and safety of assistant principals. Immediate needs include: a reduction in hours, (they averaged 12 hour days), assistance with continual supervision, and greater autonomy and learning opportunities. A primary frustration with the role was the inability to structure their time to engage in systematically planned leadership activities. The fact that leadership occurs at all is due to purposeful time utilization, will power and a high level of commitment to the betterment of the human condition. Analysis of the role offered an enlightened view of the role of the secondary school assistant principal in the tumultuous educational system called school.

© Copyright by Victoria White Halsey 1995

All Rights Reserved

DEDICATION

To my everloving, supportive
Family and Friends

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the wisdom, humor, strength and guidance of my partner in life, my precious husband, Richard Halsey. His many gifts of time, cooperation and patience motivated and reassured me through completion of this degree. My son, Nicholas, who barricaded me in my office with spongy alphabet letters, so, "No one will bother you" is to be acknowledged for his smiles and love which freed my creative thoughts.

Invaluable support came from my parents, Frank and Elaine White who continually fostered my love of learning and applauded all efforts at pursuing a higher degree.

I wish to thank the University of San Diego, Mary Scherr, Bill Foster, Ed Kujawa and Joe Rost who have transformed my life and opened new worlds of purposeful thought and action through their instruction in the intricate dynamics of leadership.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my beloved friends whose love, kindness and understanding helped me to see the potentialities in all obstacles: Mark Baldwin, Lori Brickley, Ileen Chopak, Jon Davies, Kevin Dorward, Leslie Fausset, Maryann Girdner, Susie Houle, Amanda Mleczko-Niaves, Pat Mihalik, Karen Richins, and Lisa Smedley.

To the acknowledged: I love and thank you all for your sacrifices, encouragement and vision.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Research Questions.....	5
Definitions of Terms.....	5
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	6
Literature Review.....	6
The Assistant Principalship.....	6
Leadership.....	14
Educational Leadership and School Reform.....	19
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	26
Design of the study.....	26
Site and Participant Selection.....	27
Site Selection.....	27
Participant Selection.....	28
Data Collection.....	28
Logs.....	28
Background Information Survey.....	29
Individual Interviews.....	29
Focus Group Interviews.....	30
Interview Guides.....	31
Data Analysis.....	31
Validity and Reliability.....	33
Conclusion.....	33
CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS.....	35
Introduction.....	35
Participants Biographies.....	36
The Findings.....	40
Research Question #1:	
What is the assistant principals' role in the secondary school setting?.....	40
Findings from Individual Interviews.....	40
Findings from Focus Group Interviews.....	55
Findings from the Survey.....	64

Findings from the Logs.....	67
Research Question #2	
What challenges do secondary school assistant principals face?.....	73
Findings from Individual Interviews.....	73
Findings from Focus Group Interviews.....	95
Findings from Surveys.....	108
Findings from Logs.....	109
Research Question #3	
How do they meet these challenges?.....	117
Findings from the Individual Interviews.....	117
Findings from Focus Group Interviews.....	136
Findings from Surveys.....	138
Findings from Logs.....	139
Research Question #4	
How do assistant principals assess their higher education training, initial support or preparation, and ongoing professional development?.....	139
Findings from Individual Interviews.....	139
Findings from Focus Group Interviews.....	153
Findings from Survey.....	153
Findings from Logs.....	157
Research Question #5	
If practicing assistant principals could make any changes in regard to their position, is there anything about their position that they would change?.....	157
Findings from Individual Interviews.....	157
Findings from Focus Group Interviews.....	170
Findings from Surveys.....	174
Findings from Logs.....	174
Research question #6	
What examples of leadership by assistant principals are noteworthy?.....	175
Findings from Individual Interviews.....	175
Findings from Focus Group Interviews.....	190
Findings from Survey.....	194

Findings from Logs.....	195
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS	197
Summary.....	199
Conclusions.....	199
Implications for Site level Principals.....	207
Implications for District Office Personnel.....	208
Implications for Higher Education.....	208
Recommendations for Further Research.....	209
REFERENCES.....	212
APPENDIX	222

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.0-Participant Survey Analysis.....	39
Table 1.1-Role Responses/Individual Interviews.....	40
Table 1.2-Role Responses/Focus Group Interviews-Emergent themes (From Major to Minor).....	55
Table 1.3-Role Responses/Survey Q. 4-Areas of Responsibility/Response-Frequency.....	65
Table 1.4-Role Responses/Survey Q.8-What do you perceive to be the role of the assistant principals on a secondary school campus?.....	65
Table 1.5-Role Responses/Survey Q.15-On what duties do you spend the majority of your time?.....	66
Table 1.6-Time spent on various aspects of the role of the secondary school assistant principal.....	72
Table 2.0-Challenges/Individual Interviews.....	73
Table 2.1-Challenges/Focus Group Interviews.....	95
Table 2.2-Challenges/Survey Responses.....	108
Table 2.3-Challenges/Documentation in logs of starting time, ending time and average hours spent at work by practicing A.P.'s.....	109
Table 3.0-Meeting Challenges/Individual Interviews.....	118
Table 3.1-Meeting Challenges/Focus Group Interviews Themes (Frequency) Description.....	136
Table 3.2-Meeting Challenge/Survey Responses Themes (Frequency) Description.....	138
Table 4.0-Assessment of Higher Education, Initial Support or Preparation and Ongoing Professional Development/Individual Interviews.....	140
Table 4.1-Assessment of Training/Focus Group Interviews- Theme (Frequency).....	153
Table 4.2-Assessment of Training/Survey Responses.....	155
Table 4.3-Assessment of Training/Survey-Areas of Perceived Need for Training/Preparation.....	156
Table 5.0-Changes/Individual Interviews.....	158
Table 5.1-Changes/Focus Group Interviews.....	170
Table 6.0-Evidence of Leadership/Focus Group Interviews.....	190

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A-LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS	222
APPENDIX B-INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	223
APPENDIX C-SURVEY-BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS.....	224
APPENDIX D-INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	226
APPENDIX E-FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL.....	227

CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

Introduction

Educational leaders in America are inundated with a multitude of challenges. Their job descriptions can never adequately describe the variety of politically charged activities, problems, and responsibilities included in each and every work day. These may include serving as a law enforcement officer, fire chief, crisis management counselor, surrogate parent, facilities director, staff supervisor or mediator, and traffic sergeant. It is not surprising that the possibility exists that the educational needs of the nation's youth are subjugated to the more immediate demands of effectively running the school campus. With administrative burnout and frustration on the rise (Marshall, 1992, p. viii) a study illuminating a window into the worlds of today's practicing school administrators may be beneficial.

Anson (1992) discussed the need for leadership research for the future of education by stating:

We are in a time of rapidly changing expectations and assumptions not only in this country but worldwide. Education is frequently cited as the avenue to assuring our strength and well-being as a society. As a result, the spotlight is on education as it has not been for quite some time. As the pace of change increases and the demands on the education system increase, the burden to respond to those demands will fall on the shoulders of our education leaders at all governmental levels. Planning research to meet those demands requires foresight and responsiveness to local needs and capabilities as never before. (p. 303)

Educational leaders who are typically left out of the research equation yet who are considered the ones who "run the schools day-to-day" (Marshall, Mitchell, and Gross, 1991) are practicing

assistant principals. "Few have noticed the person, the position, and the critical processes that occur in it" (Marshall, 1992a, p. ix). Research has typically focused on the leadership positions of the principal and the superintendent. This prior body of research does not adequately describe or directly relate to the intricacies of the position of the assistant principal. "The work environment of an assistant principal differs from that of a principal, and is far less congruent with the usual leadership assumptions" (Hartzell, 1993, p. 16). Even the majority of administrative training programs prepare individuals to be principals despite the fact that the majority of administrators begin, and may end, in the office of the assistant principal (Greenfield, 1985). While over 80% of all practicing assistant principals aspire to the principalship (Austin and Brown, 1970), the remaining 20% have found the position to be of value in and of itself and definitely a viable career position. "Those assistant principals who were comfortable in the AP position admitted two things: they decided to put their families first and to reject the time commitment required of principals. Furthermore, these AP's were disinterested in performing the political roles of the principal" (Marshall, Mitchell, and Brown, 1991). Individuals who choose to become career assistant principals often find that the position utilizes their talents and expertise.

The importance of the assistant principal is illustrated by Clements (1980) who states, "All educational leaders, but particularly the assistant principal, serving in that unique position which often bridges the gap between management and faculty, may well be the most effective educational leader to spearhead a rededication to positive action" (p. 16). Yet, due to prevalent perceptions and a dearth of research on the role (Greenfield, 1985), the assistant principal may not be actualizing his or her leadership abilities or finding satisfaction in the role. Marshall (1993) concurs by stating:

While they perform important tasks, assistants seldom are rewarded adequately. Often their tasks are conflicting. While schools cry out for leadership and creative efforts for reform, assistant principals' opportunities for initiative are constrained by "assumptive worlds" of understanding. This presents problems but also policy opportunities. Professional associations and policymakers seeking ways to support new leadership will do well to identify the dilemmas of assistant principals. (p. 11)

According to Wynne (1989) the need for competent administrative leaders to encourage the education of our nation's youth has never been greater. This research explores the ever-evolving position of the assistant principal and may contribute a unique insight into the actualities of school leadership. It may spotlight a group of aspiring leaders who may benefit from additional support, appreciation, and possibly more careful training and preparation.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the role of the assistant principal at the secondary level. The purpose of the study was to construct a realistic portrayal of the assistant principal's daily professional life in the educational arena. To achieve this goal of gaining an understanding of the lived experience of assistant principals, practicing assistant principals were asked to keep two one-day logs documenting their activities and encounters in their daily professional lives. They were also asked to complete a background informational survey as well as to participate in both an individual interview and in a focus group interview.

The proposed research and analysis stressed depth, richness and accuracy to realistically depict the lived experience of practicing secondary school assistant principals. As the typical leadership research in the area of education usually focuses on the

positions of the principal and the superintendent, it is often not applicable to the role of the assistant principal. Thus, the role of the assistant principal may have escaped a clear conceptualization. This research strives to contribute to a remediation of this oversight. An accurate portrayal of the role may achieve four purposes:

1. Assessment and redefinition of the roles and responsibilities of assistant principals may be in order should the data depict a position that would benefit from redefinition.

2. Graduate education programs as well as district sponsored professional development programs may be assisted to develop training programs that meet the current needs of assistant principals as well as adequately train future assistant principals.

3. The research may enable the position to be improved to become a more desirable, or viable, career option.

4. A portrayal of the position may be provided that could be read by prospective assistant principals and bring into closer alignment their vision of what they will do in the career given the realities of the position.

The Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) conducted a series of eleven seminars in 1987 that resulted in the determination that the focus of proposed studies in the area of educational research should be on leadership at the school or building level, should be interdisciplinary and collective, and should quickly result in some practical outcome. It is hoped that this research on the role of the assistant principal will assist in the development of a greater understanding of the current role of practicing assistant principals at the site level. In turn, this understanding may lead to improved awareness and preparation resulting in increased initial and ongoing successes in the position.

Research Questions

In an effort to support the purpose of the study, the following research questions were addressed.

1. What is the assistant principals' role in the secondary school setting?
2. What challenges do secondary school assistant principals face?
3. How do they meet these challenges?
4. How do assistant principals assess their higher education training, initial support or preparation, and ongoing professional development?
5. If practicing assistant principals could make any changes in regard to their position, is there anything about their position that they would change?
6. What examples of leadership by practicing assistant principals are noteworthy?

Definitions of Terms

1. Assistant Principal: The assistant principal is an administrator who assists the principal in providing leadership for a school. He or she is the person designated to act in the principal's absence and is often seen as a disciplinarian who provides a safe and orderly environment for students and staff. The term vice-principal and assistant principal will be used interchangeably in this study.

2. Leadership: For the purpose of this research, the combined working leadership definition is: Leadership is a dialectical influence relationship among individuals who intend real change reflecting mutual purposes resulting in an emancipated community.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Literature Review

The review of the literature will discuss research on the following interrelated topics: assistant principalship, leadership and educational leadership, and school reform. Section one surveys the research on the assistant principalship from 1926 to the present. The second section will focus on an analysis of leadership studies and conclude with a working definition to be utilized as a standard of leadership for this research. The third and final section in the comprehensive literature review covers topics specifically related to educational leadership and school reform.

The Assistant Principalship

If one were to judge the worth of his or her profession by the amount of literature written on the topic, he or she would have to conclude that the role of the assistant principal is minimal (Garawski, 1978; Reed and Connors, 1982). When describing the limited attention given to the role by educational researchers, administrator preparation programs, and professional associations, Greenfield (1985) stated, "With few exceptions, the literature on the role of the assistant principal is not cumulative, empirical, or informed by theory, and contributes little to increasing the field's knowledge and functions of assistant principals" (p. 7). The texts often utilized by educational administration programs (Blumberg; 1989, Bowsher, 1989; Joyce, 1986; Mauriel, 1989; and Sergiovanni, 1987) make no mention of the assistant principal. *The Encyclopedia of School Administration and Supervision* (Gorton, Schneider, & Fisher, 1988) in its selection of "administrative roles" does not mention the assistant principal at all" (Marshall, 1992, p. vii). Panyako and Rorie (1987) suggest that "The assistant principalship is perhaps the most dynamic and most changing

feature of the school system today" (p. 6). Yet it is also the most overlooked in significance and prestige. Historically, they indicated, assistant principals were hired to do the tasks that would otherwise keep the principals deluged in a sea of paperwork and keep them from interacting with students, teachers, and the community.

The first major study of assistant principals was conducted in 1970 by Austin and Brown who utilized two surveys in approximately 1200 secondary schools combined with eight shadow studies to conclude that individuals entered the position of the assistant principal thinking that they would be educational leaders and rapidly reassessed this thought as they were immersed in the routine tasks of discipline and attendance. These all-encompassing tasks resulted in little job satisfaction.

The general impression one receives from the observer's reports is that the assistant principal is far more central to the successful operation of the school than he believes himself to be, that he is somewhat pitied for the overload he carries, and that 'something ought to be done about it'. (Austin, 1972 p. 74)

Garawski (1978), stimulated by the dearth of literature about job satisfaction in educational administration, especially the management responsibilities of the assistant principal, surveyed 164 practicing assistant principals to determine the tie between tasks, environmental conditions and job satisfaction. He, too, concluded that the position was fraught with high levels of job dissatisfaction and if redefined might result in higher levels of efficacy (p. 9).

"The nature of the role of the vice principal has escaped clear conceptualization and the relationship of the role to the organization has remained elusive" (Reed and Connors, 1982, p. 466). Utilizing nine hours of intensive field observations of eight secondary assistant principals and data gathered during a two hour open-ended interview, Reed and Connors investigated the

nature of the role of the assistant principal and its relationship to the school. Their results include their perception that, "In order to bring a degree of order and stability to the turbulence, the members of the administrative team engage in alliance building and alliance-maintaining activities" (p. 480). These activities, however, produce only random results, and the position of the assistant principal remains in constant turbulence.

In an attempt to clarify the role of the assistant principal, Black (1980) sought to identify the similarities and differences in the roles of the secondary assistant principal as perceived by regional superintendents, principals, assistant principals, and teachers. She utilized a questionnaire to determine that there were primarily eight areas of similarities and eight areas where respondents differed in regard to the degree of involvement in different duties of the assistant principal. Her interviews, with a follow-up questionnaire, resulted in descriptions of the difficulty in determining the role of the assistant principal based upon perceptions of their duties.

High levels of frustration were associated with the lack of time provided to complete tasks. These mid-level administrators are bombarded from all directions during the course of a day and the constant disruptions prevent them from completing some tasks (p. 38-39).

She concluded that a job description that is truly in alignment with the actual job or aligning the position with the current job description might resolve many of the conflicts encountered by today's practicing assistant principals.

Kelly (1984) studied the dilemma in regard to the training capabilities for the principalship in the assistant principal's role. He concluded that assistant principals "spent most of their time at tasks they would not look after as principals and very little time at duties that they would be responsible for as principals" (p. 13). His research also concluded that the assistant principal's "role was a subordinate one and none of them felt that there were enough

rewards in terms of job satisfaction to regard the assistant principalship as a career goal in and of itself" (p. 18).

Greenfield (1985), in his analysis of the research completed on assistant principals, stated that, "there have been few studies of the assistant principal's role, and very little critical or creative thinking has been done regarding that role . . ." (p. 7). He continued by exclaiming that, ". . . relatively little is known about the conditions, substance, and impact of the work of the assistant principal" (p. 11). He concluded his summary on the research on assistant principals by making several general observations:

Although administrative tasks and their relative importance have probably changed somewhat in the past 20 years, the basic issues of (1) what assistant principals do, (2) under what conditions, and (3) what impact remains to be examined in depth. . . . The assistant principal generally is acknowledged in the literature and by the profession at large to be a key actor on the school scene. Although this appears to be true, it is a role that has not received much attention from either researchers or school administrators. Further study of the assistant principalship promises to illuminate much about the culture of schools, the problems associated with managing school personnel and instructional programs, and the function of experience in this role for performance in the principalship or in other administrative or supervisory positions. (p. 24)

Kreikare and Norton (1985) conducted a research study and determined six major tasks of the assistant principalship: (1) school management, (2) staff personnel, (3) community relations, (4) student activities, (5) curriculum and instruction, and (6) pupil personnel items. For each task area, a list of competencies and indicators of successful mastery of the task were developed. These tasks, competencies and indicators were developed by a validation jury of practicing assistant

principals in the state of Arizona. It was hoped that they would prove useful to individuals who trained future assistant principals as well as valuable to practicing assistant principals and their supervisors.

Koerner (1986), however, discusses the need to reassess the position of the assistant principal in light of the new philosophy that it is not considered a temporary position where one automatically moves to the principalship (p. 168). Research is needed such as that generated by Calabrese and Adams (1987) which "hypothesized that the working conditions associated with the role of assistant principal generate an environment which exacerbates the levels of alienation. More specifically, it was hypothesized that assistant principals exhibit higher levels of alienation and the dimensions of powerlessness, isolation, meaninglessness, and normlessness when compared with other administrators, e.g. principals" (p. 96). The preliminary findings from their research of over 2300 secondary school administrators include:

The role of the assistant principal, which for many teachers holds the promise of promotion to a leadership position, in reality has turned out to be considerably less attractive than originally imagined. Unless the role is modified, and this may not be possible under present organizational conditions, assistant principals will continue to be more alienated than principals and may not be able to contribute to their fullest extent. (p. 96)

Panyako and Rorie (1987) continue the dialogue of the need for modification for the role when they suggest that assistant principals be freed from all the tasks that keep them isolated from the teachers and students in the classroom setting. They also pinpoint another reason for the ineffectiveness felt by many practicing assistant principals when they state:

Today's assistant principal must be versed in all aspects

of school management ranging from financial accounting, school law, and educational and psychological measurement to staff supervision and evaluation, and effective communication with students, parents, and the general public. The assistant principal must also deal with matters relating to curriculum design and implementation, vocational guidance and assessment of the unique educational needs of the students. (p. 7)

The expansiveness of the role reduces the ability of assistant principals to utilize their talents. They conclude with a belief that the role should be redefined to enable the individuals in the position to be productive and accountable.

In 1991, the National Association of Secondary School Principals published a monograph on "Restructuring the Role of the Assistant Principal." According to this document, the role of the assistant principal involves assigned and thus expected tasks as well as assumed and therefore more self-determined tasks. Both tasks are impacted by situational influences. This document also outlines the tasks of the assistant principal, delineates the relationships expected of the assistant principal with significant others, identifies the organizational structure of the assistant principal's job, determines ways to help the assistant principal improve professionally, defines the emerging role of the assistant principal in terms of messages to individuals who work with assistant principals, and lastly, describes techniques for getting promising people into the assistant principalship. The document is a comprehensive overview of the role, yet it does not delve into the worlds of practicing assistant principals. Suggestions are made to assistant principals that seem insensitive to the current environment in which assistant principals are operating. This text, too, mentions the "paucity" of research on and literature for assistant principals. It contributes a definition of the tasks and responsibilities involved in the role and encourages a

reassessment of the role by school boards, superintendents and central office administrators.

Catherine Marshall authored the first actual text on the assistant principalship. The Assistant Principal, Leadership Choices and Challenges (1992) is a comprehensive overview of what is unique about assistant principals, how they learn to do their jobs, what is becoming known about the position, and how the position can be improved. In the preface Marshall states:

Two themes are evident in the book: First, the book asserts and demonstrates the need to understand the assistant's role and find ways to improve it. Second, the book illustrates how, by focusing on the assistant, we can uncover problems and identify new solutions for reconceptualizing school leadership. There is no better place to begin with than the assistant. (p. ix)

She depicts four reasons that the assistant principal's position is critical in the educational arena. First, it is a frequent entry-level position for administrative careers. Second, assistant principals maintain the norms and rules of the school culture. Third, assistant principals must frequently play the role of mediator, addressing the conflicts that emerge among teachers, students, and the community. And fourth, they encounter the fundamental dilemmas of school systems. "Their day is a microcosm representing the array of issues that arise when children bring society inside the schools' walls. As a result, they have developed as a prime group of individuals who could, if asked, generate a unique picture of the existing condition of public education" (p. 2).

Marshall's text (1992) outlined her previous research which determined seven tasks that, when encountered, result in the socialization of assistant principals.

Task One: Deciding to leave teachers and teaching behind.

Task Two: Analyzing the selection process not only for their entry but for upward mobility in the career.

Task Three: Maintaining a calm front in the face of culture shock. "Assistant principals are shocked at how unprepared they are for the array of tasks they confront" (p. 41).

Task Four: Defining relationships with teachers.

Task Five: Learning the art of the street-level bureaucrat, or how to do an ethical job in spite of the bureaucracies.

Task Six: Identifying, demanding, and protecting one's areas of responsibility or "territory".

Task Seven: Discipline management, or coping with the realities of the job such as teachers having a bad day and taking it out on a child and still having to support them (p. 40-42).

Her analysis continued with the belief that it is how an assistant principal chooses to react to these tasks that either moves them up the career ladder, allows them to remain in their current position or shows them that they would prefer to leave the profession. Lastly, Marshall (1992) states, "The first step in improving assistant principals' and others' valuing of the position is exploring, defining, and disseminating information about their work" (p. 87).

Marshall's second publication, a monograph on The Unsung Role of the Career Assistant Principal (1993), focused on individuals who have chosen to remain in the critical role of the assistant principal. The study of fifty career assistant principals is a ". . . portrait and some insights into the lives, the work, and the inner motivations of career assistant principals" (p. 51). "This study . . . is a good start on the agenda of recognizing their contributions and their needs" (p. 49). Of primary interest is the analysis of the stereotypes surrounding the role of the assistant principal. To be stereotyped as a Marine Corps drill sergeant limits the potential effectiveness of assistant principals and does not do justice to the ". . . new breed of career assistants whose roles are as diverse as the students they serve" (p. 1). The descriptions of the work of the career assistant principal, pictures of their career environment and identification of the policies,

programs and structural supports that assist the career assistant principal are among the richest published so far. An example of the richness of her prose describing her research results is:

Individual career AP's are as different in style and personality as the hand-woven scarves and tapestries of skilled weavers. But just as one or two threads can anchor a weaving and give it unity and strength, so, too, a consistent pattern emerges with career assistant principals. That pattern emerges from the skillful weaving of personal life values and career satisfactions to create an educator who is a major contributor to the development of young people and the stability and success of his or her school. (p. 36)

The limited research on assistant principals has many clear implications. It was often stated that although assistant principals seem to be valued, they often seem to be deluged with a wide variety of tasks and few support systems. All prior research concluded that there is a definite need for further research that can enable individuals who are placed in this position of leadership to be able to do leadership, improve their efficacy, and feel a sense of value in what they have chosen to do.

Leadership

For the purposes of this study, leadership is defined as a dialectical influence relationship among individuals who intend real change reflecting mutual purposes resulting in an emancipated community. This working definition has evolved from the research of several leadership scholars. Bates (1989) contends that "leadership seems to be a problem. There appears to be widespread agreement on its necessity, but little agreement on its substance" (p. 131). In the early 1900's, it was thought that there were a few great men who could be classified as leaders. They had the combination of birthright, talent, and position to lead the country or organization to purposeful outcomes. They

were the foundation of the original studies on leadership. The 'great man' theory of leadership along with the next few models that depicted leaders as individuals with certain ideal traits or behaviors gave way to Fiedler's (1967) contingency model. Fiedler's model suggested that the effectiveness of leaders was contingent on the match between style and purpose of the leader and the style and ability of the worker. Although a variety of models emerged that were similar to Fiedler's managerial hierarchical model, none addressed the role of followership and moral elevation due to visionary leadership until Burns introduced transformational leadership in his 1978 book, Leadership. His definition of leadership "*Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition/conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological and other resources so as to arouse, engage and satisfy the motives of followers*" (p. 18) had two dimensions. These were transactional leadership and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership was equated with management or transactions between leaders and followers with the purpose of exchanging valued resources. The revolutionary concept of transformational leadership, however, was the catalyst for a new school of leadership thought.

Contrast this (transactional leadership) with *transforming* leadership. Such leadership occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Their purposes, which might have started out as separate but related, as in the case of transactional leadership, become fused. Power bases are linked not as counterweights but as mutual support for common purpose. The relationship can be moralistic of course. But transforming leadership ultimately becomes *moral* in that it raises the level of human conduct and

ethical aspiration of both leader and led, and thus it has a transforming effect on both. (p. 20)

The years following the introduction of transformational leadership resulted in many books focusing on leadership including: In Search of Excellence by Peters and Waterman (1982), Leaders by Bennis and Nanus (1985), Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations by Bass (1985), The Transformational Leader by Tichy and Devanna (1986), The Leadership Challenge by Kouzes and Posner (1987), On Becoming a Leader by Bennis (1989), Leadership is an Art by DePree (1989), and On Leadership by Gardner (1990). These books attempted to introduce a new era of leadership studies where the concept of leadership involved a somewhat superhuman visionary individual who motivated and empowered his staff to greatness that resulted in stronger, more productive organizations. These books emphasize the how of hierarchical leadership and what leaders should do to make excellent organizations.

Thus, leadership has been portrayed as great men utilizing excellence and behavioral matching ability to attain a transformed organization resulting in increased profits (Adams, 1986; Bass, 1985; Bennis, 1984; Gardner, 1987; Kouzes and Posner, 1987; Peters, 1987; Tichy and Devanna, 1986). Rather than focusing on what leadership is and thus contributing to a school of leadership, the focus has been on the individual leader and his or her actions.

One school of thought that deviated from the norm emerged from a multi-disciplinary approach. Leadership: Multidisciplinary Perspectives edited by Kellerman (1984) and Transforming Leadership edited by Adams (1986) are both collections of leadership views that articulate such philosophies as spiritual leadership, visionary leadership, the role of followership to leadership and the critical model of leadership (Grob, 1984; and Hunt, 1984). Leadership as framed by critical inquiry (Foster, 1989) views leadership as demystifying oppressive structures and emancipating the human condition.

The two models of leadership that incorporate the human element of leadership as relationships striving to effect ethical, transformative change are Foster's (1989) Critical Model of Leadership and Rost's (1991) Post-industrial model/definition of leadership.

Foster (1989) identified four critical components to leadership:

1. Leadership must be critical: it must critique social issues from an understanding of the need for emancipation from oppressive constructs and move toward freedom and equity for all.

2. Leadership must be transformative: it must be transformative in that there is a transformation of a belief system that results in social change. This concept of transformative includes the idea of a "community of believers" (Foster, 1989, p. 52).

3. Leadership must be educative: leaders must educate others in regard to the historical traditions of certain structures, programs or policies, and engage in analysis as to their current effectiveness and need and lastly, provide the vision for a more just and democratic society.

4. Leadership must be ethical: personal and professional ethics include the use or misuse of power relationships and the desire to elevate moral consciousness through the development of a moral community.

In summary, Foster (1989) defines leadership as, "the ability of humans to relate deeply to each other in the search for a more perfect union. Leadership is a consensual task, a sharing of ideas and a sharing of responsibilities where a 'leader' is a leader for the moment only where the leadership exerted must be validated by the consent of followers, and where leadership lies in the struggles of a community to find meaning for itself" (p. 50).

Rost (1990) defined leadership as "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect

their mutual purposes" (p. 102). He lists four essentials of leadership:

1. Leadership is based on an influence relationship that is multidirectional and noncoercive.
2. Leadership involves active followers (two or more) as well as leaders.
3. These leaders and followers intend (purposefully) real (substantive and transforming) changes.
4. The changes that these leaders and followers intend reflect purposes that have been mutually developed.

Rost (1991) makes a clear delineation between leadership and management which is much like the differentiation made by Burns (1979) between transformational and transactional leadership. Rost's model strays from Burn's transformational leadership model, however, in that Rost does not view the moral dimension as the key to the test of leadership. He believes that transformations are transformations and can be not just moral, but ". . .physical, intellectual, aesthetic, psychological, social, civic, ecological, transactional, moral, spiritual, and holistic" (p. 126). Rost feels that a new school of leadership is needed to enact a paradigm shift in leadership studies. His primary concern with previous "leadership" models is that they do not clearly define leadership which would enable individuals to recognize it when they see it and thus, enable a more thorough analysis. In addition, he believes that they lack the depiction of leadership that would enable a school of leadership to emerge and enable training of future leadership scholars. Without a school of leadership, Rost believes that we will continue with what Burns (1979) identifies as a crisis of leadership (p. 1). This systemic crisis results from the lack of a clear definition in which to support the development of a school of leadership and entrenchment in models that will not meet the needs of the twenty-first century. Individuals training to become involved in the leadership needed to successfully respond to the emerging

issues of the twenty-first century must be exposed to rigorous dialogue in regard to leadership. They must be assisted to break free from the great-man philosophy still so evident in most "leadership" training courses. Only when and if this occurs will they stand a chance of addressing the second-order changes necessary to humanize and improve our current educational institutions.

Educational Leadership and School Reform

Assistant principals are among the individuals typically considered leaders on a school campus (Greenfield, 1985). They must provide leadership to address the many school reform or restructuring movements while concurrently maintaining a safe and orderly campus. Have the studies of leadership impacted the worlds of practicing assistant principals? Have leadership scholars influenced the coursework offered to future educational administrators in regard to strategies for actualizing school leadership?

Educational administrators have typically been portrayed as individuals whose task it is to manage the operations of the school. Models of educational administration have been closely aligned with business models for leadership. As leadership has become more widely discussed as the critical component to effective organizations, school administrative training has appeared to reflect a change from this management mode to a visionary, reflective, critical leader of a leadership team. This change in philosophy is portrayed in such professional journals as Educational Leadership, Phi Delta Kappan, Thrust for Educational Leadership, and The Journal for the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Foster (1985), Sergiovanni (1987, 1988, 1989), Mauriel (1989), and Smyth (1989) talk of a need for a critical assessment of school leadership to change underlying inequalities in our world. Watkins (1989) states:

From the administrative perspective the aim of the facilitating or transformational leaders would be to help foster an organizational community in which all the members of the organization have the capacity and opportunity to be leaders and where there is a common concern for empowerment and the betterment of the human condition. (p. 32-33)

The jump, however, from theory to practice is a long one. "As James O'Toole, a professor and leadership expert, puts it, 'Ninety-five percent of American managers today say the right thing. Five percent actually do it.' "(Huey, 1994, p. 42). For the practicing assistant principal, the discrepancy between what is read about potentialities through leadership and what is actually happening in regard to actual leadership practice in their schools might be a contributing factor to the high levels of documented frustrations.

One individual who has done a great deal of research in the area of transformational leadership in schools is Kenneth Leithwood. Results of a four-year study on transformational forms of leadership and their implications for restructuring found that individuals deemed to be transformational by their peers and subordinates follow many of the same practices. These practices revolve around the interrelated areas of purposes, people, structure, and culture. A synthesis of findings by Leithwood (1994) on transformational leadership practices is as follows:

Purposes

Develops a widely shared vision for the school:

Initiates processes (retreats etc. . . .) that engage staff in the collective development of a shared vision.

Builds consensus about school goals and priorities:

Expects individual teachers and teams of teachers to regularly engage in goal setting and review of progress toward goals; may also have a process for goal setting and review for whole school staff.

Holds high performance standards:

Demonstrates unflagging commitment to the welfare of students.

Establishes very flexible boundaries for what people do, providing people with freedom of judgment and action within the context of overall school plans (a means of nourishing their creativity).

People

Provides individualized support:

Follows through on decisions made jointly with teachers.

Listens carefully to staff's ideas.

Has the pulse of the school; builds on the individual interests of teachers, often as the starting point for school change.

Is specific about what is being praised as good work.

Provides intellectual stimulation:

Directly challenges staff's basic assumptions about their work as well as unsubstantiated or questionable beliefs or practices.

Encourages staff to evaluate their practices and to refine them as needed.

Consistently seeks out and communicates positive activities taking place in the school.

Removes penalties for making mistakes as part of efforts toward professional and school improvement.

Models good professional practice:

Becomes involved in all aspects of school activity.

Works alongside teachers to plan special events.

Demonstrates, through school decision-making processes, the value of examining problems from multiple perspectives:

Responds constructively to feedback about own leadership practices.

Inspires respect.

Always strives to do one's best; works hard and takes risks from time to time.

Treats others with respect.

Has a sense of humor.

Structure

Distributes the responsibility and power for leadership widely throughout the school:

Shares decision making power with staff.

Alters working conditions so that staff have collaborative planning time and time to seek out information needed for planning and decision making.

Culture

Strengthens school culture by:

Clarifying the school's vision for teacher collaboration and for the care and respect of students.

Sharing with staff norms of excellence for both staff and students.

Uses bureaucratic mechanisms to support collaborative work by:

Allocating money to provide opportunities for collaboration.

Creating projects in which collaboration is a useful method of working.

Hiring staff who share school vision, norms and values.

Sharing power and responsibility with others.
Working to eliminate boundaries between
administrators and teachers and between other
groups in the school. (p. 510-512)

Leithwood (1994) concludes from his research, "The evidence that has been summarized in this article provides reasonably robust support for the claim that transformational forms of leadership will be of considerable value in the context of a school-restructuring agenda" (p. 515). In addition, his research supports that of Silins (1992) which addresses the lack of distinction between management and leadership.

This distinction is empirically problematic and one plausible explanation is that overt practices are essentially uninterpretable in the absence of knowledge about their purposes and their effects. Indeed, most of the overt practices of transformational leaders look quite managerial. Transformational effects depend on school leaders infusing day-to-day routines with meaning and purpose for themselves and their colleagues. (p. 515)

Educational leadership and management in schools have targeted many interrelated reform or restructuring issues such as curriculum redevelopment, instructional leadership, authentic assessment, and effective supervisory techniques. The introduction of whole language, hands-on science, mathematics manipulatives, and interdisciplinary teams are but a few key reforms designed to strengthen the curriculum. According to research, clinical teaching, cooperative learning and mastery learning can improve instruction. Portfolio assessment and other forms of performance-based authentic assessment are being discussed by reformers in relationship to state mandated assessment techniques. The role of the administrator is described as changing from one who takes charge to one who facilitates change through empowerment and participatory management. As

Sergiovanni (1987) states when discussing leadership needed for quality schooling:

Transformative leaders are more concerned with the concept of power to than power over. They are concerned with how the power of leadership can help people become more successful, to accomplish the things that they think are important to experience a greater sense of efficacy. (p. 18-19)

These educational and leadership reform movements reflect the needs of a society that has moved from the industrial age to the information age. The role of schools has been challenged to develop individuals who can think, problem solve and work together to ensure the continuation of our world. New goals involve students in their learnings, enabling them to gain an understanding of the interrelatedness of their instruction in relation to their role as contributing members of society. Specifically students are no longer seen as "empty vessels" who come to school to be "filled", but are seen as constructors of knowledge who need to be taught the skills of knowledge acquisition as they develop their unique strengths and personalities. These students are also in need of a core of knowledge and an understanding of differing perspectives or points of view in which to base their opinions. They need to be taught the varying components of information acquisition and given the strength through intellectual achievement to feel confident to tackling life's obstacles.

Individuals who attain positions in administration are thought to be those who can assist in the enactment of the aforementioned reforms. Yet, their positions often are limiting in their access to situations where they may initiate change. Researching role perceptions and actualities of the daily activities may provide strategies for improving the training and professional development of assistant principals. In addition, clarifying and redefining the role of assistant principals by

listening to their voices may increase their career satisfaction by liberating their leadership potentialities.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Design of the study

The role of the secondary school assistant principal was researched through utilization of qualitative research methods. Qualitative research methodology was selected due to the desire to build on an ethic of "mutual respect, noncoercion and nonmanipulation, the support of democratic values and institutions, and the belief that every research act implies moral and ethical decisions that are contextual" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p.21). The strengths of qualitative research in researching social beings in a socially defined world are highlighted by this quote:

Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and sometimes counterdisciplinary field . . . Qualitative research is many things at the same time. It is multiparadigmatic in focus. Its practitioners are sensitive to the value of the multimethod approach. They are committed to the naturalistic perspective and to the interpretive understanding of human experience.... Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry.... They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. (Lincoln and Denzin, 1994, pp. 3-4)

To gain the data needed to answer the research questions in regard to assistant principals, the researcher utilized in-depth ethnographic interviews. "Ethnography studies the culturally shared, common-sense perceptions of everyday experiences. Ethnographers ask 'What do people do here?' " (Van Manen, 1990, p. 177). Marshall and Rossman (1989) state that ethnographic

research strategies are appropriate for descriptive research seeking to answer questions such as, "What are the salient behaviors, events beliefs, attitudes, structures, processes occurring in this phenomenon" (p. 78)?

In practical terms, ethnography usually refers to forms of social research having a substantial number of the following features:

- *A strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them;

- *A tendency to work primarily with "unstructured" data, that is, data that have not been coded at the point of data collection in terms of a closed set of analytic categories;

- *Investigation of a small number of cases, perhaps just one case, in detail;

- *Analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions, the product of which mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations, with quantification and statistical analysis playing a subordinate role at most. (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994, p. 248)

The researcher's goal is to have the final ethnographic report embrace the humanness of the participants through a portrayal of the shared lived experiences or stories of practicing secondary assistant principals.

Site and Participant Selection

Site Selection

The proposed qualitative study focused on eight secondary school assistant principals from the Californio (pseudonym) Unified School District, in Southern California. The Californio Unified School District has twenty-eight school sites, nineteen elementary schools, five middle schools and four high schools with approximately 25,000 students. This district has been described

by many as a visionary, pioneering district (David,1989). These conclusions are collaborated by the numerous state and United States Department of Education awards received by the district. Therefore, the researcher studied assistant principals in California due to the opportunity to study the assistant principals in an award-winning district.

Participant Selection

The population sample of assistant principals was selected through a volunteer, random sample within a purposive sampling technique. "Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most" (Merriam, 1988, p.48). The purposive, volunteer sample included one assistant principal randomly selected from each of the secondary schools within the California Unified School District. This resulted in a study of eight assistant principals as there are three comprehensive high schools and five middle schools within the award winning district. The randomly selected individuals were invited (See Appendix A) to voluntarily participate in the study. If they accepted the invitation, a dialogue in regard to the requirements concluded with the signing of the informed consent form (Appendix B). The initial letter as well as the informed consent form outlined the requirements of the participants and the protection of the human subjects. Individuals who chose not to participate were replaced with another randomly selected individual from the same site from which the original individual was selected.

Data Collection

Logs

Participating assistant principals were asked to keep two one-day logs documenting their daily interactions and activities during the month of February. They were asked to pre-select two

days so as to attempt to ensure the description of a typical day in the life of a practicing secondary school assistant principal. The specific days in which to keep logs were selected from a blank calendar and then transferred to the assistant principal's calendar to avoid the selection of atypical days.

Background Information Survey

Upon completion of the logs documenting their daily interactions, the participants were asked to complete a short background information survey (Appendix C). The survey focused on quantifiable information such as history of the participant in administration and their current areas of responsibilities. The information gleaned from the surveys was utilized to support, cross-check and develop the research conclusions.

Individual Interviews

In addition to completion of the logs and survey, subjects were asked to participate in a one hour, in-depth, semi-structured individual interview. The purpose of the individual interviews was to have the practicing educators reflect on the concept of what they do as assistant principals, on the challenges they have and how they strive to overcome these challenges as they seek to accomplish their duties and responsibilities, what training they would like to have had and would like to receive in the future, and suggestions they have for improving their profession or re-defining their role. ". . . Interviewing is one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings" (Fontana and Frey, 1994, p. 361). The research design allowed for opportunities for meaning construction, clarifying questions, and greater understandings of the role of the assistant principal to evolve throughout the interviews. Although each participant was asked similar questions to gain data to address research questions, the open-ended questions were occasionally modified, altered, and/or changed during the data

collection as the search for understanding occurred. Interviews were forty-five to sixty minutes, tape-recorded, and transcribed verbatim. They were held at either a pre-selected middle school's conference room or the school's conference room from which the participant was selected or the subject's office. The individual interviews were held during the month of February. The interview protocol was followed in all cases. Clarifying questions were asked to elicit precise thinking and allow for rethinking and responses.

Focus Group Interviews

In addition to the individual interview, two one-hour focus group interviews with four participants were held during the month of February. "Focus group interviews . . . provide some quality controls on data collection in that participants tend to provide checks and balances on each other which weed out false or extreme views" (Patton, 1987, p. 135). All participants were invited to a focus group interview to dialogue on their overall perceptions of their positions as assistant principals. It was at these focus group interviews that further clarification and meaning gained from the logs and individual interviews was sought. As with the individual interviews, the focus group interviews were approximately one-hour and tape-recorded so as to be transcribed verbatim for analysis. They were held in the conference room at a middle school in the district. They were informally structured so as to allow for maximum freedom of thought and interaction. The focus group interview was the last form of data collection. Prior to the focus group interviews, the individual interviews, logs, and surveys were coded and cross-referenced. The questions presented to the participants at the focus group interview were designed to fill any voids existing in the answers to the research questions. The focus group interview protocol (Appendix E) was developed with respect for the needed data.

Interview Guides

An individual interview guide (See Appendix D) as well as a focus interview guide (See Appendix E) were developed. The interviews were designed to explore the professional experiences of assistant principals, and, thus questions were open-ended to delve deeply into thoughts, perceptions, attitudes, sources of joy, frustrations, and motivations of practicing secondary assistant principals. I asked three assistant principals in the Lincoln Unified School District who recently completed their doctoral degrees as well as my dissertation committee to review the individual interview guide.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of the logs, background information surveys, individual interviews, and focus group interviews was to collect data that, when analyzed, would portray an in-depth look at the lived experiences and life meanings of contemporary assistant principals.

Data Analysis

Data from the logs and background information surveys were analyzed through a process of inductive analysis where the salient categories emerged from reading and re-reading the data (Patton, 1980, in Marshall, 1989). Interview data were coded for emerging, recurring, or common themes. Specifically emergent themes were sought out that could be developed and interwoven with the literature review, previous data, and previous analytic memos made during the entire course of the research (Marshall, 1989, p. 112). Each interview first yielded individual summaries in regard to each of the twenty specific questions asked of the participants. These summaries were then compared and cross-analyzed for similarities and differences and emerging themes. In addition, they were analyzed in terms of overall responses to the

research questions stated on page three of this proposal. As the background information surveys and activity logs of the daily activities of assistant principals were coded and woven together with the data collected at the individual and focus group interviews, a detailed narrative and understanding of the role of the assistant principal emerged.

As ". . . no single method can grasp the subtle variations in ongoing human experience" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 12) the ethnographic approach to data collection and representation was enhanced through a narrative account or style that stressed the incorporation of the participant's voices in the final report or conclusions of findings (Altheide and Johnson, 1994). Altheide and Johnson believe this technique, ". . . enables the readers to engage the study in an interactive process that includes seeking more information, contextualizing findings and reliving the report as the playing out of the interactions among the researcher, the subject, and the topic in questions" (p. 494).

Lincoln (1989) also suggested other strengths of narrative inquiry which include the power of voice, the power of interpretation, and the presentation of possibilities. Combined together with Connelly and Clandenin's (1990) belief that, "The study of narrative . . . is the study of the ways humans experience the world. Thus we say that people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, where as narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (p. 7). Thus, a narrative approach to the research text lent an added dimension of voice to my ethnographically-based research on practicing assistant principals.

Participants, school sites, and the district were each given a pseudonym as a protection for the human subjects and to provide subjects with anonymity. All comments and responses of the participants were kept confidential and anonymous. Tapes were locked up then destroyed upon transcription, and data was coded

to ensure anonymity. Transcriptions were sent to participants for criticism, deletion, and/or addition.

Validity and Reliability

Qualitative research and naturalistic inquiry approach the concepts of validity and reliability through a lens of a socially constructed world. Guba and Lincoln (1985) identify four components to defend qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The researcher utilized the four data collection techniques to address these four components and portray the role and perceptions of the secondary school assistant principals so well that practicing assistant principals will say it resonates with the reality of their profession and their beliefs.

The assistant principals' stories or logs provide ". . . arguments in which we learn something essentially human by understanding an actual life" (Connelly and Clandenin, 1990, p. 8). This research attempted to portray multiple views and mutually constructed understandings in regard to the perceived role of the assistant principal.

Reliability, or belief that the study could be replicated and find the same results, was addressed by Merriam's three guidelines (1988): (1) state the investigator's position in regard to assumptions behind the study and information regarding participant selection and data analysis, (2) triangulate data collection and analysis, and (3) leave an audit trail that accurately depicts how the study was achieved (p. 172).

Conclusion

The researcher is biased toward a need for research methods that bring people together instead of further alienating them. Due to the interactive nature of qualitative research, the development of professional relationships that utilized dialogue to offer a window in the real worlds of those individuals who are

being studied was facilitated. It is hoped that the research undertaken can help interested individuals understand, and thus have the potential to improve, the worlds of practicing secondary assistant principals.

The research design was formulated to result in a convincing narrative of the complex world of the practicing secondary assistant principal which resulted in readers vicariously experiencing the role of the assistant principal as researched. The field narrative was reconstructed in such a way as to replicate as closely as possible the range of the professional experiences of practicing assistant principals. It is hoped that the complexity of their worlds and their unbelievable commitment and sense of responsibility for their positions were adequately portrayed.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

Compiling the data on practicing secondary school assistant principals from four different data collection techniques- individual interviews, focus group interviews, surveys and logs- has been challenging yet stimulating. It might be compared to painting an accurate watercolor of the coast of Florida during a hurricane. The artist strives to get the exact hues, shapes and moods yet they change with every gust of wind and arrangement of the cloud structures. The assistant principal's office is in constant motion and filled with an amazing range of potentially volatile, thought provoking human interactions. In addition, there is a technical side where each decision is required to be made with skill, immediacy and a certain permanency without consideration for the trees that are being uprooted or sand that is clouding decision making abilities. The role is unpredictable. It is unforgiving to those who make mistakes early in their career, and spectacularly enlightening as to the inner workings of the tumultuous world of an educational system called school. It provides a camaraderie born of mutual survival, develops a person's inner strength as they become more adept at supporting others, and, during those few moments in the eye of the hurricane, produces a heart felt joy as the wind tossed administrator takes a minute to observe a child, parent or program that may have been positively impacted by their choice to become, and actions as, an assistant principal.

The purpose of this chapter is to give an analysis of data collected for the qualitative, ethnographic study that will contribute to an understanding of the role of the practicing secondary assistant principal. The research questions to be addressed are:

1. What is the assistant principals' role in the secondary school setting?
2. What challenges do secondary school assistant principals face?
3. How do they meet these challenges?
4. How do assistant principals assess their higher education training, initial support or preparation, and ongoing professional development?
5. If practicing assistant principals could make any changes in regard to their position, is there anything about their position that they would change?
6. What examples of leadership by practicing assistant principals are noteworthy?

In this chapter each research question will be addressed with the data gained from the four data collection techniques: individual interviews, focus group interviews, surveys and logs that were written for a period of two to three days by the practicing secondary school assistant principals who were participants in this research. The eight participants were randomly selected from Californio School District in Southern California. For confidentiality, these participants were given pseudonyms. Participants were as follows:

Participants Biographies

Dr. Susan O'Malley

Susan O'Malley is a middle school administrator who has been an administrator for eleven years. Her major areas of responsibility are the master schedule, discipline, and curriculum. She is 44 years old, has worked for four principals, and currently holds an Ed. D. in Administration.

Dr. Michael Berg

Michael Berg is a high school administrator who has served as an administrator for four years. His major areas of responsibility are discipline, facilities, and transportation. He is 44 years old and has worked for seven principals. He also holds an Ed. D. in Educational Administration.

Steve Anderson

Steve Anderson is a middle school assistant principal who has worked as an administrator for seven years. When asked about his areas of responsibility, he said assistant principal - A-11. He is 41 years old and has worked for eight principals. He holds an M.A. degree in educational administration. His perception of the role of the assistant principal is to do whatever the principal delegates or doesn't want to do himself. At the time of completion of this dissertation, he had accepted a middle school principal position in another school district in the county.

Ted Miller

Ted Miller is a high school administrator who has been an administrator for nine years. His major area of responsibility is overseeing the counseling department and scheduling as well as campus supervision. He is 48 years old, has worked for six principals, and holds an M.A. in Administration.

Dr. Tina Edwards

Tina Edwards is a middle school administrator. She has been an administrator for three years. Her major areas of responsibility are discipline, campus supervision, and to supervise instruction. She is 44 years old, has worked for two principals, and currently holds her doctoral degree in Educational Administration. At the time of completion of this dissertation, she had accepted a position as a high school principal in the same school district.

Dr. Clint Oliver

Clint Oliver is a high school administrator who has served as an administrator for four years. His major areas of responsibility are discipline, staff development, strategic planning, working with student teachers, and supervising evaluations. He is 43 years old, has worked for five principals, and currently holds his Ed. D. in Educational Administration. At the time of completion of this dissertation he had accepted a tenure track teaching position at a State University in the county.

David North

David North is a high school administrator. He has served as an administrator for five years. His major areas of responsibility are discipline, facilities, school improvement program, overseeing the water company, security, emergency preparedness, transportation, and teacher evaluations. He is 45 years old, has worked for seven principals, and has an M.A. degree in Educational Administration.

Kim Adams

Kim Adams is a high school administrator. She has served as an administrator for four years. Her major area of responsibility is the counseling department. She is 39 years old, has worked for four principals, and currently holds her M.A. degree in Education. At the time of the completion of this dissertation, she was one of two administrators in the final determination for a middle school principal in a neighboring school district.

Table 1.0: Participant Survey Analysis

Subj. #	Yrs. in admin.	Age	Gender	Age began admin.	# of principals
#1	5	45	M	40	1
#2	4	44	M	40	7
#3	4	39	F	35	4
#4	9	48	M	39	6
#5	11	44	F	33	4
#6	4	43	M	39	5
#7	3	44	F	41	2
#8	7	41	M	34	8
Average	5.9	43.5		37.6	4.6

Chapter four will present an analysis of the data collected from these eight participants. It will be reported in six parts correlating with the six research questions. Each research question will be addressed from the data received from the following sources: First-the individual interviews; Second-the survey; Third-the focus group interviews; and Fourth-the logs kept by participants. The goal of Chapter 4 is to present the data in a balanced fashion allowing for the breadth and depth of information while reducing the data for clarity, understanding, and specificity. Of utmost importance is that the voice and spirit of the assistant principals researched is authentically depicted.

THE FINDINGS

Research Question #1: What is the assistant principals' role in the secondary school setting?

Role: Findings from Individual Interviews

The findings from the individual interviews on the role of the secondary school assistant principal indicated a complexity that interrelated task and role perceptions. Responses ranged from highly global to intricately personal. As stated previously, the interviews were first coded for all themes that emerged. The descriptions of each theme were then graphed and the subsequent findings were compiled as follows:

Table 1.1: Role Responses: Individual Interviews

<u>Theme/Role</u> (Listed from major to minor)	<u>Description</u>
Supervision/Discipline/Safety	Before, after and during school; athletics; a cop; campus safety; maintaining order.
Change Agent/ Staff Development	Empowering; educating; influencing; facilitator; curriculum development; improving climate/culture; actualizing the vision.
Support System	Supporting the learning process; service to others.
Problem Solver	Primary sorter; trench worker; nitty gritty; receiver of complaints; producer of creative-win/win-solutions.

Personnel/Evaluation	Observations; hiring; removing incompetent personnel; coaching.
Resource	People contacts; learning-sharing information.
Doing what your boss tells you to do	Subservient servant; lackey; gopher.
Team Player	Building relationships; working with others.
Role Model	Motivator of students; demonstrating appropriate behavior.
Miscellaneous: Athletics Master Schedule Facilities Preparation for principalship District committees Disaster Preparedness Attendance	After school sports Scheduling Maintenance; custodians Learn the role Textbook adoptions Emergency Plans Truancies; unexcused absences

Supervision/Discipline/Safety

As is evidenced by the frequency of response, the assistant principals embrace the concept of their role as providing a safe and orderly school environment for the students, teachers, and community members who might be visiting their school. In their interviews, they discussed utilizing such techniques as being visible at all times when children are out on the campus, being fair and consistent in the development and implementation of discipline and policy as well as being responsible to proactively set the stage for a safe campus.

Providing a safe campus interrelated the concepts of supervision and discipline and was in one assistant principal's opinion, "What concerns the teachers and other individuals first and foremost: providing a safe and secure campus where teachers can teach." While all stated somewhere in their interview that this was indeed a pivotal part of their role, there were mixed views in regards to their enjoyment and degree of satisfaction regarding this role. The responses encompassed a wide range. The role of disciplinarian was frequently painted in a negative light. "Supervision? I hate it ... I hate bus duty, dances, they come in and mosh and then you have to break it up and you're the party pooper." Or as another assistant principal expressed:

Supervision is another part or aspect of the job that's probably from my perspective the one that I dislike, I hate to say the most, but it's one that if I had to give something up it would be the first, only because you're a bit uncomfortable you know. We have 2,600 students here ... it's crowded, it's loud, it's noisy, it's distracting, and I'm paranoid by nature because I was a lifeguard for so many years. I was standing out there with the task force officer today and he's saying, "What's wrong?" because my head looks like it's on a swivel. As a lifeguard, that's ingrained in your soul ... you have this responsibility or feeling that you need to stop something dangerous from happening before it happens. Typically, a lot of supervisors are reactive and are going to wait to see if something happens, then they'll deal with it. In that case, their adrenaline isn't flowing in a continuous basis. To me, however, it's very draining as far as energy goes to do a good job at lunch, before school, after school, and at all the events.

With campus safety as an overarching goal, many of the supervisory or discipline related activities may involve the sheriff. This aspect of the role introduces another dimension to the role of the assistant principal.

Supervision ... that's very labor intensive. You've got to talk with students at any time and there's a major issue where the sheriffs or police are brought in ... that's a three or four hour chunk immediately. Home suspension requires a couple of hours with parents and students. And then whatever you have scheduled, whatever you're going to get done when a discipline issue surfaces, poof, everything is gone. So for example, today when we got out of advisory where we discuss with kids some of the changes that should take place, all the kids were talking about other topics that should be brought up. I walked out of my own advisory and there are two girls beating up another girl and it had sort of a Filipino/Hispanic background to it and so the next three hours are spent trying to bring resolution to that. So the fact that I have two classroom observations scheduled and all that, that's out the window."

Thus, it may not be the actual role of disciplinarian that is frustrating to practicing assistant principals, but the ramifications of this component on the rest of their potential accomplishments. "I think we feel that we're not making a contribution ... I feel like I'm wasting my time.. There are other things more meaningful that I could be doing. I feel like I'm a prison guard." Yet, supervision and discipline are definitely an integral part of their role. Doing what they feel is a good job may, in some cases, not be enough.

Teachers want you to be hard-nosed about this and that and they want you to crucify the kids and I think they want to be able to come in when they don't agree with you and know that it's not something that is held against them because you have this open door policy. They would like to think that it's okay to beat you up as an administrator but that you'll still like them as people.

The role of disciplinarian involves continual decision making and even though assistant principals are not directly involved in most altercations, they are required to make constant judgments about the outcome. This mediating, however, is what many assistant principals mentioned as enabling them to connect with kids and utilize skills that make them feel as though they have achieved something positive in their day.

I don't mind the discipline ... actually, I like the discipline and it gives me a chance to work with my counseling skills and when I meet with parents and kids on a discipline issue I can turn it into a counseling session. I know that the further along I get in administration through being a principal or whatever, the further removed from that you get.

Lastly, an assistant principal mentioned that he feels that his role as disciplinarian is where he has the most impact on the school campus.

Right now I feel that my most impact is on student behavior in this school in general. I was told when I became a disciplinarian at a high school this size it would wear me down and I would become jaded and I wouldn't like the kids and I would get angry at kids and I find that I have few repeat offenders and I think that's partially

because in fact, I think it's true, because my repeat offenders know that I haven't lost any respect for them as a person, but I'm in absolute opposition to the decisions they choose to make and the behaviors they exhibit and I think that my impact is that I'm very direct. I will agree with a kid when maybe another adult is being absolutely inappropriate in behavior, but then say to the kid that a lot of things aren't fair and right, but you have to make the decision about how you're going to react to it ... and I think that these sorts of things are disarming to kids because they expect you to be a proponent of the system and just lecture them on and on and on. I think that the impact is definitely on individual human behavior relationships. It's surprising to me the number of kids who I've met only through the role of disciplinarian who want to come back and tell me what they're doing and how successful they are. I guess they believe that you have always believed in them and now they want to come share with you that it's working.

Perceptions of supervision also included the concepts of providing a safe campus by being highly visual to another proactive stance where assistant principals are seeking out situations that might be happening in the future and striving to resolve them before they become problems. This process might begin when an assistant principal hears or sees what might be a fight. He or she brings the people together and make them resolve their differences before it results in a fight. One assistant principal describes his philosophy of the role as needing lifeguard mentality. He is constantly on the lookout for potential altercations or issues. When he completes his hour and a half of lunch supervision, his exhaustion results from seeing and responding to every situation that had the potential to cause violence on his campus.

Thus the role of disciplinarian including campus supervision has a wide range of sub-roles and determinations. Situations were described by assistant principals that centered around trivial matters such as, "Jenny forgot her pencil," to situations involving removing loaded guns from students or "responding to a call that a student has shot herself in the bathroom" to "there is a parent on campus with a gun." The individual interviews demonstrated that this area was the most dominant theme in their role as secondary school assistant principals.

Change Agent

Serving as a change agent or "educator of parents, students, teachers" and "actualizing the vision for the school through staff development" and other school climate building activities is considered to be another area pivotal to the role of the secondary school assistant principal. Frequently, the responses in the individual interviews included such comments as:

While I have an extreme passion for strategic planning or striving to change organizations, it is frustrating and it requires a great deal of patience ... and I anguish over it but I love doing it. I love to see how a process can impact an institution to move in a certain direction and so when I hear staff using the language that we started putting in the system, that's rewarding. People are beginning to understand that there are different ways of doing business. When we're able to bring the staff together and build consensus around major topics, that's very rewarding because a high school staff of almost 200 individuals is a challenge to communicate effectively the message and get people to agree on a direction.

Another assistant principal focused more on changing the individual teacher's performance to impact the total educational

process in the school when she stated that she felt her job was a "facilitator to make their jobs easier."

If the decisions I make or the thoughts I contribute to a committee, help come up with some kind of operational task or curriculum implementation ... if it makes it easier for that teacher to be a better teacher in the classroom, I feel as though I've made a contribution even though I have not done something directly that is going to touch a child, it has facilitated someone else to enhance a learning opportunity for children.

Not only did the assistant principals interviewed feel as though it is their role to impact the teaching staff, they also feel that they "have a unique role in the sense that they have the opportunity to create change by impacting their principals and their bosses and their leaders.

While many felt that they were able to be change agents a few felt less satisfied. One assistant principal stated, "I don't have the educational impact that I thought I really could in regard to what's happening for kids in their learning."

Another assistant principal critiqued the entire staff development process and its place on the priority list for practicing assistant principals.

I do spend a lot of time with staff working in a variety of areas and again though it's crunching it in when there's time so it does seem to be more sporadic. There isn't a time of the day when I sit and do staff development. I squeeze it in when I don't have other things happening which is probably not the most effective way to do it. Sometimes it's frustrating because I'd like to plan ahead and I don't always get far enough ahead.

Support System

Providing a support service to a school campus was a top priority for practicing assistant principals. Offering support to parents, students, and teachers all appeared to revolve around the concept of allowing the learning process to occur on the school campus. Discussions of doing whatever has to be done to allow people to teach and students to learn was "the most important reason for our existence." One assistant principal expanded on this thought by commenting:

I would say right off the bat that our primary job is to support staff. That means that we do whatever we need to, to keep the school running so that teachers have the opportunity to do what they need to do which is to teach students good lessons and in that, I would say that it's a lot of conflict and problem resolution with students, parents, and staff members.

Another assistant principal put a different twist on the response.

I try to be real supportive of the teachers and I think sometimes that is our greatest impact with them through that support ... in parent conferences, in letting them know that they have a rough job too, you know that they're dealing with 150 kids a day and our job is to back them up whenever we can ... because we're all here to try to help the kids get an education ... that's the bottom line ... we're all trying to accomplish the same thing so that if I can support the teachers in any way ... and maybe a good master schedule makes life easier and people happier and so forth.

The assistant principals interviewed expressed a variety of strategies to provide service or support through their role. These included supporting teachers with their every day discipline problems, processing curricular challenges, facilitating interactions with parents or offering emotional support through encouragement, motivation, and praise. In addition, providing student support was frequently cited in terms of helping students to become decision makers who have the ability to choose the best way to interact in certain situations. According to one assistant principal, "teaching students to behave appropriately is one of the greatest support systems an assistant principal can provide." Support for parents also included providing answers for their endless questions and serving as a mediator between them and the child's teachers or in many cases, between them and their child to allow for a greater sense of, "we are working together for student learning."

Lastly, in regard to the role of the assistant principal as support system, the concept of supporting the principal was frequently cited as of utmost importance. "I really believe the role of the assistant principal is to be part of a team that supports the principal and supports the teacher in moving the school to where the school wants to go." He continued this thought by stressing, "this is sometimes difficult because as an assistant principal you may have your own ideas and your own thoughts, yet you have to balance that with what it means to be part of a team."

Chief Problem Solver

The role of assistant principal as chief problem solver, primary sorter, and trench worker was also frequently mentioned. "Assistant principals run the school ... they run the mundane, nitty-gritty, hands-on, inner workings of the school." They see their role as:

Putting out fires ... on any given day there are problems

of run-away students, new students transferring in with some bizarre transcript ... every day there are issues that have to be dealt with. All I see is a parade of people and their situations vary all the way from the teacher who comes to me yesterday morning because he's heard that these parents are going to show up for his classroom lesson because of the subject matter, to the teacher who is worried because of a boy who keeps making sexual references to a girl in class but the girl keeps front-loading with all the things that she's willing to do with him ...

Another assistant principal describes this part of his role as: 'administrivia' ... dealing with the infrastructure of the bureaucracy ... the nuts and bolts of following through on situations such as 'ants on my door', 'I wrote you a note about the broken tape recorder', 'I talked to you about getting this kid into a class ... why didn't it happen yesterday ... I want him out of my class.' I strive to deal primarily with educating kids, teachers, and parents ... However, the bulk of my time is spent simply by helping folks work through the mechanics and the hoops of solving their problems within the system.

Personnel Director

Another important role of the assistant principal is serving in the capacity of personnel director. The assistant principal often serves on interview teams selecting teachers, classified staff, or other support staff. In addition they are often asked to serve on panels at the district office screening substitutes, interviewing potential classified candidates, and serving on panels to select principals for a variety of sites. The role also involves yearly evaluations of teachers, and classified staff. "I think that probably your role has the most value when you impact a teacher by

assisting them in their teaching skills because they impact 30 kids the second you give them a new idea" While teacher observations and impacting change through the evaluation process were mentioned as a frequent joy to accomplish in that you get to observe positive workings on a school campus, there were a variety of laments in regard to the time consuming task of working with sub-standard employees.

Resource

The role of the assistant principal also involves serving as a resource for the school campus. Predominantly, the assistant principals interviewed mentioned their impact on the campus climate by virtue of the sharing of their knowledge of students gained through the intimacy of their role which allows the assistant principal to:

See the students as more whole persons because you get to see all the Raggedy Anns' and Andys' and all the tragedies in their lives that you do not, in a factory-like school system that we have set up and developed in the United States, get to see in the classroom. The administrator works with the whole family and child on a lot of different levels to solve a variety of problems that are not necessarily manifested in the classroom.

Many assistant principals felt it was their responsibility to provide teachers with these insights into the child's life to enable teachers to work better to maximize the learning process for each student. By virtue of their ability to work one on one with kids, assistant principals learn many things that the average teacher may not be able to access. Assistant principals consistently discussed the positive impact of sharing pertinent information specific to individual children with the classroom teacher, campus supervisor or counselor.

The assistant principals' role also involves serving as a resource for teachers by their commitment to spending time getting to know people.

It takes a lot of time to deal with people and to go out to people and to find out what people need. Our faculty, for instance, doesn't function real well on memos. I don't know that a high stress job like teaching does ... so going out to classrooms and talking to teachers and engaging them in their neck of the woods, so to speak, and spending the time it takes to walk something around to see how it's going to fly, rather than just deciding on it and seeing what happens, doing a lot of the preliminary leg-work when there's going to be a major decision of some kind is highly impactful.

Classroom teachers may not have time to achieve this goal by virtue of being locked in to the daily schedule and isolated in their classrooms. They may have disagreements and not realize that:

Often problems could be solved between people if there was just a third party to listen to the situation and shed some light from their vantage point of what might be happening. For example, what I think teachers perceive the assistant principals' job to be is the first line of decision making when it comes to issues and concerns. However, I think many of them are capable ... most of them are actually very capable, of making solid decisions and going on with them on their own,.. but they need confirmation that it's okay and their decision was right, so I think you're the first line of administration they come to for that. I know that for me, a lot of them will come to me and bounce ideas off of me which I really

enjoy doing with them. I like that brainstorming and kind of idea-sharing.

Role determined by the Principal

Lastly, a discussion of the question "what do you see your role as being a secondary school assistant principal?" was often answered in terms of the determination of the role by the site principal. Their role is shaped by the directives given by the principal and by his or her overall leadership style. As one assistant principal shared:

The role that your principal sees you in as an assistant principal will impact how you behave. Are you a paper-pusher, are you interacting with people, are you primarily a bureaucrat or are you primarily influencing instruction? Largely what you do as an assistant principal will be dictated by what your leader's philosophy is. I guess simply what I'm saying is that in my experience, and my experience has been mostly in the California Unified School District, principals make policy, and assistant principals implement policy. My general impression is that assistant principals can impact policy only by putting the idea in their principal's head. Generally, the policy comes back to us to implement.

Another assistant principal concurred and elaborated by stating:

Well, see, I've worked for six principals now in the role of assistant principal, maybe seven and your role really depends on a couple of things. One, it depends on the degree of confidence the principals have and then sell, two, it has to do with the degree of confidence they place in you and their perception of your ability. In some ways

I want to say it has to do with what the principal sees as politically expedient for their career. Because that definitely shapes the role the principal outlines for assistant principals to play. For example, a confident principal who is confident in the role and politically secure within the school district itself may delegate more and allow the assistant principals greater latitude. The less secure the principal is either about their political ability or the confidence they have and by confidence I mean not just the confidence in their abilities, but experience with what they have to do. The principal tends to target areas either of interest and or areas they feel they need to grow in themselves. For instance, I have never seen a principal who has been in charge of facilities because facilities is a nuisance job. Our role also depends on the belief of the principal as whether they view it as a training ground and their role is trainer and mentor or is it their role to structure our role to make their job as easy as possible? I've worked for both kinds. So, facilities, PE, PTA, fundraising, tend to be jobs principals delegate to assistant principals who can be worker bees and do what it takes to get the job done.

Although the frequency of some responses were not as high as others, they are nonetheless, pivotal to the role of the assistant principal. These include serving as a role model for kids, determining their own role by shaping their own time, working with other administrators, and utilization of the role to preparing them to be a principal. In addition, many of the tasks given to the assistant principal and thus, role framing tasks, include master schedule development, serving on district committees, disaster preparedness, overseeing athletics, and overseeing attendance and facilities. While these areas appear to be the classic areas one thinks of when one thinks of an assistant principal, they do not appear to be thought of as the dominant role defining tasks of a

secondary school assistant principal. The descriptions of the role ranged from the concept of a subservient, responsible support trench worker type person to the belief that "the assistant principal runs the school." One assistant principal gave voice to the participants overarching belief regarding their role by stating, "my job is to make it easier for teachers to teach and for students to learn. There is no other reason for me to exist."

Role: Findings from Focus Group Interviews

The findings on the role of the secondary school assistant principal as researched through the focus group interviews offered different responses from the individual interviews. Had there been only focus-group interviews, the perceptions of their role might have revolved around the interrelated concepts of serving as problem solvers or change agents and doing what was needed to support the principal. Discipline received minimal attention as shown by the following table.

**Table 1.2: Role Responses: Focus Group Interviews:
Emergent themes (From Major to Minor)
and description**

Theme - Description	Theme - Description
Problem Solvers Worker Ants; putting out fires; catch all	Evaluations Classroom observations; working with difficult staff
Change Agent Facilitator of change; creating culture; build relationships	Resource to staff Seeing and sharing the big picture
Supporting the Principal Principal's clean -up crew	Working with Adults
Disciplinarian	Meeting Community Needs

Support Staff Enable teachers to teach; help the school by helping staff	Master Schedule
Helping Students Spending time with kids	Role is to give input to the District Office

Problem Solver

The overarching theme for the role of the assistant principal as depicted by the focus group interviews was that they were problem solvers. "You have to enjoy problem solving ... watching someone come in and being really angry and five minutes later being able to just talk with them and resolve their issues is what the role is all about. There's a lot of fun in just diffusing things. I enjoy that." stated one assistant principal. Another assistant principal, however, did not see the problem solving role as quite so stimulating. In describing the role as problem solving/solving issues, she stated, "and then depending on what site you're at or what level you're at, there are just sundry responsibilities that fall on those job responsibilities that sometimes don't even get dealt with because we're trouble shooting and putting out fires most of the time. We're the whole ball of wax. We're the front runner on issues with parents, issues with teachers, issues with kids, all issues." This all encompassing dimension of the role, problem solving, defeats many attempts at achieving other components of the role. Yet they did not see problem solving as just reactive. One comment, "It seems like you're trying to protect everybody's dignity in the process of solving problems" relates to the interwoven, proactive theme of serving as a change agent or facilitator of change.

Change Agent - Facilitator of Change

In the focus group interviews the role of the assistant principal as agent for change or facilitator of change focused predominantly around the concept of creating culture, getting to know the culture, and building relationships to impact change. Many expressed their responsibility to the school in terms of their ability to build relationships with people through some of the problem solving situations that allows them to create change.

I think I need to build relationships with people because I want people to do things because they feel they should be doing it. I'm not a good person to walk up to someone and say, you'll do this. I rarely do that. It has to be a critical issue before I walk up and give them commands. I generally want to convince people they should be doing something. My relationship with people is important for me if I'm going to be successful at creating change.

Another assistant principal captured this sentiment when she commented, "and as an assistant principal you get to become a builder of programs where you can take a program from the drafting board and get it into implementation provided you have the right principal that is going to allow you to do that."

Supporting the Principal

The theme that the role of the assistant principal is to support the site level principal also emerged with more consistency in the focus group interview. "The assistant principals do whatever the principals don't want to do ... principals choose what to delegate to assistant principals and don't delegate the things that they reserve to do unto themselves." Another assistant principal stated that "a real simple view of that basically, is that we're the support staff of the site principal and

through his direction, and his guidance, and his responsibility and delegation, we operate in any direction he is going. We basically assist him. I see us as a little bit more than worker ants." Thus, many assistant principals do not necessarily hold a positive view of the belief that assistant principals are just there to do the bidding of the principal. A more pragmatic view of this dimension of the role was, however, expressed by one assistant principal.

See, my view comes in as seeing the principal as the primary educational leader. We take the pressure off of him in many ways so that he doesn't have to deal with a lot of the great issues, i.e. discipline issues, personnel issues, scheduling, etc. so he can be more of the philosopher, the educational leader, if he can.

Lastly, another assistant principal says that the principal "has a tremendous impact on how we operate as assistants. Because of what Susan said and basically what the role is, we are people pleasers in this business to a large degree and we like to please our boss, our supervisor. This belief will directly affect how we approach our job and how we do it."

Thus, the role as dialogued by a group of practicing assistant principals embraces the concept of providing support for the principal.

Disciplinarian

Discipline in the focus group interviews took an extremely passive role. Unlike the other forms of data collection, it emerged infrequently and typically in conjunction with other themes. Their role as disciplinarians emerged as they discussed their decision making techniques and/or the challenges of the role. In discussing discipline as a sub-set of decision making process, an assistant principal said,

If two kids get into a fight on campus the decision is made of what is going to happen to the kids. The intervention is to talk with them individually and then try to get them to sit down and talk or you can choose another intervention which would be to send them home and try to deal with it face to face when they come back. Your decision is based on how are they going to hear it best. You need to have this sense of working with people as you make those kinds of decisions. It's almost your intuitive interpersonal workings with people, because if you make the wrong decision, which we all do once in a while, the whole thing flares up again and makes the situation worse, or occasionally you make a good decision which you really were proud of, and the students did resolve it. I'm sure we've all had the situation where kids are so angry they won't talk, and after we sit them down to talk you can finally get up and leave the room and let them sort it out.

Thus, the role of disciplinarian is a sub-set to the role as a decision maker/problem solver. In addition, the role of disciplinarian emerged as extremely problematic.

I'm thinking the most tenuous walk that I stroll along is being the disciplinarian ... the teachers would like you to just wring necks. They just want the kid broken down and it's difficult for them to understand that that's not the way I do business ... It's tough to be able to be who you are with a kid and make it work well enough so when the kid returns to the classroom, the teacher believes he or she is behaving better, and if you can achieve that balance then the kids don't mind seeing you, because they believe you will treat them fairly and the

staff believes you are stern enough to make students change. It's a fine line to walk.

There were no comments made that directly stated, as in the individual interviews, that the role of the assistant principal was supervision and discipline. Essentially, that theme emerged through discussion of other topics.

Support Staff

The findings in the focus group interviews also depicted the role as supporting the staff and "to do basically anything that helps the school whether it is discipline, master schedule, helping with the fire drill that's happening and everything that happens out of the classroom." The focus group interviews expanded this dimension of the role to include the exhausting, continual, pervasive level of responsibility to all constituents involved in the role. An assistant principal mentioned "that the fact that kids get hurt while supervising athletic contests at the high school level anyway, all that stuff has to come down to somewhere and typically, it's to the assistant principal." Another assistant principal stated:

I think a lot of what we do enables the teachers to teach and teachers don't see that ... but if someone wasn't taking care of fights and drugs, and the scheduling problems, or the angry parents over teachers, if someone wasn't doing that, would they do it? Somebody has to do that! A lot of what we do enables the teachers to just get in there and do their job.

Thus, providing support for the workings of the school and being reactive as well as proactive is a component of the role of the secondary assistant principal. The theme of offering support revolved mainly around addressing administrative tasks and

providing support for the teaching staff. However, as the next section demonstrates, the focus group interviews also depict the role as directly supporting and working with students with much greater frequency than the individual interviews.

Helping Students

Joy of working with kids and the positive relationships that occasionally emerge through this dimension of the role, was a theme that assistant principals elaborated upon in their focus group interviews. One said,

That's a real positive aspect of the job for me, when you really feel like you've reached a student ... sometimes it goes deep down into those discipline issues, or maybe a drug bust ... you know you've really reached a kid and you know they realize that they really needed help. You know they're not just shining you on and telling you what you want to hear ... those kinds of touching moments that you just share with yourself are a real positive aspect of the job.

An interesting visual research note during the focus group interview was when an assistant principal would make a comment as stated above, the other assistant principals would nod and smile and it became clear that they, too, cherished those moments with kids.

I agree with David a lot ... I like the kids, I like being out on campus, I like talking to them, joking with them a bit ... even when I was doing discipline, for the most part, there were few kids that really got mad at me. They were more mad at the situation ... and going back to what was said about parents a while ago, sometimes if you could just deal with the kid, and not the parents, you could

solve so many problems. But parents enable them and thus you end up with more problems ... and pretty soon the kid is angry at you again for something. But I truly enjoy the kids and I think we have such good kids in this district and for me, sometimes the best fun is going to a sporting event. Friday night football is just a great relief to get out there and enjoy it.

Lastly, most of the comments and dialogues regarding connecting with kids had an element of counseling involved. The situations that encouraged the type of substantial changes that all assistant principals remember and feel value in their role typically began with a problem with students and ended with a solution that positively impacted all.

I like the one on one with kids. Having come from a counseling background as well, it gives me an opportunity to draw on all my skills. I actually find myself using my counseling skills more than I ever used my teaching skills, because you seem to have more of an opportunity to do more counseling with staff, and parents, and children than you do teaching any of these groups. I like working with kids on that level, however, the sad part is I only end up working with a small ten percent of the school that end up visiting you in the office, but I do like that one on one kind of thing and I like drawing on parents and bringing them in during the parent sessions. There is some 'kick' to it. I like when you can work through a problem and can solve it, whether it's with a student, a teacher, or just a parent paperwork issue ... but where you actually help someone and you know that, and they know that, and it's like one of those light bulb experiences.

Evaluations

Unlike comments made in individual interviews portraying the role of evaluation in a negative light, in the group interviews the evaluation part of the role was portrayed in a more positive light. "I really do enjoy the post-conferencing with teachers. That's really fun and I find that I have to be careful to not gush like a little kid because it's so much fun. It's supposed to be working with them, not just all the other stuff. I really enjoy that."

Resources to Staff

The focus group interview, as did the individual interview, depicted the concept of being a resource to staff as the assistant principal's responsibility to share the big picture that their role gives them access to with the teachers. These interviews added a new dimension to the 'assistant principals as resource' discussion by the description of their role as people who strive to move the schools out of the 'Jurassic' period. Sharing the big picture and current educational research was pivotal to the success of that movement. Hooking teachers up with other teachers who are doing successful things and doing them well so that the teachers build their own sense of community of encouragement was also an interrelated theme.

I'm going to add, in addition to all that support stuff, that we're in one of the few positions in the school that we can look at the total school and get the bigger picture. Many times your teachers are not afforded or willing to take the time to do so. The role has to be to share that view with staff and they have to understand that sometimes the most important thing is to not judge a program because we're losing X amount of kids or we don't have a support system, but that there are other reasons. We have to continually point out the big picture

for them and thus, help move the schools out of the Jurassic period.

Meeting Community Needs

The assistant principal's role in relationship to access to the big picture incorporates meeting the needs of the communities in which the schools reside.

In regard to moving people out of the Jurassic period, another assistant principal said, "I agree, too. One thing I would like to add is when David said we're in the Jurassic period I think this is true that we're in positions to try and make strides in other issues such as, how do we change our schools to meet the needs of our community? There's another part of me that says we get so overloaded that we sometimes have to put some of those things on the back burner which is hard to do because sometimes you get so overloaded with all the things you do, how do you find time to respond to the needs of your community ... especially when the staff thinks we're up in the office having coffee and donuts all day.

Miscellaneous

Other miscellaneous components to the role of the assistant principal are master schedule development, managing adults, and giving the district office feedback and input. The role of the assistant principal through the data from the focus group interview portrays a much more positive, people helping, role than that of the individual interviews. This topic will be elaborated upon in the conclusion of this document.

Role: Findings from *the Survey*

Responses to the survey questions related to the role of the assistant principal are as follows:

Table 1.3: Role Responses: Survey Q. 4: Areas of Responsibility: Response--Frequency

Discipline	5
Evaluation of Staff	3
Master Schedule	3
Campus Supervision	3
Curriculum Development	2
Transportation	2
Facilities	2
Water Company Intervention	1
School Improvement Program	1
Security	1
Counseling Dept.	1
Staff Development	1
Strategic Planning	1
Student Teachers	1
Emergency Preparedness	1

Table 1.4: Role Responses: Survey Q.8-What do you perceive to be the role of the assistant principals on a secondary school campus?

Fix-it person/ Put out fires	4
Trouble Shoot/Proactive	3
Support Staff	2
Supervision	2
School Improvement	1
Organizing	1
Discipline	1
Curriculum development	1
Parent Screen	1

Program development	1
Scheduling	1
Run the School	1
Ensure Campus Climate	1
Serve as principal if needed	1
Assume Leadership in areas of expertise	1
Not proactive	1

Table 1.5: Role Responses: Survey Q.15: On what duties do you spend the majority of your time?

Student Conflict Issues	4
Working with Staff	3
Teacher Evaluations	3
Parent Contacts	3
Supervision	2
Discipline	2
Administrivia/Chew up time	2
People interactions	1
Facilities	1
Technology	1
GATE (Gifted and Talented)	1
Program Management	1
Project Oversight	1
Paperwork	1
Scheduling	1

These findings are consistent with the findings from the individual and focus group interviews. They delineate an added complexity to the interviews by the utilization of semantics such

as, "Parent Screen", and "Run the school." Analysis of the survey responses enabled corroboration of previous findings.

Role: Findings from the Logs

The goal of this research was to portray the role of the assistant principal in such a way as to vicariously experience the role of the secondary school assistant principal. To contribute to the achievement of this goal, one log of a high school assistant principal and one log of a middle school assistant principal have been reprinted in their entirety. Their authentic writings say so much more than an interpretation ever could. After presenting the logs, the findings will continue with the overall perceptions of the role of the secondary school assistant principal as determined and analyzed from these logs kept for a period of two days by practicing assistant principals. The logs were utilized to gain a window into the *actual* activities and interactions of practicing assistant principals.

High School Assistant Principal

January 18, 1995

- 6:15 a.m.** - Arrive at work for possible parent conference regarding suspension for theft.
- 6:20 a.m.** - Listen to messages on voice mail and confirm student teacher placement; a thank you for following up on band trip details so quickly; theft of grounds equipment.
- 6:30 a.m.** - Meet with custodian to get details on theft; inside job as no forced entry and on water leak.
- 6:45 a.m.** - Met with parents regarding theft of teacher's purse. Family totally embarrassed - will hurt student's future.
- 7:10 a.m.** - Inform Water Co. of present condition of leak. Note on faculty board.
- 7:20 a.m.** - Meet with teacher regarding curriculum issues.
- 7:30 a.m.** - Look at schedule; plan observation.

- 7:40 a.m. - Meet with campus supervisors regarding off campus smoking.
- 8:10 a.m. - See student removed from class for profanity.
- 8:25 a.m. - Leave to briefly re-observe chemistry class.
- 8:35 a.m. - Begin entering write-up of yesterday's observation.
- 8:45 a.m. - Confirm conference attendance for 2/22/95.
- 8:50 a.m. - Secretary reminds me of SIP notes; write results of funding.
- 9:05 a.m. - Back to observation.
- 9:10 a.m. - Phone District regarding field renovation.
- 9:15 a.m. - Supervision (Break).
- 9:40 a.m. - Observation write-up..
- 9:45 a.m. - Health office issue/release.
- 9:50 a.m. - Student with no textbook.
- 9:55 a.m. - Phone regarding PE problem; asthma and allergies.
- 10:10 a.m. - Student-regarding not following teacher directions; phone parent; had conference call to decide next steps.
- 10:45 a.m. - Look at mail; parent letter about teacher (Spanish); needs follow-up.
- 11:00 a.m. - Met with R. regarding room assignments.
- 11:20 a.m. - Check on progress of water repair.
- 11:30 a.m. - Return call to facility user regarding denial of use.
- 11:40 a.m. - Supervise lunch.
- 12:30 p.m. - Organize data from District regarding PE candidates.
- 12:45 p.m. - Meet with secretary to designate interview times, etc.
- 1:30 p.m. - Memo to Tech Lab questioning progress.
- 1:40 p.m. - Call to Mr. H. regarding AP transfer.
- 1:50 p.m. - Call Bill T. regarding district manager's program.
- 2:00 p.m. - Meet with M. regarding SIP funding.
- 2:10 p.m. - Notes to teachers to set up meeting - they are in conflict with each other.
- 2:15 p.m. - Campus supervisor reports kids leaving classes - head out on campus.

- 2:30 p.m.** - Supervision at back stairs.
- 2:50 p.m.** - Call District - water leak noticed in domestic line.
- 2:55 p.m.** - Contact student teacher to confirm placement.
- 3:00 p.m.** - Personnel issue/Union related.
- 3:45 p.m.** - Get cash boxes from T.
- 3:50 p.m.** - Listen to messages from voice mail.
- 4:10 p.m.** - Call home to check in with kids.
- 4:20 p.m.** - Sign facility requests.
- 4:30 p.m.** - Review list of things to do.
- 4:35 p.m.** - Return parent call regarding rules on beepers.
- 4:50 p.m.** - Supervision of ball game.
- 9:30 p.m.** - Head home.

Middle School Assistant Principal

January 19, 1995

- 7:15 a.m.** - In the morning, although I am the Lone Ranger for the first 30 minutes, I refereed two student fights and three teacher disputes. I also met with a teacher upset with student who talked during detention and wants to know potential consequences.
- 7:50 a.m.** - I am checking out blood in the urine in the restroom with Mrs. S. turned out to be red dye #3 copped from the science lab and poured in the urinal.
- 8:30 a.m.** - Attended the Principal's Conference meeting; returned to school, answered 3 phone calls from parents regarding sixth grade boys fighting in the hall; teacher perhaps engaged in unlawful search for cigarettes of a student, causing embarrassment; proofread Advisory schedule; did paperwork for the Advisory schedule. Listened to harassment from my secretary and the other assistant principal; helped Mr. J. find his keys and assisted a teacher who reported suspicious, woodlike substance jammed in locks and was unable to access classrooms except via a third interior door.

9:30 a.m. - Conferred with ESL personnel. Issues were conference attendance, who should plan on attending two upcoming events; received update on the hiring of ESL bilingual aide; received advice on potential problems regarding harassment of Spanish speaking students.

10:00 a.m. - Addressed a series of student discipline referrals for separate sets of physical disputes involving pushing, shoving, bumping, grinding, tassels and assorted other rudities. Called three parents and informed them of their students' transgressions. Conducted two ear-loppings and one tongue excision.

10:45 a.m. - Met with one teacher who reported and turned in a vandalized book on hearsay evidence; assisted with a conflict in the lunch area regarding a lost ball; and returned to the office. Assisted Mr. P. in deciding where to purchase lunch from and provided counsel to him in regard to a Noon Duty Supervisor who had insulted a student. Suggested impounding their walkie-talkies.

12:15 p.m. - Met with a science teacher who reported theft of their accouterments. (This case is ongoing and will lack a complete solution.)

1:00 p.m. - Was informed by the attendance clerk that one of our students was truant and was alleged to have stolen the car of another student's family. This was a parent report.

1:15 until 2:15 p.m. - Acted on 17 student discipline issues ranging from chewing gum to failure to report to class with a proper textbook to reports of students spinning books on their fingers. Approximately six of these student contacts were for missed office/teacher or classroom appointments.

2:15 p.m. - Reported to bus duty. At 2:22 p.m. the buses cleared. I counseled the librarian regarding her concern with student book spinning issues. I received a report from the library staff (including the librarian) on the gravity of this situation. I suggested heavy counseling with a good friend like Jack Daniels. An additional proposal for student intervention (digital

amputation) was rejected as trite, uncaring, insensitive and smart-ass, even though it might prove effective. The librarian left disconsolate.

2:35 p.m. - Met with Basic Education teacher who wanted to show me some superior student work that had been completed in class. The work was truly superior - congratulations were extended.

3:30 p.m. - Received call from transportation department. I was informed that a late bus was returning due to marbles being released on the floor and students providing the bus driver with aliases that were suspect. I was informed that as this was a safety issue, all students on the bus were being returned for positive visual identification by appropriate administrator. After comforting frustrated bus driver, frustrated parents, irritated secretaries, irrational students, this situation resolved itself by everyone returning to their corner for a 20 minute time-out.

3:45 p.m. - Construction, assembly, distribution of Educational Foundation parent volunteer phone drive solicitation information packet. Dinner in office. Proofread final lead article submissions for school newsletter; assisted one lost parent looking for three lost children.

7:00 p.m. - Met with Educational Foundation Board in Conference Room.

9:30 p.m. - Arrived home.

9:31 p.m. - Passed out.

These logs in conjunction with the other logs collected and analyzed clearly support the individual interviews in demonstrating the role of the assistant principal as disciplinarian/overseer of supervision. Another emergent thought is the diversity in prerequisite knowledge and decision making skills. An analysis of the logs depicted the range of activities and interactions as follows:

**Table 1.6: Time spent on various aspects of the role of the secondary school assistant principal:
Analysis of Logs**

Theme (Frequency)	Theme (Frequency)
Supervision/Discipline (83)	Daily Calendar/Schedule (11)
Parent Contacts (34)	Personnel Issues/Hiring (11)
Phone Time (32)	District Office Contact (10)
Teacher Contacts (32)	Mail (10)
Meet w/ Administrators (18)	Master Schedule (8)
Observ./Evaluations (18)	Off-Campus Meetings (8)
Writing letters/Memos (18)	Meetings w/ Counselors (8)
Desk Organization (13)	Meetings w/ Secretaries (5)
Student Contacts (12)	Budget/Funding Issues (3)
Medical Situations/Health Office (11)	Curriculum Development (3)
Facilities Issues (11)	Staff Development (3)
Home/Family/Personal (11)	Conference (2)

This table documents the daily interactions and activities of practicing assistant principals. The logs demonstrate that the primary responsibility in regard to the role of the assistant principal rings true to the previous data from the interviews and surveys. Supervision and discipline amount to almost one third of the interactions in their day. In the individual interviews and the focus group interviews, the theme that was expressed second to discipline was that of the role as change agent. Yet of the 362 documented interactions/activities, only 6 seemed to be related to this component of the role. "Parent Screen", a concept that emerged in the survey also appears as a primary characteristic of the role. In addition to the findings from the other data collection techniques, the logs also depict the number of meetings, phone

calls, and routine maintenance are required for the job. The eleven medical response interactions also did not emerge prior to this documentation of activities. What was evident, however, is the prior analysis of the assistant principal as "running the school" is conclusively supported by the logs.

Research Question #2: What challenges do secondary school assistant principals face?

Challenges: Findings from *Individual Interviews*

The assistant principals researched in this study were most enthusiastic about sharing their perceptions of the challenges in the role of the assistant principal. In coding the themes to be grouped under each research question, it became clear that the majority of quotes and themes revolved around issues of challenges. Most of the challenges related to Research Question #1, the role. For example, while many felt that their role was somewhat defined, the challenges consistently got in the way of task completion. Their issues related to time, teacher/administrator relationships, exposure to constant negativity, and the other challenges listed in the table below illustrate their frustrations in regard to the inability to balance their desire to achieve what they perceive to be their role with the day to day actualities of the role.

**Table 2.0: Challenges: Individual Interviews
(From Major to Minor) - Description**

Challenge	Description
Lack of Time	Divided too many ways; can't be proactive; not enough time

Teacher/Admin. Relationships	Difficult initially; insincerity; no longer peers; more difficult than managing the children; hypocrisy
Political Environment	Packaging everything; special interest groups; unique politics of area
Exposure to Negativity	AP as first line of assault; constant criticism; disillusionment; narrow vision
Lack of Parent Support	Want needs met immediately; not accepting responsibility for their kids
Cannot develop self-worth	Stressful/draining-no energy left to meet goals
Entrenchment of others	People locked into archaic system of education; lack of ability to act; no flexibility
Lack of Resources	No money; no technology; not enough personnel
Unclear Expectations	Role is unclear; no public philosophy
Increased Violence	Guns; weapons; fighting; gangs everywhere; fear
Inconsistent Leadership	Boss has a different vision; stifles creativity
Meeting the needs of children	Seeing the lives of some of these children and feeling powerless to help
On-going tedious tasks	Paperwork; phone calls; mail; memos

Lack of Time

First and foremost, all assistant principals interviewed agreed that the most prevalent challenge was lack of time. Relevant issues emerged such as: not enough time to do all that they want, not being able to manage everything, no time to plan, time is not their's anymore, discipline issues, rearranging planned what even they themselves might have taken the time to plan, as well as personal issues revolving around time away from their family and no time to take care of their personal business. These concerns emerged throughout the data.

Many seemed surprised at the incongruence in their preconceived perceptions with the role they encountered as they entered administration. Prior to becoming an administrator, their belief was that as an administrator they were going to have more control over their time. Then the reality of the job intervened.

My job is the antithesis of what I thought it was going to be. First of all, I thought I would have more control of my time because the bell would not be driving me from classroom to classroom. This was funny, because now I have a belief that my life functions in 90 second segues which means that I don't find the time that I thought I was going to find.

He continued by expressing his frustration at the lack of time to utilize the skills on which he had prided himself on as a teacher, coaching and observation of effective teaching practices. He finds the time commitments of deadlines imposed by others, the sheer numbers of requests for his attention, and the pace of the job only allow him to, "salve the wounds, not keep the injuries from occurring."

Time and time again the concept of 90 second or 60 second bites or chunks of time emerged as an issue. The amount of time allowed to complete any task is broken up into many small chunks in that assistant principals are constantly interrupted. In addition, the number of students averaging over 2,000 at each site confounded the ability of assistant principals to be able to utilize time in a way that was amenable to them. When asked about internal problems that he faced in his position, one assistant principal said,

Time management for one thing, in terms of the number of students we deal with in the finite nature of the day. The days just scoot by from 8:30 to 3:00 when I can get to kids ... the situations that develop within the structure of each day, many times that structure is limiting to what you can deal with. So, having time enough to deal with all the students in a real large school is one of the main problems I face.

Another relevant challenge involving time, is the inability to achieve long-terms projects or projects that they choose to initiate. One assistant principal referred to the job as 'triage' and another one stated:

If it's not at crisis level, it tends to go on year after year. I've walked by a certain department and think, gosh, I need to get into that room ... I just know they're floundering, but if I'm not hearing about it every day, they can flounder away and I'll try to just get someone else to work with them. It would sure be incredible to have the resources and the time to be able to impact student learning through better teaching.

Or, as another assistant principal expressed:

The end result that I like least is not managing the things that need to be managed as well as they should. Hearing of something that's going on within a program that you knew was sort of running amuck, but because it wasn't a crisis that sucker-punched you at 8:20 in the morning you haven't yet dealt with it. You know it should be dealt with. You always have those lingerings of all these things that need to be managed that you're not addressing and sometimes it's just plain depressing.

Crisis management in terms of absorbing all their time also relates to the concept of the length of the work day. The assistant principals reported putting in many hours and still not being able to achieve their goals.

I think sometimes we don't work very healthy. You know when you put in three 15 or 16 hour days in a row ... I don't think I'm very effective after the second night out and I think that's what I like least. Just the sheer amount of time that it takes.

Another assistant principal corroborated:

What I think is the unique or interesting thing about this position is that there's no typical day and that you're not sure ever about what you're going to be doing. You can expect to do particular things during the day but rarely can you go through an entire day getting all things done that you feel you need to do.

Lastly, the concept of time revolves around the idea of learning to adjust expectations to match time constraints.

Okay, the biggest challenge I had in beginning this job was learning to deal with the fact that I would no longer be able to finish things ... and to know that I have lost complete control of the day by 8:00 a.m. I don't think we ever have control over our day. We could be sitting here and there could be a drug bust and my day would change because of an outside situation ... so I think that the control is the bottom line to frustrate you ... to recognize that when things do happen, that's a piece of the job and to be able to shift from task to task quickly and pretty efficiently, to move from thinking about the staff development day where you're trying to work with more educational principals to impact the culture of the school, to suddenly dealing with a kid who has a gun on campus, you just have to make those shifts.

However, these constant shifts in areas of responsibility are, in the long run, one of the greatest challenges to the assistant principals trying to adjust to the time constraining rigors of the role.

Conclusion: "Do you have a minute?"

"Constant interruptions", "how long it takes sometimes to do a situation such as when someone asks if you have a minute knowing it may take two days due to the severity of the situation", "realizing that people interactions take an exorbitant amount of time", "learning that even if you want to get something done sometimes you are emotionally in an upheaval because of the intensity of a situation that you just finished dealing with and even though that grant, or observation or budget is due, it's very difficult to shift your focus from the intensity of some of the situations you're involved in to immediately diving into something that's related to more of the technical side of the role" are just a

few of the lingering challenges of time. Challenges of time are always hanging over the heads of practicing assistant principals because every day when they leave, they leave with the knowledge that there are so many things that they did not accomplish. Ironically, due to the embedded sense of personal responsibility each one of the administrators feels in regard to their role and the need to be professional, many times their physical health and personal well being is overshadowed by their need to keep the campus safe and support the other members of their staff or students. While they expressed desire to regain control over their time, most have realized that "your time is no longer your own. You are not controlling it anymore. It is being controlled by every knock on the door, every time the phone rings, every time a referral is written, you're at everyone's whim."

Teacher/Administrator Relationships

Developing the teacher/administrator relationship is another challenge consistently stated by practicing assistant principals. In their attempts to constantly try to make everyone happy and balance the role of supporting teachers, parents, and students as well as placating and supporting their bosses, these administrators find continual challenges. Many disclosed the difficulty of managing the needs of all the variety of adults on a school campus. They expressed this challenge in many ways but one assistant principal summed it up by saying:

My second least favorite thing about the job besides the importance of people not being earnest or playing kissy-face with you is the fact that you as the administrator, and particularly as the assistant principal, are always expected to take the adult role in any crisis. So, that gives parents, teachers, and the boss, the right to throw a temper tantrum and behave as a child and childishly. And by that I mean everything from yelling and

screaming and threatening and pounding tables and jumping up and down. You are expected not only to remain calm but to take the parenting role by saying, "Yes you are entitled to those feelings but how could you have made a better decision so you can solve your problems?" Regardless of how ridiculous they are behaving, you are always expected to take the adult role and be in the problem solving mode or the parent mode in terms of, if the child transgresses, you forgive and move on, that's what is expected of you ... when your real thoughts of some of these individuals is, to borrow the word from a bumper sticker, you'd like to strangle the living _____ out of them because they're so ridiculous. But that's not the expectation. So that's my second irritation of the job outside some of the insincerity of some people.

The challenge of remaining in the parent or adult role in any crisis emerged as a difficult one, especially as the former teacher first becomes an administrator. "My greatest initial challenge was, I think, learning the nuances of managing adults who often behave more ridiculously than the 6th, 7th, 8th, and high school students I was familiar dealing with."

Assistant principals spoke of the difficulty in no longer being a peer to their previous teacher friends. They expressed the challenge of knowing that they might be causing disappointment to friends or how their perceptions of these same teachers changes during evaluation. As a peer there is a sense of remaining non-judgmental. As their evaluator they constantly see the impact of these individuals on the lives of students and on the inner workings of the total school. Judgment enters in and with judgment, potential conflict.

I suppose the most difficult thing was not really severing the ties but kind of rearranging the ties between you and your former colleagues. Given the fact that I'm hired in the same district that I've been brought up in, I have a lot of friends and acquaintances throughout the district, that now in a lot of ways I may have to be the 'gun' and tell them the 'no' word. That's a difficult thing for me, I think, and the initial few times you have to do that are very difficult. It is critical, however, to know that I did the right thing and the fact that the person who is leaving the room may not be happy at that time, is not as important as knowing that I've done what is good for kids.

As assistant principals become more adept at the role, they were consistently challenged by the reluctance of many teachers to become empowered and to make their own choices.

I think teachers automatically turn to administrators for leadership and I have no problem taking the leadership role in that, but I purposely spin it back to them. I want them to have buy-in to whatever decision is made there and not ever have the opportunity to say that so and so drove them out of or into that decision. I think that when an administrator is assigned to a committee, the teacher's perception is that the administrator is the leader of that committee.

A continual challenge for many practicing administrators then is balancing teacher/administrator relationships. For many of them, their difficulty with teacher/administrator relationships emerged early in their career as they were learning the culture

and were still the outsider on the school campus. As administrators they are continually in isolation from the inner workings of the teacher environment. Some try to build trust, collegiality and reduce isolation through praising efforts.

I tell them that the most important people on this campus are the teachers. I tell them I'm here to support you to be an advocate for the kids ... I'm here to listen to parents and my job is certainly not more important than your job and your impact with students is going to be far more than mine. When the kids leave the school, they're going to remember you, not me, except maybe one or two.

Yet, finding balance is a constant struggle in that the administrative team is constantly under scrutiny. The challenge was explained as one of supporting the total school environment while reducing the number of times they alienated individuals through their attempts to placate and motivate the groups. Human relationships are always challenging and the preconceived role expectations of assistant principals make these tenuous relationships even more challenging.

Special Interest Groups/Political Ramifications

The political ramifications of every decision on teacher relationships and relationships with the community also emerged as assistant principals dialogued about the challenges faced in their position. In addition to discussing the political ramifications with teachers, in regard to decisions they make, many assistant principals consistently mentioned how difficult it is to work with special interest groups and learn the politics of the area in which their school is located. They felt the challenge was to package everything in such a way as to be accepted and to be politically correct. Time and time again the idea of parental pressure

requesting exceptions for their child and demonstrating a lack of understanding about the reasons for certain rules or policies or programs at school emerged as concerns. Many of them expressed the increase in political ramifications of all decisions as a lose-lose situation.

You know, I do the announcements here and I get a lot of people bringing me things to announce. I had a wrestling announcement the other day and I didn't announce enough names so I have 3 parent phone calls on not doing that kind of thing. We have coaches ... I call it coach-bashing ... we have coaches where if a kid doesn't play, parents are taking us to task on that rather than letting the coach do his job. As I said earlier, we're always being challenged in what we don't do. I think there are good people who are concerned about their kids, but they're concerned almost in a doting fashion ... that they're enabling. You know they don't accept it when things happen such as when their student can't get a certain class due to overcrowding in that class ... they literally want us to offer more classes. I've had parents who have wanted me to take other kids out so their kids could get in. So there's continual pressure from the outside.

Another assistant principal had a more global way of looking at this situation.

Sometimes what the community believes is happening at school, is not a reality. Trying to be an ambassador and sell programs and explain exactly what's going on in school, is very difficult. I guess the realization is that people don't really understand how schools operate.

Thus the challenge is to educate them because they're the ones who are going to consistently have the concerns and depending on their level of understanding of what they're doing, they will either support you or not.

Thus, taking a proactive stance in the community and in the face of rising political concerns and misunderstandings, is a continual challenge.

Negativity

Another theme that emerged, as assistant principals contended that their world was becoming extremely political, was the exposure to constant negativity. Comments revolving around narrow-mindedness, disillusionment, people not accepting responsibility for their own behavior, the fact that the assistant principal is the first line of assault or the first place to complain, and lastly, the fact that they are exposed to the criticism of all is summed up by this comment.

My typical day is a balancing act between contacts with parents dealing with students that are having difficulties in one way or another. Rarely does it involve students that have a positive situation. It is 9 times out of 10 negative, or something that is potentially negative.

Many times these negative situations are exacerbated by seemingly wellmeaning parents. Their lack of support for decisions that the assistant principals make often has the ability to undo several hours of challenging work an assistant principal may have put into a student's life. The following theme elaborates upon the challenge of parent interactions.

Parent Interactions

A unifying challenge for practicing assistant principals was the deluge of parent interactions. Frustrations with parental reinforcement of negative habits in their children combined with a seeming lack of any form of respect or understanding for the role of the assistant principal surfaced repeatedly.

What I like least is when I've worked a situation out with a student. The student understands that they have to take responsibility when I call the parent and then the parent undoes everything I've done. It's so frustrating to deal with adults that can't see what's best for their child and that makes me very sad. Plus it's a very difficult situation because many times those parents are the ones yelling the loudest because they're the most frustrated.

I think parents blame us too much for everything that goes wrong with their kids. They don't take responsibility at home for having kids do homework. I mean I am still astounded when we go to guidance councils and we're talking about a student and the kid is failing four classes and, number one, the parent thinks it's an improvement because the previous semester, he failed five. Then when you start talking about homework and stuff, it's well, he doesn't have any homework ... he tells me he gets it done at school. So we're talking about people who are in denial. They don't take responsibility at home and then they want to blame us for it and we end up in these big arguments. I really believe with all my heart that if we had parents who were cooperative and who would take responsibility and who would discipline their kids when they need it and tell their kids to do their

homework and make sure they're doing it and turning it in, we'd have a whole lot more success. But when the parents are backing their kids, even when their kids are doing things that are wrong, and then blaming us for these things that have happened, how will we ever succeed with that kid.

Time and time again assistant principals commented how the area they feel they have the least impact is when dysfunctional parents continually support their child's misbehavior. They describe the feelings of frustration when these parents blame their child's lack of educational success on the school. "The least impact? It's with parents and how they follow through with kids." Their feelings of failure abound in these descriptions of the challenges in their role.

A certain segment of families are so dysfunctional that no matter what we do it won't be enough. It is frustrating and disheartening to say that I can't help you any more and it's real hard for me because I want to help everybody. But there are certain times when you just have to cut the cancer out and you can't deal with it anymore because it takes too much energy away from the kids or families you can help.

One last insight in regard to parent support and lack of it has to do with the challenge of responding to the immediacy of most parents' requests. For example, one assistant principal discussed how it does not matter what they're doing if certain parents have a situation that they need to discuss immediately, it behooves them to actually see that parent immediately since typically they will go to the superintendent's office if you don't. They express concern because they would prefer if the person

could make an appointment or if they are indeed in the middle of a mess, if that parent could wait. But there is a select group of people whose perception is that the assistant principal is there to serve them and only them. Thus, many assistant principals expressed concern in that it is typically the parents who have no patience or understanding for why you might not be able to see them immediately who have the children that are the most dysfunctional. The close linkage between parental support and ownership of behavior to overall student achievement was discussed as a great one.

California Unified's unique demographics pose other challenges for assistant principals striving to build positive working relationships with parents.

In this community we have a real dichotomy. We have parents who are super involved with their kids, very high intelligence and have passed down the gene pool so we have a lot of these kids who are real achievers, but like any other community, we have a large complement of single parent families. Not that they're bad, but that the problems that can typically go along with that situation are just like any other place. We have some single parents who do not supervise their children but have plenty of resources. The inherent problem I see with that is that Mommy and Daddy feel guilty for not being there and give them money or enable them by trying to get them out of any consequence that might be occurring at school. It makes it the most difficult part of the disciplinarian's world. That is, when you don't have buy-in from a parent and they want to look good in their kids' eyes as their advocate, in reality you try to explain to them that the kids need to learn the consequences of their behavior ... they need to fail every once in a while

and learn from it and that they will love their parents for it later on. So in this affluent community, I see a lot of enabling inherent to our situation. Many assistant principals feel that you lose yourself in this effort.

Developing Self Worth

A challenge of many assistant principals is how to develop their own sense of self worth. They express that they are consistently trying to meet the needs of others and many times that is at the expense of their needs. This challenge makes it extremely difficult to accomplish their goals, accept new challenges, and move in a direction that they think would be professionally sound. In many ways, the assistant principals state that the role is so all encompassing that they often subjugate themselves to others. Many who have been assistant principals for more than a couple of years feel that they have learned as much as they can from the role but can't personally or professionally grow in any other realm while in the role of the assistant principal due to the high levels of fatigue resulting in lack of motivation for new projects. The continual stress on the individual to perform and be in the public eye and accepting all inappropriate behavior and not being able to show it yourself, is both mentally and physically draining for assistant principals.

I think the job for me was much more of a physical dilemma than I thought it was going to be because it required that I did business *so* differently. My wife made comments like, 'I've known you for 20 years and I've never seen you react this way. I stopped jogging for awhile ... and the first six months of the job I wasn't able to cope with the fact that I couldn't get everything done. I had not been aware of my tunnel vision task orientation which some of my colleagues laughed at and said, yeah, but remember

you're the guy, you were the teacher that if a student gave you a paper on Monday, you read them on Monday night, and all your kids had them back on Tuesday ... because then the workload came in bits and pieces ... I have now learned and am more able to deal with the fact that I am on overload 90% of the time. It's something I can actually cope with and doesn't cause the literal physical reactions that the first six months did when I couldn't sleep and I couldn't eat.

Techniques to develop self-worth seem to emerge as the assistant principals learn to cope with the role. Their concern is at what expense? How challenging is it on their sense of self worth and on themselves?

Entrenchment of Peers/Educators

The entrenchment of many individuals on a school campus is a challenge that is very frustrating to individuals who see themselves as instruction leaders and change agents trying to improve the learning situation for students. The assistant principals feel that this entrenchment is due to a variety of causes that include individuals locked into a model that is no longer serving the needs of our current day students. One assistant principal looked at the situation by stating:

I am impatient. There are people who aren't changing. We're living by rules that I think hurt students and I haven't been able to work with others to change ... we're a dinosaur of an institution and so many of the things we cling to we cling to just because that's how it's always been done and that's very, very frustrating.

Others talk of the conflict between their perceptions of what should be and the perceptions of others in regard to the prevalent culture at the site. "The culture of the school, leads us at this site to believe that the rules are the most important thing and I think that people are the most important thing ... and there's a conflict."

The challenge for assistant principals who are on a site where their values are incongruent with the values of the individuals at the site revolve around interrelated issues of impacting change while meeting the needs of the individuals at that site. All assistant principals interviewed, however, speak of hope and offer strategies for overcoming this situation by bringing people together. This, too, often proves to be extremely challenging.

Specifically, I think that in some of our subject areas we offer, we may not have been able to get the people who traditionally teach those subjects together to talk about what they do and ensure consistency in programs ... so that every student in Chemistry, all 600 of them, can leave with some basic experience in Chemistry. That area is so difficult to impact. When you're working with such headstrong people that think that they're right and they won't listen to somebody else's point of view, it's very difficult to get them to move off their platforms.

By virtue of their position assistant principals are given windows into many different worlds that the teacher who is isolated in his or her classroom may not be able to experience. Educating these entrenched individuals requires trust, communication skills and patience. Therein lies the challenge.

Lack of Resources

Educational systems are continually in a crunch for resources. The assistant principals concede that their role is not one of money management, but consistently discuss the challenge of obtaining more resources at the site and how that would positively impact their role. "I would like to have more resources so I could grant a few more facility type and equipment type requests."

They spoke of how the lack of resources make individuals somewhat irritable on a school campus. Irritable individuals tend to write more referrals and be less amiable in dealing with any of the aspects where they might interact with the role of the assistant principal. One assistant principal stated:

I think sometimes our hands are tied because of financial constraints. There's nothing we can do about that. This year we had so many PSU's, personnel staffing units, taken from us that we've ended up having large classes and really, the master schedule that's developed has large classes equally spread out ... so everybody's complaining. I think sometimes when it's a financial thing, there are certain things we just can't do even though we'd like to, we can't. If I had more PSU's, I could offer more classes, hire more teachers, have smaller classes, but we don't, so we can't, so they're big. And that's one thing I can't do anything about.

A lack of resources contributes to an overall frustration about not being able to get certain things done that they would like to see happen. It may involve an assistant principal wanting to improve a teacher's performance by allowing them to have a release time to observe other teachers. However, if there is no

funding that is not a possibility. Or they might want to send that teacher to a conference. If there is no funding for that, once again they are not able to do that. It may revolve around the site facility. Improving conditions for teachers, once again, might increase their motivation and result in maximizing student learning.

Finances aside, one assistant principal regretted the lack of administrators to serve as human resources on school campuses: "There have been in the last two years over 2,000 new teachers in the state of California and at the same time, 700 fewer administrators." He continued by stating:

It's like we have a screwed up system because we're expected to function under some sort of business management model which throws all these things at you. They say you should not have a span of control of more than eight to twelve people and yet you have, literally, well let's see, probably under my direction, including teachers I'm evaluating, the classified staff, exclude the students and put them completely out of the picture, I probably have about 45 people that I'm directly responsible for ... and you know that you're not going to have the relationships with them that actually begin to impact change, and that's frustrating.

Thus many of them felt and frequently stated: "If there could be more of us or more support for the role, I could do so much more."

Unclear Expectations

Part of the frustration as stated above with lack of resources, might be related to the fact that assistant principals do

not seem to have much control over their role due to its lack of definition. They report that a teacher has a pretty decent conception of what a teacher is supposed to do in the course of their day, and that they are not typically expected to go out of that role. It is the same for counselors and principals. Assistant principals, however, seem to feel in general, that due to the lack of public philosophy and unclear expectations of assistant principals, the role is a catch-all. These unclear expectations and lack of ability to give any organizational structure to the role increases the challenge of achieving their goals.

You cannot control your calendar... having to spend 70% of your day at least in a reactive mode ... you don't create the set, you don't set up the parameters of the problem and then solve the problem ... and basically, the parameters are brought to you. By that I mean, a bus driver may walk in the door with a kid who punched another kid on the bus. You didn't have a chance to set that situation up, set the appointment, control your calendar. I would say that the biggest internal problem is always being in a reactive mode and struggling very hard to bring some sort of organizational structure to situations that continually go on. It is expected of the assistant principals to be there at all times for all people.

The unclear expectations do not just impact the assistant principal's role with teachers, parents, and students, but they also impact the way the assistant principal is allowed to make decisions. The site level principal may have preconceived ideas which may not be congruent with the assistant principal's vision. Or, the assistant principal may feel that he or she is doing exactly what the principal wants and only learn that they aren't when the

principal vetoes some of the work that may have taken a great deal of time to accomplish. There were descriptions of repeated frustrations in balancing the needs of unclear principals. The plethora of tasks assigned to the assistant principal by the principal is discussed in one assistant principal's response to the question of what internal problems he faces in his position. He disclosed the dilemma of striving to do what he is directed to do in the face of continual changes in those directions. An example is the development of the master schedule. If he is given the master schedule to develop, he will do it. Yet when it is shown to the principal, the principal often has worked 'deals' with certain staff members and not alerted the assistant principals to these facts. Thus, his many hours of work may have to be repeated again and again.

There is a constant stopgap checking that takes place and as a result of that, the work does not get done as timely as it should. There are miscommunications in things because there are two cooks sort of dabbling. In many cases, both sides are getting blasted. The person who it is delegated to can't get it done and the principal isn't making clear decisions and so both sides are sort of handicapped because it is neither autocratic, nor is it delegated. This results in a big time fatigue factor. It also may handicap the person and cause them to put less effort into the initial task because you always know there will be changes. You kind of get to the point where you just do the damn thing. It would help if you were front-loaded so that the umbilical cord could be severed and the system has the opportunity to work more efficiently. It sort of creates a conflict because it often emerges that the principal never intended it to be done any other way than his own in the first place.

Miscellaneous Challenges

Other challenges facing assistant principals include responding to such changes in society as drug babies, increased violence, and changing demographics. Many assistant principals state that the increase in drugs and guns and unexpected fears of catastrophe combined with increased pressure on them to perform effectively at all times while under such great pressure, is a challenge they see as unresolvable. Their scope is already too broad, too undefined, and too time-consuming. Yet, as research question #3 demonstrates, many just keep on trying to meet these challenges.

Challenges: Findings from Focus Group Interviews

**Table 2.1: Challenges: Focus Group Interviews:
Theme (Frequency) and Description**

Theme (Frequency) Description	Theme (Frequency) Description
Time (8) Lack of time; Loss of control over time; Time flies	Initial shock (3) Difficult transition; Isolation; Loneliness
Increase in violence (6) Weapon Removal; Gangs; fights; Racial incidents	Principal's Style (3) Variance in clarity of direction; Mismatch= move
Lack of parent support (6) Verbal attacks; Challenging all decisions; impatient/relentless	Measuring success (2) Cannot judge performance; Little feedback
District office Interaction (5) Cannot reach them; Fussiness of site-based management; Lack of backing	Self-development (2) No time for self-development; Would like more but lack the energy

No closure (4) Job is never done; Undefined role results in too much to do	Discipline (1) Only work with 5% of the kids when the other 95% might benefit more
Resistance to assuming responsibility (3) Teachers don't want to change or accept responsibility for failures	Evaluation Process (1) Ineffective, archaic

The focus group interviews rearranged the frequency of the themes that emerged as challenges for the assistant principals in their role.

No Time to Be an Educator

The concept of lack of time consistently emerged as a theme in the focus group interviews in terms of the lack of ability to 'get into the classrooms', or work on 'the school's instructional area' rather than, as mentioned in the individual interviews, in regard to task completion. The issue of time also revolved around the fact that what made them effective as a teacher may not make them effective as an administrator. As one assistant principal declared when asked a question regarding his role as an assistant principal:

I was just thinking ... people that are even thinking about going into the profession should be given a view of what it really is ... I think one of the most critical things that needs to be conveyed is the loss of control of time. Because as a teacher you can feel like you have no time, but your time comes in chunks. You will know that for 45 minutes you will be doing one thing. You will have a captive audience and be able to know that your time as a teacher will enable you to say that you have to read these papers now ... it's my prep period and I'm going to read these papers.

Your time is your own. As a teacher, you might say you have to read these papers now. As an administrator, you might think you have to get this cover typed up for the WASC report and yet, you won't get to it because of something else. I think it's really critical for a person who is leaving the classroom to recognize that could very well require personal change in themselves. It may be frustrating for them to realize that you will never have the time to do anything as well as you would like to have it done with the type of thoroughness that probably is what made you a good administrative candidate because of the way you ran your classroom. As an administrator you don't just sluff things off, but you must recognize that efficiency takes a certain priority over polish. If you're a driver type that likes things done exactly right, that's going to be another major personal change in the way you do business.

Or as another added; "Or, if you're a perfectionist, it'll drive you nuts", to which another assistant principal responded; "Or if you work for a perfectionist, you may get driven nuts."

The concept of prioritizing time then, is the challenge. "In the middle school we have so much crisis discipline and that's just part of the job; many times just because of the nature of the situations they have to be dealt with immediately, and thus, supervision doesn't get the same amount of time as say, an expulsion or an illegal weapon."

During one focus group interview, the assistant principals congenially shared some of the funniest comments they repeatedly hear and laugh with a spirit of understanding based on experience, as they know the impact of these seemingly innocent comments. The comments include 'Do you have a minute?' or 'I can see you're racing down the hallway, can I follow you?' or 'Oh,

are you leaving? Could I just share one thing?' Each one of these revelations may take two to three days to resolve and radically effect the predesigned daily agenda. A collective belief, however, is that due to all the variables that make the role of the assistant principal so challenging, there truly is never enough time, and possibly not enough energy to do the kinds of things that "have an end result of being good for the education of tomorrow's youth." "I get that feeling when I'm worn down ... that I just start reacting to everything that's coming through ... you know what I mean ... and I haven't even done the thing that would have given me, the students, or the school the most benefit."

Increase in Violence

The increase in violence was discussed with great frequency at the focus group interviews. It was not just discussed in terms of the fear factor, but also in terms of the overall time and energy commitment that potentially violent situations may cause. An example from one assistant principal was the example of a vanload of gang-type looking individuals trying to run over some kids at the bus stop. She stated that a student made a u-turn out of the parking lot, may have been speeding, and that the sheriff was present on the campus and managed to take care of the situation which ended up also involving some sort of illegal weapon. Another assistant principal depicted a situation involving,

An incident at a school where some girl and guy were goofing around and after a while, they weren't joking any more and she said if you keep bothering me I'm going to get SSI after you (Strong Silent Islanders) or something like that. On the next day, we had 3 carloads drive through the campus. Two of them go and park outside the campus on the street and the third car goes up the ramp and when it gets ready to turn right on to

the street, the other two cars behind them have guys out the window making hand gestures, and out of that front car comes a gun and, boom, there's a shot fired back and then that car takes off and the other two cars go up and also take off. Through partial license plates, the car with the gun in it came from El Segundo and the kids might have been from El Segundo also. This frustration of the fact that many of the violent incidents involve students that are not your own provides a high level of caution on behalf of the assistant principals.

Many of the participants expressed the challenge of increasing violence which appears with enough regularity to appear in your subconscious 'worries about your job' at all times.

Lack of Parent Support

As with the individual interviews, lack of parent support was expressed as a challenge and a frustration. New insights were revealed that related to the role of the assistant principal in putting a stop to the incessant parental demands.

My greatest frustration, I think, is parents ... because we have so many demands and we can't meet them all and the parents are out there demanding something for their one child who is at school and, rarely, see the entire picture of where that child fits into the whole school. Right now, I'm looking at the whole school in terms of the master schedule and where the teachers are and what they can do and so forth. A parent might call up and say, hey, I want my kid to have this teacher. Well, I know this can't happen, but how do you explain that to them and then the fact that they blame us so much. I think, right now, that parents are not willing

to assume responsibility the way parents did 25 or 30 years ago. Everything is on the school and we get way too much of it and the kids hear this ... they see their parents backing them up at school ... if the kid does something, if the kid fails in school, it's the school's fault, where it used to be the student's responsibility. So, we have, I think a way that our jobs could be a little easier and our kids could be more successful if we could just get through to the parents and get some more support.

The impact of the continual dialogues with parents inhibit the ability to "get things done." Tina depicted one problem.

A kid might have done something wrong and you're going to suspend him and the parents are arguing with you all day about it and they don't want you to suspend him. Then the parent wants to meet ... they want to meet with you ... and when the parent doesn't get their way at that meeting then they want to meet with you and the principal. Now there's another issue and when they're at that meeting they tend to bring up everything in their past in regard to every dealing they've had in the district since they've been in the district. I have a lot of parents who are masters at changing the subject ... instead of their kid being in a fight, it was a stupid rule we're trying to enforce. Pretty soon you're off the subject. It's such a time commitment and it makes your job so much more difficult.

Another assistant principal corroborated by saying

I think because we're public agencies, we are open to attack by the public. I keep saying that people would not

walk into their dentist's office and treat the receptionist and the dentist the way people treat us. You know, if a kid had a problem with braces, they don't run into the dentist and ream him up one side and down the other the way they do to us. But, with us, they feel like they're entitled to do this.

A final comment in regard to the frustrating challenge of parents includes the concept of not doing a good enough job of putting a stop to some of the whining and enabling.

I might define, personally, my frustration a little differently. I think perhaps I've become a little complacent, perhaps, about the enabling parent and the whining teacher and the whining child not getting the support at home. And I think I internalize the frustration and I now realize that my development professionally and personally is on hold ... because maybe I don't have any time during the day to even contemplate, you know. Maybe it's an excuse and it sort of becomes frustrating, and now I've put the blame back on myself. It's frustrating to face the mirror and blame yourself for not getting organized enough to advance beyond all these other people's issues.

District Office Interactions

Relationships with the district office was a new theme seen as a challenge for practicing assistant principals in their role. Collectively, they were concerned and desirous of more attention to their role, increased professional opportunities, and more access to the bigger picture. Some expressed concern of their frustrations in calling the district office and the resulting inability

to get answers or not being able to find someone who had the answers.

I think they have somewhat of a professional obligation to kind of keep us on board and keep us growing and giving us opportunities to grow and be challenged.

A global frustration, however, is;

They say that we are site-based managed. Well, if that's true, how come every time we make a decision and some parent or community group or somebody doesn't agree with our decision they come back to you and tell us to re-think or change it. If you trust us to do site-based management, why do you question the decisions we make?

Support for the district office also emerged from two sources. One was the fact that just as assistant principals would like teachers to be understanding of the fact that they're not in their office all the time, we should understand that district office personnel are not in their offices all the time and when they don't reach a "live person" at the district office, it is probably because they are trying to get a lot of stuff done, too. Secondly, gratitude for the support in handling severe discipline problems.

Lack of Closure

Lack of closure in the focus group interviews encompassed the fact that schools cycle through so many recurring systematic events. "I think, in fact, that the nature of the job is that it's never done. We're either opening up a school, going through a school year, or closing the school down and preparing for the next school year. So even if you look at the master schedule cycle it's

never done." Thus, the concept of lack of closure is indicative of the role. There will always be another student, another teacher, another program, or another policy that needs reworking assistance or change. In addition to this belief, a challenge of lack of closure relates to the fact that:

There are very few opportunities to see something from beginning to end. A lot of times it's almost knowledge level type of short term bits and pieces that make up this massive jigsaw puzzle called school. The idea of here's what I need to do and in two weeks I'll be there and in four weeks I'll be here, is non-existent. Our role is truly 90 second jobs. Some of it's like an assembly line ... you don't see the final product that you rivet the door on.

Resistance to Assuming Responsibility

The challenge of working with people who can't see past their classrooms or expand their own personal experiences to embrace a new, needed paradigm was again a frustration expressed in the focus group interviews.

In terms of frustration on the job, one of the things that frustrates and challenges me the most is the inability to help people feel empowered enough to deal with some of the nitty-gritty situations themselves, whether it be a teacher, a counselor, or clerical staff. Because you're the assistant principal they come to you and think that you're the person who is supposed to solve this when they have the skills and the tools and the resource to solve it themselves.

After this quote was expressed by one assistant principal, another assistant principal discussed the realization and

rationalization of the insecurity of others regarding decision making by saying:

I think that teachers are really comfortable in directing kids and the thing that they're not trained or prepared for or have no practice of it in their adult lives is probably making decisions for other adults and being responsible for making those decisions for other adults. Therein lies my opinion ... a very basic flaw with shared power decision making among teachers. You basically have a whole group of adults who are very brilliant sometimes in directing kids, but when you make them a team leader and they have a decision that will affect every person on their staff, they become so busy pushing the power back to the principal because they truly don't want to take the responsibility. They are very uncomfortable taking responsibility for their advice due to their inability and inexperience to direct other adults.

The assistant principals shared that not only do the teachers not want the responsibility, but they may not have the experience to know how to make the decision, and they may not have the vision or view of the big picture that would enable them to effectively make the decision.

Initial Shock

The initial shock and difficulty in getting on board as an assistant principal in your first few days also was discussed with regularity.

I think you make some of your biggest mistakes initially when you first start off. It's not like you're trying to be dishonest, you're trying to meet one person's need and

you just don't realize that when you just met that person's need you just nuked three people, and you didn't know that they were impacted at all. It takes those first few years before you start seeing how when you said, sure, you can do that, you realize that you just impacted this whole group of people without even meaning to.

Other expressions of initial shock included the mention of loneliness, isolation, and an inability to act due to lack of knowledge.

Principal's Style

In the discussion of the effects of the principal's style on the role of the assistant principal, it became clear that the way the assistant principals were treated by their principals has a pivotal impact on their role and also serves as one of their greatest challenges. These frustrations revolve around the fact that they are told what to do by someone who may not necessarily have a clear picture of what they want to see happen. Once the assistant principal begins the process of doing what they're told, many other issues seem to emerge that cloud the issue. More and more variables are added and as one assistant principal indicates:

I think that one of the conflicts that develops is when you're given something to do and when you go to bring it in to share with the principal more variables are added and your initial planning was semi-useless. Then you have to start again and when you bring the next version in, something else gets added. That's a great challenge because the relationship with my principal is very control oriented and even though you have been delegated to do something, he doesn't share exactly what it is. And thus, your work is doubled.

Others just accept this challenge as a given.

I've always figured that the principal is my boss and this is the way he or she wants it done and that's what I try to do. I want to work on my own a lot and I appreciate it when someone lets me do that, but if I have a principal that's going to be more authoritative in how they want things done, I'll just work with that.

Still others find this challenge occasionally so overwhelming that it requires a job shift. "The principal might have a different style which will directly affect how we do our work. If the principal has a different philosophy of how he's going to run the school than the vice principal may have, there's a challenge to the effectiveness of the relationship there." Another assistant principal continued this line of reasoning.

Sometimes it's very frustrating because if your leadership styles mismatch he or she is still the boss so you need to find a way to support them him or her in whatever way you can. The concept of support, however, should be going two ways. I see in relationship to the role of the principal to us as assistant principals the differences in style of someone who, when I go to the principal and want an answer because I can't resolve the issue at my level or I don't have the knowledge on a particular issue, that I would want the answer or be told by them I don't have the answer, I'll call someone, or this is who you need to call. To me, I really feel that to be the role of the principal ... to support us. Not that they always need to have the answer, but that they would not just listen, but they would be a resource in helping come up with a solution. That can be a frustration ...

especially if I was to meet someone who left me not knowing what I needed to know or helping me bring closure to situations.

Thus, challenges may be occurring due to the principal's guidance or lack of it.

Measuring Success

A challenge that did not emerge in the individual interviews, but did emerge in the focus group interviews was that of how difficult it is to achieve any measure of success in how you're doing as an assistant principal. There is the situation of playing to four audiences.

We play to our boss, we play to our students, we play to the teachers, and we play to the parents. And in some extreme cases, maybe to the principal. What you do with a student based on your knowledge of home and classroom, may upset either home or classroom, based on your decision. How well you can meld these two is one measure of your success and that has to come through the trust or confidence of your staff. If you do not have this trust or confidence, you will be doomed as an ineffective administrator, because they speak the loudest ... they are the public relation agents for you with your boss, the parents, and the kids. So unless the teachers perceive you as being supportive of them ... I think you're kind of doomed to be seen not necessarily as a total failure, but not a success either. It truly is a tough job because you do play to these different groups and it's tough to keep all these four audiences happy all the time. I worked for one principal where as long as he didn't hear anything from my office, the measure of success was not how

bad you were dying, but as long as nothing went upstairs, then you were doing great. The integrity of decisions didn't matter ... just as long as they didn't hear anything.

Thus, an inability to attain a measure of success or judge their performance is a challenge to be overcome by practicing assistant principals.

Miscellaneous

Other sources of frustrations are the lack of "techniques" to achieve success in evaluating non-satisfactory teachers or instructional aides: "even with instructional aides, you can't get rid of them." And "our separation with those in control of special education" in that they're governed by a director or program specialist and yet the students are on their campuses. Having the resources in a different location from the actual students in special education is an extreme frustration and challenge.

Challenges: Findings from Surveys

Table 2.2: Challenges: Survey Responses
Theme (Frequency) Description

Theme (Frequency) Description	Theme (Frequency) Description
Difficult Parents (6) Group Mentality; Belligerent	Balance (2) Balancing needs with 'what gets tossed your way'; prioritizing
Disciplinary Issues (4) Constant conflicts; How to manage the 'business' aspects	Managing Adults (2) Dealing with poorly performing support staff
Politics (3)	Unmotivated teachers (2) Teacher hand-holding

District Office Stance (3) What is O.K. to do? What is the chain of command?	Deluge of Knowledge Base Required (2) Knowing all the proper procedures
Learning the Culture (3)	Time (1) Transition to 90 second focus
Campus Safety (3) Being completely responsible; overwhelming responsibility	Facilities Management (1)

The survey responses reinforced the findings from the individual and focus group interviews. New themes that came out were the challenges of balancing their priorities, determining the District Office stance and acquiring the deluge of knowledge required to be successful in the role.

Challenges: Findings from Logs

The specific interactions and activities documented by practicing assistant principals in the logs added a new, insightful dimension to gaining an understanding of the challenges in the role of secondary school assistant principal. The issue of lack of time and the long hours spent at work were frequently mentioned as challenges faced by practicing secondary assistant principals. The following table delineates the hours of assistant principals as documented by the sixteen logs collected for this study.

Table 2.3: Challenges: Documentation in logs of starting time, ending time and average hours spent at work by practicing A.P.'s

Log #:	Starting Time (AM)	Ending Time (PM)	Hours/ Min. Worked
# 1	6:45 AM	4:30 PM	9 Hrs 45 Mn
# 2	6:55 AM	10:00 PM	15 Hrs 5 Mn
# 3	6:30 AM	7:30 PM	13 Hrs

# 4	6:30 AM	4:15 PM	9 Hrs 45 Mn
# 5	7:45 AM	9:10 PM	13 Hrs 35 M
# 6	7:45 AM	9:00 PM	13 Hrs 15 M
# 7	6:45 AM	9:30 PM	14 Hrs 45 M
# 8	6:30 AM	4:30 PM	10 Hrs
# 9	6:50 AM	9:40 PM	14 Hrs 15 M
# 10	6:40 AM	9:30 PM	14 Hrs 50 M
# 11	6:15 AM	9:30 PM	15 Hrs 15 M
# 12	7:15 AM	9:30 PM	14 Hrs 15 M
# 13	7:15 AM	4:30 PM	9 Hrs 15 Mn
# 14	7:30 AM	6:30 PM	11 Hrs
# 15	7:15 AM	6:30 PM	11 Hrs 15 M
# 16	6:45 AM	4:30 PM	9 Hrs 45 Mn
Average	6:57 AM	7:15 PM	12 Hrs 18 M

In addition to the logs documenting the reality of the challenge of long hours, they also demonstrated twelve specific recurring challenges for the practicing assistant principal. Of particular interest to the research findings were the descriptions of the exact interactions and activities which depict the realities of the challenges.

Supervision/Discipline

The first emergent theme relating to challenges for assistant principals attained from the logs was keeping up with the plethora of discipline occurring on a daily basis. Examples of specific disciplinary interactions documented in the logs included thefts, fights, possession of pagers, knives, drug transfers, expulsion hearings, fraudulent phone calls, and other disruptive activities. One area that was highlighted was that of the bus disciplinary issues and interrelated dealings with the transportation department. Examples include when a late bus

returns and the bus driver will not take the students home, it becomes the assistant principal's job to figure out how to get these students home. This happened in four different examples out of the sixteen logs. Thus, the frequency of the transportation problem would suggest it is quite a challenge for practicing assistant principals. Other transportation related issues include handling of bus referrals, having problems with bus drivers and needing to write informative memos to their supervisors, supervising and loading the buses, receiving petitions from the kids to revoke the driver's licenses, and interacting with parents who are upset with bus drivers who left their kid at the bus stop without any way to get to school or to get home.

In addition, as there were 42 interactions relating to supervision and discipline, this is where the bulk of the time of the assistant principals was spent. An interesting sideline emerging from the logs is the challenge of these interactions. The challenge of morning supervision where you're trying to get students to come to class on time or lunch supervision ... the challenge of keeping them from smoking, fighting, or drinking at lunch, and lastly, the disciplinary results and the challenge of metering out discipline and having a variety of individuals unhappy with your decision. The logs documented assistant principals who met with a parent in regard to their student who stole a teacher's purse and their displeasure with the subsequent suspension due to its impact on the child's future and grades.

Another situation was when a parent was unhappy because no police report was filled out when their daughter was hit in the jaw by another student. These examples clearly outline the challenge of being in charge of the discipline or supervision on a school campus.

Medical Concerns - Medic

Throughout no other data collection technique, did the challenge of handling specific medical emergencies emerge. The logs had eleven different situations where the assistant principal was involved in medical or health related situations. As one of the responsibilities of the assistant principal is to oversee the health attendant, this may be interpreted as though he or she had medical training and could serve as a health attendant, nurse or evaluator of medical decisions. Examples of Health Office related interactions depicted in the logs included:

- *Handling a Medical emergency - Nurse is at lunch. Who can give insulin?
- *Breathing of a child appears to be extremely strained - child may need to go to hospital - cannot reach either parent - is a call to 911 in order?
- *Working on a situation involving a field trip and a child on that field trip needing an epi/pen trained personnel to go on the field trip since that child has a 20 minute response for a bee sting. In that situation, the bus was waiting out in front and the student either would be pulled from the field trip or trained personnel would be released from their duties at the school site so that they could attend (Option #2 was selected.)
- *Triage training
- *After hour medical emergency from sporting event
- *Blood in urine - or was it? Required memo to be sent to staff to be on alert for student who may be seriously ill.

Special Events

Another area that emerged from the logs was the attention to organizing and arranging special events. These events include assemblies such as awards and rewards assemblies, picture day,

music and choral concerts, fundraisers, sixth grade camp, minimum days, sporting events, airbands, multicultural fairs, hearing and visual screening, testing, and organizing miscellaneous field trips.

Special Interest Groups

Interactions with special interest groups appeared with increased regularity. These interactions included:

- *Special Education Meetings
- *Sharing results of Special Education testing
- *Parents suing for inadequate Special Education service - want District Office to pay for private placement -
- *Hiring adequately trained Special Education staff
- *GATE - Parents unhappy with teaching strategies -
- *GATE testing issues - lack of eligibility questioned by parent
- *ESL - Hiring aides to meet the needs of students speaking 20 languages
- *Inability to acquire adequate directives from District Office regarding ESL policy
- *PTSA - Attending meetings - addressing concerns - writing articles for newsletters
- *ASB - meeting with representatives - providing leadership - supervising activities - supervising, organizing directions for ASB money utilization

Administrivia

The challenges of the need for assistant principals to take care of a wide range of situations was never so evident as from reading their logs. The logs depicted that assistant principals spend much of their time:

- *Listening to complaints from all

- *Attending constant meetings
- *Handling information
- *Writing grants
- *Adequately achieving preconceived goals once the grant is received
- *Attending ticketing meeting with San Diego Police - learning to give tickets
- *Generating letters and memos such as responses to staff, letters of recommendation, expulsion hearing statements
- *Translating forms into different languages
- *Paperwork, mail, desk organization
- *OCIS contracts/grades
- *Monitoring student teachers - especially time consuming if student teacher is bad as this results in parent meetings and meetings with the student and master teachers
- *Brainstorming techniques to handle the information flow in the office
- *Coordinating and writing the WASC report
- *SSC (School Site Council)/School Improvement meetings

Other administrivia included covering for missing staff members, such as teachers, secretary, the health office clerk, or other administrators. Also, striving to overcome the challenge of keeping in touch with their own families. Frequent mentions of telephoning home to keep in touch or attending their child's open house. Another issue was the challenge of keeping up with their own professional development and the time it takes to read an informative article or information needed for an upcoming committee meeting, or amassing the knowledge needed regarding new technological or scientific advances.

Parent Interactions

Documented parent interactions included parent drop-ins, involvement in a custody issue where the assistant principal had forgotten to check the A-19 (the Federal Survey form that delineates who may check out a student from school) before dialoging with the other parent about a student, sheer numbers of parent phone calls and meetings, and the need to chair such parent advisory groups as the GATE parent advisory group and the Human Relations Advisory Group.

Students

Students receive frequent mention in the logs in that the assistant principals seem to be constantly protecting the students' rights as in situations where a teacher may have violated their rights by inappropriate searching, or a campus supervisor might have insulted them. In addition, they are consistently working with at-risk kids by attending meetings and/or disciplining those students.

Facilities

Facilities also played a dominant role in the logs and the challenge appeared to be learning who to contact at the district office regarding such situations as when your fields are flooding, or when there's been theft of your custodial equipment. Another time consuming facility interaction is that of the politics in regard to room assignments, determining needed renovations, and keeping up with the constant flow of facility requests by outside or site level members. Lastly, an interaction with the risk manager from the district office regarding which chemicals to store demonstrated another challenge of working with facilities.

Curriculum and Instruction

The logs showed the attempts by assistant principals to balance the specific departmental needs and wants with the good for the school. The interactions included:

- *Discussing inappropriate curriculum with teachers
- *Productively working on long-range curriculum planning with science and math departments
- *Working and offering guidance to mentor teachers on how to work effectively with teachers

Master Schedule Development

The master schedule was mentioned in five different arenas in the logs by practicing assistant principals. They mentioned the need to constantly cycle drafts of the master schedule to the principal, the impact on interdisciplinary teaming, the need to listen and incorporate the needs of all staff members while keeping the master schedule within a certain budget, the impact of changing to block scheduling, and lastly, the impact of changing from a two period basic education day to a three period basic education day.

Evaluations

Whereas in the individual and focus group interviews, the evaluations were spoken of in terms of the difficulty with working with challenging people, the logs demonstrated the uniqueness of the evaluation process and personnel issues, in terms of understanding the new district alternative evaluation project, the time frustration of writing up evaluations and observations and the follow-up meeting with the teachers, as well as the legalities involved with classified staff and personnel commission interactions.

Community and Outside Agencies

Assistant principals must be familiar with a variety of community and/or outside agencies. The logs demonstrate their smooth transition from dealing with situations on campus to those off campus. Examples include working with educational foundations, other service clubs such as the Rotary Club and Soroptimists, as well as with the Water Companies.

These are but a few of the documented specifics from the logs. This data has shed light into the intricacies of the position and the challenge of acquiring the needed knowledge base to successfully handle the range of situations included in a day's work for a practicing assistant principal.

Research Question #3: How do they meet these challenges?

Meeting Challenges: Findings from the *Individual Interviews*

As research question #2 illustrates, the challenges for practicing assistant principals are endless. Yet, all of the practicing assistant principals in this research study had been assistant principals for at least two years, and the average was about five years. How they strive to meet their challenges and find their inspiration, joy and energy will be addressed in this section.

TABLE 3.0: Meeting Challenges: Individual Interviews Themes (Listed From Major to Minor) Descriptions

Meeting Challenges	Description
Teamwork	Camaraderie; Empathy helps; Synergy; Support; Collaboration; role models
Stress Reduction	Workout; Humor:Balance; Knowing when to change jobs
Owning your own role as AP	Admitting Errors; Recognizing limitations; reflective practice; do what inspires you; agenda setting
Flexibility	Seeing/accepting different points of view; Go with the flow; Letting go
Developing Interpersonal Skill	Asking questions; listening;delegating
Time Management	Sticking to your calendar; Becoming efficient; saying no
Connecting with Students	Daily contact brings joy; its invigorating/inspiring
Celebrating Successes	Seeing the vision come to life; Knowing you did your best; reading notes
Getting to know School Culture	People, heroes, rituals

Teamwork

The isolation of the classroom teacher has long been thought to contribute to the profession's resistance to change and growth. A surprise for many practicing secondary assistant principals is the instant feeling that they are working on a team with the other

administrators at their site. On most middle school campuses there is one principal and two assistant principals, and on the high school sites there is a principal and four assistant principals. The concept of teamwork and the administrative team supporting each other through camaraderie, empathy, synergy, role modeling, and collaboration emerged again and again as the saving grace for the profession. Many individuals such as this assistant principal, when asked, "Where you get your sources of inspiration, job, and energy to be able to achieve your role?", responded:

From the people I work with, colleagues. I like to roller blade so I like to exercise which kind of relieves me, but mainly in terms of inspiration it's the people I work with. They give me inspiration by the interactions we have, by finding humor and helping me as I help them to focus on issues and not the emotion of a situation.

It is this camaraderie that builds extremely tight relationships between practicing assistant principals and their administrative team. One assistant principal mentioned that it is this connection with others that keeps him sane in the role. Another member of the team that is rarely mentioned in administrative textbooks, is the secretary for the assistant principal.

I have a wonderful secretary who troubleshoots a lot for me. She understands my schedule so she can help facilitate to other people and what she can't ... and then for me, after enough years of experience now, I think I have a better sense of knowing which problems I have to deal with immediately and which ones I can say, you need to call your child's counselor about this. It's really

kind of from experience. And then, of course, there are times the whole thing goes out the window. Thus, many challenges are met through having an efficient secretary who can streamline your interactions with others or assist you with the tasks that have been given to you. As part of the team then, you have other administrators as well as your classified staff.

Stress Reduction

The story of one assistant principal as he embarked upon his new career with extreme enthusiasm and which rapidly changed to extreme frustration, illustrates the importance of stress reduction. He discusses how he came to the point of having to develop stress reduction skills.

I think I had to kind of hit rock-bottom. My favorite story to tell in that way is that I was sitting in a chair at home and I had my shorts on and my jogging shoes and the whole shot and my wife said, 'David, when are you going to go jogging?' And I said, 'I already have.' She said, 'No you haven't, you haven't left the house yet.' To have believed that I had left when I had not was like my rock-bottom. I don't remember if I cried, but I know that I got really teary-eyed and it was real frustrating, because I had actually thought I had left the house and I hadn't. Then we had these sort of heart-to-heart talks ... and then I learned that I wasn't going to control my afternoons ... that my job was going to begin at 4:30 in the afternoon. That's when I could start doing my work. So I wasn't going to get home until 5:30 or 6:00 and to get home at that time and then go for a jog was not fair to my family or the way I wanted to do things. So then I started getting up at 4:00 in the morning so I would run

before I came to work ...and that adaptation led to developing the coping skills and learning how to get along because then I could be physically tired at the end of the day and mentally tired, so I was back in that sense of balance where I now have accepted the fact that I might only run four days a week. That's okay ... if my alarm goes off at four and I'm tired, I hit the button and I go back to sleep until 5:00 ... which three years ago I couldn't have done that because I had to get up and run. I seem to continue to be more in balance with the fact that I have to get the exercise ... that's critical to who I am and that's what keeps me going but I'm not going to do that to sacrifice the sleep because I can't survive on 4-1/2 hours of sleep. To hear myself say that is the indication that I'm balancing the ship because I couldn't have said that five years ago when I started. Also, another interesting thing is something new in the last three years. I have a friend who isn't related to education in any way, shape, or form and somebody who is mentally stimulating to me because our conversations can touch on anything and everything ... we just enjoy the free flow of words and that Sunday morning ritual ... now my son joins me and his son joins him and so the four of us pack up and go surfing for 4 hours each Sunday morning and that, I'm sure, has led to dealing with this stuff. So having a life, in other words, that extends past just this little enclaves my way of adapting to the challenge of the role.

His story demonstrates the all encompassing feeling most assistant principals describe as the role taking over their life. In their discussions on meeting challenges, many talk of utilizing a sense of humor which maintains their sanity, allows them to take the job seriously but not themselves and puts the job into perspective. "Really, if you don't have a sense of humor you

shouldn't be an assistant principal. You have to be able to laugh otherwise you'll eat yourself alive. You have to have a sense of humor and also a sense of what it takes for renewal."

These thoughts were also cited by another assistant principal:

I think that for me it's absolutely critical that I keep things in perspective with a good sense of humor. And to me, my sense of humor has kept me sane and in fact, I even put up a little note on my board the other day that says 'Embrace humor, or endure hell!' The person that gets into this profession that cannot take a laugh at human nature ... because it is hilarious ... I don't think can last.

Outside activities are pivotal to stress reduction. Examples are the assistant principal mentioned above who goes surfing and another who is into golf while others just love to spend that time with their families and utilize weekends to go on trips as well as daily workouts.

Another stress reduction is learning how to balance their personal life with their work life. That sense of balance is pivotal to most assistant principals' feelings of success on the job. When the stress becomes so great a reduction technique for many is to try to put some positive into the negative situations that seem to be coming fast and furiously. When this happens, one assistant principal reports:

Well the first thing I do when that happens, and maybe it's my coaching background, but, I'll take a time-out. I'll regroup ... I'll go someplace

for 10 minutes and say I need to get out of here. Another thing I find really helpful, especially when I'm really overwhelmed by situations, and my mouth is dropped opened because I can't believe what I'm hearing, or with an incredible amount of discipline that is just overwhelming, I'll go sit in a classroom with a teacher that I know is outstanding and it's completely renewing. I can lose myself in there...

Stress reduction activities are pivotal to maintaining consistency in the role of the secondary school assistant principal. All have described the stress in ways such as "knots in my neck", "knots in my stomach", "lack of sleep", and "lack of ability to relate with their families". Transitioning to a point where they are able to address the stress and develop coping skills was frequently mentioned as pivotal to meeting the challenges of the role.

Owning Your Own Role

Another interrelated thought to that of stress reduction, is the need to own your own role as assistant principal. Taking control of your actions, recognizing limitations, making sure to take the time to do what inspires you, as well as reflect on your role are just a few of the responses on how to own the position. Summing this up, an assistant principal stated: "Probably 97% of this, the job especially in this environment, is what you make it. Within the parameters of the structure of school ... the job is really what I make it."

Another assistant principal mentioned that in order for her to find success, she had to do outside activities that related around her field that she adored prior to becoming an assistant principal, which was counseling.

I did private counseling for a while on the side. I

started a business where I was doing inservices with small and medium sized companies where they didn't have a staff development component, so I met with them and talked about what kind of staff development issues they might have and did some staff development kinds of things and tagged on employee counseling time as a part of the contract. Then I taught some classes in Psychology at Mariner College and connected with young adults that way and found I was really talking to a lot of single parents, and again, meeting with them. I actually started doing a support group with a lot of my students from my class once a week so I kind of kept my hand in it ... Thus I kept honing my counseling skills and I think they are the skills that have made me a better administrator than anything I've learned by teaching. The counseling experience gives you better skills and the whole time you're listening to a concern that someone is sharing with you, you're picking up points ... what is the key issue here, what are they really feeling about, how much is emotionally driven and how much is fact ... and so I think you're able to ferret through what some of the issues are.

Thus she has learned to utilize her skills and keep developing those skills that made her a successful human being prior to becoming an assistant principal. Utilization of these skills translated into her feeling more productivity and value in her chosen profession.

One last concept in regard to stress reduction techniques utilized by assistant principals to maintain their sense of autonomy has to do with the individuals who talked about the

occasional need to change who they were working for, should they be in an environment where the principal's belief system was incongruent with their own. While this was mentioned as extremely challenging, it was also emphasized as pivotal to their success as an assistant principal. One spoke of how had he stayed in a previous administrative position he probably would not be an assistant principal today. He also stated more globally, "I understand what I believe and I'm working consciously to see if it's a match with the organization. If it is a huge mismatch of the organization, then it is a clear message that I should work for a different organization."

Flexibility

As assistant principals discussed the techniques to meet the challenges in their role, flexibility was seen as an underlying dynamic to achieving success. They discussed the need for overcoming their preconceived notion that they would achieve what they were thinking to achieve each day. They laugh at how many times they have started projects and have been interrupted, or how many times they thought they had a great program or policy that they thought should be implemented "blown out of the water."

Flexibility emerged under a variety of themes such as the need to see and accept different points of view, to have flexibility in how they handle different situations, and learning to go with what situation was emerging at hand and giving up control of their day. This often required learning to enjoy the variety of the work opportunities and letting go of prior ways of doing things. One assistant principal in particular discussed what made him a successful teacher was the fact that he achieved his goals and pursued areas of personal interest that made him successful as a teacher. He went on to state that these were the opposite of the skills that make an individual successful as an assistant principal. The assistant principals collectively felt that they need to be able

to adapt and shift gears immediately and learn to go with the flow.

I think most of us are very eclectic in our approaches that there are things that work for us and yet we are uncertain why they are working or how they fit together. I do believe continuous academic learning and if you give people an opportunity to explore intellectually and then the opportunity to non-judgmentally discuss it with others and reflect and listen and be open to what might fit and what might not fit, you can build a pretty solid foundation. And always keeping in mind that there is new information out there and the world is changing rapidly and remembering not to get too fixated on one piece and be willing to move in a different direction if something is not working.

Occasionally, flexibility was seen in terms of situations such as where an assistant principal talks about how she might be trying to leave her office to attend a meeting or an observation and a parent will arrive. She explains the process that goes on as she works to be flexible with them as well as with her own schedule.

I try not to put parents off, because basically I think we're talking about parents for the most part. Typically, when a parent calls you or is waiting to see you it's an issue that is burning with them and just for some people, if you make them wait a day, it typically gets worse. Maybe half of them get better and half of them get worse ... but I like to get to them right away. By letting them know that I'm willing to take their call or see them right away, I think it takes them off guard

a little bit because I think most people call expecting to be put on hold and then say we'll get back to you ... and I try not to do that. And I try to use that technique too, where I say I can see you now although I'm supposed to be somewhere else ... and typically when you hear them say thanks for seeing me, you know they feel that at least you're on their side ... so rather than have this control struggle, I try to collaborate whatever their problem is and I really try to listen as much as I can and that's pretty successful most of the time.

Their ability to be flexible in their schedule, problem solving techniques, and responses to individuals has allowed many assistant principals to meet the challenges of their role.

Developing Interpersonal Skills

Developing interpersonal skills is something that assistant principals work on consistently, yet also felt was one of their greatest areas of needed growth. The role of the assistant principal as well as the greatest challenges to achieving that role has much to do with the human interactions one engages in on a daily basis. The assistant principals researched spoke of the importance of utilizing interpersonal skills to diffuse anger and successfully work with people in a way so that a sense of trust is developed and all interactions are not negative. A plethora of data emerged on the how of developing these interpersonal skills. The intense mental and verbal process that goes on in some of these interactions emerged consistently in the individual interviews.

Interpersonal skills were seen as invaluable was with irate parents. Three different assistant principals discussed this issue in three different ways.

Assistant Principal #1:

If someone walks into the office and they're upset, you want to talk to them and listen to them. I think half the time if you just listen to what they have to say, it diffuses some situations right off the bat. I think that's one tactic to take. Another one that I take and found is effective, is that if we have a student that's not performing well, is to call the parent first. Because the kids will go home and tell the parents the story, and they will only tell their side of it. Now, of course, the parent thinks we're telling our side of it and personally, I really try to tell it as it is without embellishing one way or the other, but who knows if I'm successful at that ... so sometimes I try to make the first contact and be proactive with people and develop a relationship with a parent prior to their hearing from their child what an ogre you are.

Assistant Principal #2 discusses how to effectively utilize interpersonal skills:

Well, the first thing that I do is to try and validate that the person's upset. I may not actually agree with why they're upset, but I validate it and let them know that I understand and I see that they are upset and I feel they're upset. Then I ask a lot of questions. One thing my principal is extremely good at is helping people to discover what their true issues are and I've learned a lot about elongating conversations even though I may

know what the ultimate solution is going to be within ten seconds. They're not ready to get that solution yet and they need a certain amount of time to vent ... to have me listen ... to have me question ... to feel that I'm interested in what they're talking about. I may not agree with them, but just to listen and ask questions ... so I tend to do that and once I've got the information, like I said, I may know the solution to their problem within ten seconds, but telling them that at that point would be fruitless because they're not ready to hear it. They want to know that I'm engaged, that I will ask them questions to have them clarify what their issues are and a lot of times in asking those questions, they become solvers of their own problems. Thus, to help others gain control where maintaining and initiating problem solving skills.

Assistant Principal #3 discusses the role of listening in interpersonal relationships. She states:

What's interesting is that semantics are such a powerful thing. I think part of it is a non-verbal presentation that you're not really rattled, that you're not really stunned by what's being said to you, you're not necessarily impressed or unimpressed. I think it begins because you're a fair diffuser ... that whatever comes your way you can be accepting of it. It's neither right nor wrong and that's the way it is, so where do we go from here? I think that acceptance builds a better bridge toward the fact that then you can move on to problem solving and your control comes when people know your greatest concern is to resolve

the issue more than to disagree completely. And, many times the other person's point of view cannot be accepted ... it's just not going to happen. The lady today who is irate because I suspended her daughter for 4 days for fighting, especially when the other girl pushed her first, I'm not going to back down. But I listened to the mom, stated I believed what she was telling me, acknowledged it, that I can see that point of view, and then say that I'm real comfortable as a school disciplinarian and here's why I chose that. And then hear the daughter say well, I did do that Mom ... and what happens is I don't believe the mom ever really likes my decision any better, but there's a little degree of understanding that I didn't do it for any other reason than the behaviors that were exhibited and so it's partially, you get away with externally looking like you're not that rattled or shook up or whatever ... I guess it's sort of like being an actor on the stage.

Yet the thread that ties these three quotes together is one that demonstrates these assistant principals' goals of trying to develop relationships based on fact, based on what's best for kids, and what's best for the entire school environment. According to another assistant principal, developing their interpersonal people skills is the absolute number one skill needed in their position. He feels that he meets most of the challenges that he sees in terms of the role:

With my incredible innate ability with interpersonal people skills, that is very often one you're born with. The only thing you can do to improve that is to work very hard at sharpening those but if you do not have some

ability in that, you will not be a successful administrator. That is my opinion and the other thing to be a successful administrator and to create change in folks and to meet the challenges of your role, is that you must be able to accept the fact that all folks have shortcomings and every single adult you'll ever work with will be worse at something and if you cannot accept the human condition of imperfection, you will find it intolerable to work with some of the inadequacies, and inconsistencies that some adults possess, let alone some hypocrisies. If you cannot accept those gray areas, you will not be able to survive as an administrator much less have a chance of creating positive change in any of these people that you view as being inadequate, or incompetent, or unwilling. You will never hate anybody or despise anybody into doing anything you need them to do. Your only chance is to sugar-coat them, entice them, and make it appealing for them to do. Therein lies the skill of being a people manager.

Personal Time Management

As mentioned earlier, owning your own role as assistant principal emerged consistently as a technique to meet the challenges. Along with that concept, controlling where they spend their time, learning to calendar things they need to do, and becoming efficient with time were themes that surfaced repeatedly in the individual interviews. One assistant principal discussed it as, "either control your time, or it controls you." Another stated that the way they compensate for the challenges of the lack of time in their role was:

By constantly being aware of where I spend my time ... by journals, by using a calendar that details how I'm spending my time ... a Daytimer ...

we all use the same calendar which I feel is important. All of the administrative team uses the same calendar and we have weekly meetings where we coordinate our calendars so we know who's going to be off campus and when. But time management is a commitment and it's constantly got to be re-evaluated ... am I spending too much time with discipline ... am I not spending enough time with classroom supervision ... am I in the classrooms when I need to be taking care of lunch time supervision ... the calendar is a good way to monitor that.

He continued by stressing how he could be missing pivotal issues by not continually assessing where his time is utilized. "By becoming aware of what the real problem could be, which is that you could be missing the whole world you're supposed to be interacting with because you're lost in this world, you often compensate by saying in this world, I can only do that much."

He does not feel that is an excuse for not achieving what he wants to achieve. The mere fact that he has filled his days and been extremely busy does not erase the fact that he has not achieved the goals that he set out to achieve. Thus, by working to control time and where he spends it, this practicing assistant principal has found that he has become more effective as well as more focused.

Connecting With Students

It is the daily contact with students that allows many practicing assistant principals to meet the challenges of the overwhelming role. While they lament the constant supervision, they continually mention, however, that is those times with the kids that remind them of what they find joyful about their job. It

is sitting in the classroom and watching kids motivated and engaged in their learning that brings joy to their existence. It allows them to stand back and remember what their purpose is on a school campus to allow this process to happen. "It is interesting, because often times those are the kinds of things that you could make more of a difference at if you actually do manage to figure out where to get the time to do them."

One adjunct thought in regard to how connecting with students allows them to meet challenges relates around this quote.

The strategies I use for being successful with students have helped me to be successful with adults. Thus, if you have learned to work well with students, typically you have learned to listen, address the issue, not the personal feelings, and built relationships based on mutual concern for the success and achievement of the individuals involved in the interaction.

Getting to Know the Culture of the School

As assistant principals strive to meet the challenges of their role, it became immediately evident that achieving their role was not something they could do alone. Many of them felt that developing an understanding of the culture of the school was pivotal to their success.

I listened to try to understand the culture which took a long time to develop and I believed because I kind of knew what I was talking about in many areas, I was able to garnish a certain credibility so that even if you didn't agree, people didn't think I was just blowing smoke. That was helpful. I was, for the most part, very direct in letting people know what I needed to be comfortable and successful.

Learning the culture, while vital to the success of the practicing assistant principal, was expressed as a very difficult challenge to achieve.

I think that it was learning the culture of a new school ... to find out what I was walking into ... to see how I could impact this site without violating the values of the school immediately. I spent a lot of time trying to learn about the culture of the school ... talking with students, talking with teachers, talking with parents ... and I think it was difficult because there were lots of things that as an outsider coming into an organization were very apparent that needed work. My ability to have the form or the vehicle to start those changes took about six or seven months longer than I would have liked. There's a lot of inner turmoil when you know that something needs to change and you're dealing with the symptoms and not working on the problem. That was extremely difficult.

Thus, the practicing assistant principal's attempts to get to know the culture were an attempt to meet the challenge of initiating change or achieving any other aspect of their role. For without a basic understanding of the norms and belief systems on their campuses, they could be violating those beliefs and thus, be undermined by the individuals with whom they were working.

Celebrating Successes

Lastly, many assistant principals feel that seeing their vision come to life and knowing they did the best job they could allows them to celebrate the successes that they feel within the job. In discussing where she gets her source of inspiration, joy, and energy, one assistant principal said:

I think a lot of it comes from within. As long as I know I have treated people fairly and I have done the best job I could have the day before. If I know that I am dealing with a major issue the next day, I tend to be up the night before trying to figure it out. If it's a confrontation with a parent, if it's a parent group, a faculty group that's just irate about an issue, or like the one we had in the Science Department last week ... the night before I keep thinking that their issue can't drive the school. I strive to process what the concern is, what we're going to do to accomplish it, how we are going to work with it if it happens, and how we are going to work on it if it doesn't happen. I like to force them to deal with the issue instead of me having to deal with the issues all the time. And I think if you have those days back to back, the job becomes less joyful. So I think it's vital to cherish the few moments of success we have on a daily basis and remember what things went well.

Conclusion: Getting the Job Done

Assistant principals describe the fact that every time there's a knock at the door or someone says do you have a minute, or the phone rings, someone else starts taking charge of their role. Occasionally, they have to say no ... have their secretaries screen calls and leave their doors shut if they're working on a project. In addition, they spoke of the importance of scheduling situations where they could utilize and develop the skills that they felt were pivotal to their success as an assistant principal. Arranging workshops or inservices for the staff, making sure to be involved on the strategic planning team or the initiating a staff development committee for the school. These activities allowed for them to feel a sense of renewal and purpose above and beyond the day to day troubleshooting.

Constant reflections on such questions as "was my decision good for kids" as well as internal debates in regard to their practice by asking themselves "why did I fail or succeed" supports positive growth and enables assistant principals to be ready to tackle the next challenges that come their way.

Meeting Challenges: Findings from *Focus Group Interviews*

Table 3.1: Meeting Challenges: Focus Group Interviews Themes (Frequency) Description

Theme (Frequency) Descriptive	Theme (Frequency) Descriptive
Teamwork (8) Team effort; Camaraderie; Celebrate Successes together; Working together; feedback	Flexibility (3) Flexibility in decision making; change your style with current leadership needs
Reflecting on the Positive (8) Love to be with kids; touching kids lives; Staff appreciation (Notes, etc...)	Reevaluate Expectations (3) Self-Awareness; redefine your perceptions of role; realize you can't be a perfectionist
Humor/ Fun (5) Humor amongst teacher's post-evaluation conferences;	Admitting faults (1)
Reflective Practice (4) Learning to reflect	Utilize District Support (1)
Structuring time to be proactive (4) Budgeting time; prioritizing; managing crises	Being Fair (1) Consistency frees decision making skills

Techniques for meeting challenges abounded with great detail and enthusiasm during the focus group interviews. The

bulk of the comments directly correlated to those previously mentioned in the individual interviews. Additionally, however, the concept of meeting challenges through teamwork was expressed as a celebration of the collective experience, as "camaraderie born out of necessity, a common bond of under fire like, you won't believe what they just told me." For many, this camaraderie with other educators was a new experience.

I think I also like the joking that takes place among the administrators. There is a lot more teasing and things like that than when I was a teacher working with my colleagues in the department. I don't remember much going on then. It's like a comedy stress reliever for some things and I've been teased for years that I don't have much of a sense of humor, or whatever, so it's kind of interesting that there's something I've come to appreciate.

Sharing his joy of meeting the challenges of the job through human interactions and reflecting on his practice with colleagues, one assistant principal said;

Kids, kids, kids, I love to be on campus with them. I love the energy they bring. I love some of the pranks they pull even though they bend the rules. When they're coming down on us, I know they're not mad at me even though they want to pretend like they're mad at me. I didn't do anything to them. I like being in the parking lot in the morning greeting kids when they come in. I love the team that I'm on. It's probably the only time in my 20 year career that you can have a period of time where you reflect on your practice with your colleagues. When you're teaching they have different prep periods, but when you go into an

administrative meeting and you're kind of going back through something that happened, you get a lot of feedback, a lot of direction, so that's real nice.

Other discussions interrelated the concepts of flexibility, re-evaluating expectations, and admitting faults. The collective group felt that without flexibility, the challenges of the role would never be met. In addition, if they did not align their expectations with the realities of the role, the frustration would stifle and hinder their productivity. Lastly, their ability to admit their faults allows them to learn from their mistakes, regroup, and move on to tackle new challenges.

Meeting Challenges: Findings from Surveys

**Table 3.2: Meeting Challenge: Survey Responses Themes
(Frequency) Description**

Theme (Frequency) Description	Theme (Frequency) Description
Input (5) Get input/advice before decision making; listen to issues; ask questions	Be Responsive to the needs of teachers (1) Earn support
Balance the work day (1)	Calendar Time (1)
Limit District Office involvement (1) Focus on site level needs	School culture Involvement (1)
Humor (1) Keep sense of humor	Embrace the Role (1)
Call fellow A. P.'s (1)	Remain Objective (1) Don't take things personally

The survey responses to how the practicing assistant principals meet their challenges unearthed two new themes.

Limiting the involvement with the district office was thought as a response to the challenge of fulfilling their site level duties. In addition, the need to consistently be responsive to the needs of teachers and by doing so earning their support was portrayed as a technique to avoid sabotage and enact positive changes through increased collegiality and empowerment.

Meeting Challenges: Findings from Logs

The logs documented the need for administration to meet the challenges of their positions by:

- *Meeting with other administrators
- *Utilizing the district office as a resource
- *Listening continually
- *Remaining flexible
- *Consistently seeking to manage their time (such as making lists for the next days' activities and getting through the paperwork)
- *Connecting with kids and teachers to share successes

Research Question #4: How do assistant principals assess their higher education training, initial support or preparation, and ongoing professional development?

Assessment of Training: Findings from Individual Interviews

When asked to assess their higher education training, initial support or preparation and ongoing professional development, many assistant principals discussed either being "completely unprepared", or offered suggestions for new coursework. Remarks were made in regard to where their most effective strategies were acquired and critiqued the entire process of obtaining their administrative credentials. The table that follows depicts the

emergent themes and frequency of response grouped under this research question.

Table 4.0: Assessment of Higher Education, Initial Support or Preparation and Ongoing Professional Development: Individual Interviews

Areas of Need	Areas of Need
Discipline/ Conflict Resolution (8)	Dealing with difficult situations (3)
Special Education (4)	Resource Guide (3)
Adult management (4)	More time at home (3)
Internship (4)	Leadership Styles (2)
Weapons/Gangs (4)	District Policy (2)
Laws/State Mandates (4)	Personal Ed. Philosophy (2)
Budget/Finance (3)	Assessment of Readiness (2)
Time management (3)	Training received by significant other administrators (2)
On the job training (3)	

Discipline

In regard to their assessment of initial support, preparation, professional development, higher education training, there were almost four times the number of responses that reflected on the inadequacy of their training in regard to discipline and how to handle disciplinary situations than any other response..

Higher education needs to teach assistant principals about Ed code law, policy procedure, and tear apart some board policies to give examples on how the nuts and bolts of discipline work. I don't mean whether you

give a kid 3 detentions or in-school suspension ... I'm talking about the things that govern us where, if we don't know about them, we end up at the school board meeting trying to defend why we didn't ask this question first or interview that kid instead of that kid. I think of another assistant principal's story of opening a yearbook and asking a student whether this was the student that he had mentioned instead of giving the kid the yearbook and saying, pick the student out. When you have a lawyer there and he's saying you incriminated this young man by picking him out for the student, we weren't really taught how to deal with that. We're not lawyers, but that's the reality of what we get asked to do. We needed to have truly picked apart and analyzed and then practiced working in these types of situations so that it becomes a little ingrained ... because it's tough to learn what you have no experience in. Another thought is to get some district forms on suspension and the expulsion process and timelines, review boards, parents' rights, and all that stuff. Case studies would be fun too ... you have a situation where something happens ... what are you going to do about it? People could practice how they might do it so they can get practice in what a solution might be that actually worked ... it might keep you from 'eating it' the first time. We might have benefited if we had just known that some of these things were going to be issues.

Regarding the need for practical training, another assistant principal stated:

I think there should have been more practical training. Ninety-Nine percent of new assistant principals are going to get discipline. They need to teach you about what the Ed code says, when you can suspend a kid and when you

can't ... and probably even more now than when I got into it, they need to teach you special education law and what you can do with special ed kids. When I did my training, it was all in curriculum and all the stuff you don't do when you first become an assistant principal..

Training in self preservation and how to protect yourself and break up physical confrontations was another emergent theme. When asked how they were taught what to do in disciplinary situations, their frequent response was:

Asking tons of questions of people ... I can remember the first time I had a discipline problem. I listened to the kid and said, okay, can you excuse me for a moment? I walked out of my office and went to my colleague's office and said, here's the situation, now what do you think? And I got some advice ... because I didn't have any background, any benchmarks as to what I should do for a certain discipline problem ... so for about the first few times I had a discipline problem, I had to go and seek advice ... like what do you do? Because you want to be consistent and so I compensated for my lack of knowledge by trying to learn what I could from everybody. Even if they taught us how you could find information, that would be a step in the right direction ... such as there's a "Laws Against Minors" book where I could find out what types of things are against the law for students.

The broad scope of discipline makes it very difficult to train in all areas. Yet, it was consistently an area that assistant principals felt required greater attention initially from their district and site as well as from higher education.

Mishandling disciplinary situations was thought to be potentially life threatening in one assistant principal's words. In describing the need for conflict resolution training, she divulged:

I think that needs to happen because I'm a little fearful that some poor person who drops right out of an administration program and arrives as a front line assistant principal and has no clue, could have a very serious thing either happen to a child, or to themselves because they don't know what they're doing. They might escalate a situation because they don't have a clue.

She continued by reflecting on a situation where she was hurt in a disciplinary situation and that,

I'm not sure that anything would have prepared me for the first time. I think I had one of my law classes where they talk to you about what you should do and not do in terms of breaking up a fight and dealing with violence on campus and with kids with weapons and when to take them away and when not to, and all that. I just don't know if you could ever know exactly what to do until you're in that situation. The first time I took away a gun from a student was the first time I ever did that and I did not know how I was going to respond until I saw the gun. I felt safe enough in that situation to ask the student for the gun and take it out of his hand because I didn't think he was going to shoot me or anyone else. He just happened to be stupid enough to be caught with a gun. However, I was involved in a fight that I got hurt in. And I'm not sure I would respond any differently if I was in that same situation again. I don't know how you could help people with that or how people could be taught that. The interactions I'm involved in have me

thinking that I'm some sort of cop and I'm not trained in any way, shape, or form like a cop. It's quite an interesting dilemma.

A police officer is trained eight hours a day for three months to become a law enforcement officer. An assistant principal may never have a class or be taught any skills in this area. As the assistant principal above mentioned, it could prove to be life threatening.

Special Education/Special Interest Groups

Special education training was thought to be the first thing in one assistant principal's mind as far as training they needed to acquire prior to arriving in their situation. She stated:

I think the very first area I wish I had received more training is in special education. Absolutely somewhere in my experience I needed to have more training in special education. I needed to be taught about the laws, due process, and what special needs mean and what they are. And when you have severely handicapped kids on your campus and you put them in a category and go out there with those 9 kids and they're all really different, and their needs are all different, where do you learn how to work with them? We have SED, SDC, RSP ... we have everything on our campus and where does one learn how to help those students? The consultation model ... how do you learn how to make that work? How do you integrate the whole curriculum instructional side of it, and then the legal side of it? Nowhere in my law classes did special education ever get addressed. It has caused some of my biggest nightmares.

Others supported and expanded her request for training to include other special interest groups and categorical programs.

I think an increased emphasis needs to be done in the training programs in the special interest areas within public education ... I'm saying that most assistant principals come to the job with very little concept of the overall picture of special interest groups like special education, which is a huge one, and whatever assistant principals know, they know from picking it up on their own because there's not really a training program for that. I don't think there's much of a training program for GATE, I don't think there's much of a training program that accesses the special interests and concerns of English as a Second Language, and the impact on the overall program of these special interest groups. These are all things that the assistant principal picks up because they learn from the 'college of hard knocks.' That's on-the-job training. So I guess in the short answer, higher ed needs to pay special attention to those kinds of pressure groups within public education. Those are three hot topics right now ... GATE, ESL, and special education. Special education proportionately impacts hugely the way schools operate and with more and more legislation coming down to sharpen and define when you get the kid the more entitlement programs that you get, very little is done to explain to the prospective administrator about Chapter 1, Chapter 2, Chapter 97, Chapter 13, Chapter 11 ...

Special education training, in some respect, overlaps with the need for training on discipline. Almost every administrator who has had the responsibility of special education has had some potentially serious incident regarding a child with special needs.

One assistant principal commended a program that he took that was called 'PART (Physical Assault Response Training) Training.' He said:

I know when I took physical assault response training, that it was very important. It's something you should do, especially as a special education person, because you can have a kid hanging on to your hair and you need to know if you push the hand into your hair, if you pull the hand away from your hair, they'll take a chunk of your hair ... and that you need to push the hand down towards your scalp so that you do not lose a chunk of your hair. The thing that made this training so phenomenal for me was just the whole understanding that if you're analyzing and not freaking out, you might be able to do better thinking because when you're freaking out, you're obviously not going to do your best thinking, and when you're analyzing, you're still in a much more rational mode and able to access the best components of your brain. In other words, instead of fight or flight, you're analyzing and determining things such as, is the person that is grabbing on to you ... is their thumb down, is there thumb over, how do you break them off of you? It definitely teaches you to look at the responses of these kids with special needs in a new light.

Adult Management

Learning to work with adults is another area that many felt a lack of training or preparation.

I think the people who come out of the classroom, have generally no experience in managing other adults. So, it's another new experience to emotionally deal with the fact that you're going to have to be in somewhat of an

advisory or supervisory counseling mode with other adults. You're giving professional advice to parents and teachers, and classified personnel. I guarantee you, that even though you have learned to work around and with secretaries as a classroom teacher, it's a whole different issue when all of a sudden, artificially you are now placed in the role of their supervisor. That's a dynamic that becomes a neat trick and one you must learn to do well to be successful.

Insincerity on the part of faculty was an unexpected characteristic encountered by assistant principals.

I call it the 'kissy-face' hypocrisy that goes on. You can call it politically correct or you can call it whatever you want to call it, but I do not like the insincere manifestations of friendship when actually there is no friendship and there is no intent to have a positive solution, yet people go through the theatrics. And I think that's simply called 'two-faced'... the biggest discovery for me I think is learning how to work with adults and discover there's a whole bunch more of what I just described than I ever had any concept of. You meet a lot of folks that ain't sincere! If you had an opportunity to practice working in some of these situations or a heightened awareness that these situations existed, it might make it much easier to take.

Internships

Having the chance to intern with a successful assistant principal was thought to have potential benefits for individuals seeking the position.

I think there should be more in the way of interning

or having people do some actual on-site stuff. I don't know if the colleges need to somehow work with the school districts so that teachers could be released for a period of time so they could actually work in the discipline office, and work in the attendance office, and work in the scheduling office, and with counselors so they could get a taste of what everything is ... because again, for me, almost everything I learned was once I started doing it. Just stumbling around and finding out what people were doing and how they did it ... and there's still a ton of stuff I don't know. That's the way I had to learn and I think a lot of assistant principals had to do it the same way.

Many others expressed this need which would have allowed them to hit the ground running instead of fumbling about for a good deal of their first year.

Laws

In assessing their training, many assistant principals felt that they needed:

More about school law as it pertains to student rights. I realize that may or may not have been helpful because the laws have changed so much in the last few years and until you really need it, the law doesn't really mean anything. If you didn't really need that marijuana rule, you might not understand it, but it would have been real nice to have had that exposure so you know the law is there. Because the expectation of the assistant principals to be very knowledgeable about due process, student rights, parent rights and more and more we are being drawn into custody battles ... you know, who can pick a kid up, etc. there's a lot of things they don't cover

extensively that would have been helpful, but again as we said, I don't know if having it presented then would have been that helpful unless there had been more case studies.

There were discussions about how often they need to refer to the law in regard to placement, disciplinary issues, religious holidays, curricular challenges and/or special education law. Having no experience with the education code reduced their effectiveness and potency.

Weapon Training

While many specifically mentioned that they had never received any training in weapons, it did emerge consistently as an area that had high risks involved. One assistant principal made a suggestion that:

At our school we don't see much violence and/or guns ... I mean we've had our guns and we've had our knives and all, but we haven't had any real violent things happen. I would imagine that that is something they should do when a person is getting a teaching credential, because when you come on a school campus as a teacher, you see the violence as much as anybody... but as an administrator, the teacher kind of turns to you and wants you to fix it, so maybe administrators need some training in that area. However, I would include it in any regular courses that teachers are training in. I think it's all related to training that's needed in the area of discipline and the kinds of things that go with it like weapons or gangs or that kind of thing. What scares me and has always scared me the most as an administrator, is the people that come in from off campus. Fortunately, we have a task force officer and when he's here he can

handle that stuff pretty well ... but the kids that are your students might hesitate to do anything to you because they know you and you know them, but outside people ... who are they? They can do something and then leave and never be seen again. So they're the ones that always worry me the most. How you handle them ... that's a situational thing ... to just let people know that outside dangers exist and how you deal with it and give people ideas on how to deal with it might be beneficial.

Another administrator said that he was pleased that he had gone through the class that the California School District offered on how to disarm 9 millimeter weapons but that it wasn't the training that he thought was pivotal until he actually had to remove two loaded weapons on his campus this year.

Budgets and State Mandates

While assistant principals do not typically serve in the capacity of chief budget, chief financial individual, they do often get delegated tasks of which they had no prior knowledge or understanding.

I had to do the school minutes for the state, you know, how many minutes we are in school ... they gave me the project without any training or any background, and, of course, I lost 5,000 minutes in the school year, and got a call from the district office. I was high about 10,000 minutes at first, and then they disappeared. We need to speak a common language and we don't get that kind of training prior to getting in. Now the district has worked up some of the pieces that need to keep working on bringing us up to speed. Higher ed could be responsible for budget and budgeting, but school districts also need to

bring their administrators up to snuff on their budget formulas and situations like what counts as instructional time and what doesn't count as instructional time.

Most speak of getting their training on the job in regard to budgeting.

Even though I had one class on budgeting in my credential program when I was working on my credential, I think the experience I got through being in charge of the ROP program had given me a better feel of what a budget is all about, because I was handling a 1.5 million dollar budget that I was responsible for ... I did all the hiring of staff and the purchasing of everything, and actually having gotten down and dirty in the real parts of the budget compared to what they tell you here, where I was never even shown a budget ... we never got into the PSU (personnel staffing units) end of the budget and how much money was being set aside. I didn't know how much was set aside for each team, I don't know what their publications budget was, and all that. However, at our sites, the principals handle those situations.

Management of Time

When asked to assess his training, one high school assistant principal focused his entire answer on issues regarding the need for time management and awareness of time utilization.

I think it's really critical that people going into administration can get a glimpse of the fact that they will not have the ability to focus on something for an extended period of time. And to know that that's okay and that's just kind of the way it is and to practice challenging themselves to do different things ... I'm

trying to think of how to teach that ... maybe if another significant other consistently changes topics on you in the middle of conversations ... or anything to get you prepared for the fact that all topics that need to be processed and responded to could be absolutely unrelated and you will need to deal with all within a 90 second time period.

I went to one of the leadership trainings or workshops and one of the people who was in administration kept a journal of just one day and she put it up on the overhead and that, I think, once I got into the job, was the most powerful reference to what I had. At the time, however, the only problem was I didn't have any experience with which to relate to it when it was shown to me so I couldn't laugh about it, make connections and grow to understand that's the way the job was.

The other thing that I would add is that I do not control my calendar like I could and if I did, I could make changes such as... Tomorrow I am supposed to be at an advisory workshop-so my whole day is blocked out-and as a result, whatever's spinning within this sphere of Sierra, life will go on, things will get handled, it'll take place. So, if I could do the same for my classroom observations ... instead of putting them on hold when parents come in or when phone calls are made or whatever, my secretary can diffuse it the same way as if I wasn't here. I get caught not putting those important things on my calendar so my calendar gets filled with the things that have to be done and what I really wish to do and what's important about my job gets put in between those things. And I know that if I had on

my calendar the things that are important for running the plant and the things that I want ... I want pre-conferences with my teachers by this time, and I want observations by this time ... if I had that in place, I am convinced that my secretary could help me probably achieve at least 60% of it, which would be darn near 95% better than what I'm doing right now. Does that make sense? Because when you're in a meeting, no one interrupts ... I mean the interruptions are minimal ... and somebody can say, I'm sorry, she's doing this ... and you get it done! But we don't plot our jobs into the time and so, therefore, we become victims of time.

Assessment of Training: Findings from Focus Group Interviews

Table 4.1: Assessment of Training: Focus Group Interviews: Theme (Frequency)

Theme (Frequency)	Theme (Frequency)
Weapons/Gun Training (5)	Not enough training (1)
Internship Needed (3)	Higher education training was frustrating (1)

Many of the ideas expressed in the focus group interviews in regard to assessment of higher level education elaborated upon the concept of learning while they were on the job. They assessed their formal training as having little or no value to what they actually did once they started doing the job. When asked what kind of training might have better helped to prepare them, one assistant principal made a suggestion.

Colleges need to somehow work with the school districts so teachers could be released for a period of time where they could actually work in the discipline office, work

in the attendance office, work in the scheduling office, and with the counselors so they could get a taste of what everything is. Because, again for me, almost everything I learned was once I started doing it ... and it was just stumbling around and finding out what people were doing and how they do it .

Another assistant principal agreed and elaborated on this concept.

Somebody said something interesting to me the other day ... that as educators you could probably do a sociological study on the fact that they are extremely caring people. One of the frustrations about this role is that all of a sudden, one day, we are given this title, assistant principal, and somehow are immediately expected to be hard-nosed and 'hold the line' type people. We now have to deal with the changes that title may bring and we weren't prepared for it, weren't trained for it, and all of a sudden, we're responsible for it.

While training in regard to weapons, gangs, and guns was mentioned in the individual interview, it was the most frequent comment made in terms of training that assistant principals collectively felt was needed. Every assistant principal in the focus group interview had had an experience with removing some type of gun on their school campus. One individual who had two loaded guns this year, said that when he took the gun off the girl he put it in a corner, called the sheriff and said; "Come and get it." The sheriff asked him if he would like to unload it and he said, "not on your life, get your butt up here!"

Another assistant principal felt that training needed to be done in how to be proactive regarding fights, etc. He commented

on the fact that people needed to dialogue and have practical experience with case studies in regard to prevention of violence.

For instance, if a fight happened between a Hispanic and white student Friday after school and thus, you could not get to them on Friday, it would be your responsibility to try and call those students at home over the weekend and not just allow the situation to go on. And in the case I'm thinking of, due to not doing that, having a major fight with lots of blood that is far more serious than knowing how to disarm somebody or dealing with guns. People need training in practical judgment in regard to violence prevention. Had I known then what I know now, a fairly serious situation might have been avoided.

Thus, the frustrations mentioned in the focus group interviews seem to stem from a lack of training in regard to pivotal areas of responsibility and risk for assistant principals.

Assessment of Training: Findings from Surveys

Table 4.2: Assessment of Training: Survey Responses
Description of Training-Value of Training

Assessment of Training (Average Response 1=Low Value; 5=High Value)	District Staff Development/ Inservices/ Workshops
Credential Program (2.6)	Clinical Teaching (4)
Miscellaneous Training/Preparation: Doctoral Program (5)	Clinical Supervision (5)
Counseling Background (4)	Cognitive Coaching (5)
On the Job Training (5)	Situational LDSP (4, 4+, 3+)

Student Assistance Training (5)	Social Styles ; Producing results with others (4, 4+, 3+)
ASCD Trainings (5)	Interview Techniques (4, 4+) (Behavioral Interviews)
Conferences (4)	Workshops Out of District Schools Attuned (3)
CSLA (4)	World of Difference (3)
Curriculum Instruction Academy (5)	Discipline and the Law Law Advisory Wksp (4,5)
Professional Memberships (5)	Master Schedule Building Workshop (5)
ASCA Conferences (3)	Discipline with Dignity (3)

The value of additional training is clearly demonstrated by the ratings of inservices, workshops, conferences and education toward an advanced degree. Of immediate concern, however, is the appearance of the lowest rating for their credential programs. The next table offers suggestions for areas of needed coursework and might be beneficial to the restructuring of current educational administration programs.

Table 4.3: Assessment of Training: Survey- Areas of Perceived Need for Training/Preparation

Areas of Needed Training/Inservice/Workshop	District Office Chain of Command
Political Awareness	Problem Solving
Budgets: Do's and Don'ts	Facilitator Training
Due Process & Student Rights	Building Interpersonal Skills
Dealing with Difficult Parents	Conflict Resolution
Team Building Skills	Board Policies/Procedures
Dealing with Unmotivated Teachers	Law (Law Review Seminars)

Time Management	Practical Discipline
-----------------	----------------------

The surveys indicate the contrast between what training practicing assistant principals need and the current educational administrative training required by the state.

Assessment of Training: Findings from *Logs*

While the logs did not specifically address research questions 4 and 5, they did add to the aforementioned areas of need from the individual and focus group interviews. These include health related trainings, how to arrange and organize special events, how to write and implement grants, how to acquire techniques to stay professionally current, how to protect the rights of students, how to address the plethora of facility issues, how to build a master schedule, and lastly, how to implement curricular change.

Research Question #5: If practicing assistant principals could make any changes in regard to their position, is there anything about their position that they would change?

Changes: Findings from *Individual Interviews*

As the literature review for this dissertation discussed, the role of the assistant principal has never been considered as important to research as the highly profiled roles of the principals and superintendents. However, in the past year a host of committees, task forces, and organizations have begun to focus on the assistant principal. The Association for California School Administrators is going to begin in 1995 to have a statewide co-administrator committee that meets for two years. This committee is a response to concerns expressed by assistant

principals, deans, and disciplinarians. As they are on the front line, they have a strong desire to network, learn about effective programs and processes, and have a voice at the state level. The chairperson of the task force that determined the need for this committee, stated:

The roles for co-administrators and the demands on them have changed dramatically in recent years. Co-administrators need a professional resource to address their concerns, create opportunities for mentorship, encourage professional growth, and provide stability in this era of educational complexity. (Ed. Cal., May 29, 1995.)

The assistant principals in this research project wholeheartedly support the philosophy that assistant principals need more attention, more training, and to have their role redefined due to a greater understanding of what it is that they do. The emergent themes and the frequency of responses are demonstrated in the chart that follows.

**Table 5.0: Changes: Individual Interviews
Responses (Frequency)**

Changes (Frequency)	Changes (Frequency)
Reduce Supervision (8)	Educate teachers regarding role and give mandatory inservice for general professional development (4)
Redefine Role/Reorganize tasks/Dean of Discipline (7)	Offer Inservices for Assistant Principals (4)
Allow for Flexibility in Hours (6)	Obtain Guidelines from District Office (2)
Improve use of Technology(3)	Reduce Interruptions (1)

Reduce Supervision

As many demonstrated by Research Question #1, many assistant principals perceived their role to be disciplinarian, change agent and problem solver. As demonstrated by the logs, discipline and supervision seem to absorb the bulk of their time. Thus, many practicing assistant principals perceive a need for restructuring their role to free them from some of the supervisory responsibilities on their secondary school campuses. When asked what might help them to do their job better and more in line with the vision of how they should be able to do their job, one assistant principal rapidly responded,

I can answer that very fast. I don't mind doing discipline. I don't mind handling the issues in cases that come up because our teachers are really good ... they handle much of their own discipline in the classroom and the counselors are good at handling many of these things. I don't mind handling the major issues of discipline. I do mind the constant supervision ... if I could just have someone take care of supervision on this campus at lunch, break, after school and before school ... someone else to do it ... I would, all of a sudden, have this weight lifted off my shoulders where I'm not consistently preoccupied with that aspect of my role. If I'm sitting here before school talking with a parent in a conference and there's no one out on the small quad and I know there's 2,000 kids running around, that continually weighs on your decision making ability... so that's what I'd like to have right now for me, personally, someone to help with supervision.

Role Redefinition

In line with the concept of just having a human being that could be much like a school task force officer to watch the crowd, or keep an eye on where the students are gathering, part of the continual request of practicing assistant principals is that of redefining their role and embracing the possibility of adding another role called Dean of Discipline. One assistant principal recommended restructuring the role.

Somehow if we could reorganize how discipline happens on the campus ... I mean right now it's consuming a job and a half plus others as needed. We could do the things that we do best, which is to work as educators.

Discipline requires that immediate function and seems to absorb all creativity and energy. We've talked about a Dean of Discipline as opposed to an assistant principal. Discipline is a very important piece of what happens to a school, but it isn't really the best use of the talents of almost any of the assistant principals that I know ... so that's a piece that would need to get redesigned somehow.

Another assistant principal corroborated by saying,

What I would like to see in this district, they're still on the books ... there's still a job called 'Dean.' I think what we would do is to re-institute the job of a dean who is a disciplinarian ... that would be your entry-level job in this district and basically throughout the district ... if all the high schools and middle schools hired deans, in essence, you could hire more of those people because you'd be saving money since they don't get paid as much as assistant principals and that would be your entry-level job, and then when you're ready to move up to another

job you'd go to assistant principal.

The reorganization of tasks was viewed as the key to role redefinition by another assistant principal. She felt that if assistant principals were allowed to specialize and focus on one or two areas instead of being responsible for the entire gamut of everything that happens on a school campus, she might be able to achieve more of the goals she had in mind in the course of her day.

I guess what I'm saying here is by allowing you to specialize, it would eliminate some of the insanity and the hecticness of having to conduct a conversation while four people come to the door who want to tell you anything from there's ants on my windowsill, to my air conditioning is not working, to there's a girl who has cut her wrist in the office, to I have Mrs. Jones on the telephone right now and there's a crisis she needs to talk to you about. So I guess what I'm saying is that in some ways if you could filter out, channel out, direct and redirect tasks to allow an assistant principal to specialize or concentrate on a few tasks at a time, their skill could grow more quickly and they could achieve more in those areas.

She continues this line of thought in her interview by discussing the concept of reorganizing tasks from the bottom up and allowing for hiring of individuals for sites based on "what they like to do and what they're good at." In redefining the role of the assistant principal each site then would be able to hire based on an individual's strengths.

For example, we have two secretaries who are out there and neither one of them want to answer the telephone.

One of them likes to work on booklets and graphics and is very concerned about having every letter and 't' crossed to the exclusion of perhaps getting the big picture in terms of volume of work. We have one out there who is concerned about how people are feeling and how they're doing and making sure our life is comfortable, and maybe not quite as concerned that everything is researched to the ultimate of leaving no stone unturned, but is willing to get the job done just because we have most of the stones turned. If you are starting a new school, you would be allowed to hire people based on the aptitude they were interested in and saying you are being hired to answer the phones, you are only going to answer the phones, and that kind of thing.

Assistant principals who were hired in this fashion would have tasks delegated to them that were under the umbrella of what they were hired to do. This consolidation of their efforts might enable a greater degree of success at task completion.

Flexibility in Hours

Assistant principals consistently expounded upon the need for flexibility in their work hours.

I think there should be not only flexibility in the school day, but in our jobs. There are times when I need to be here until nine or ten at night, but that doesn't necessarily require that the next morning I'm here at 6:30 a.m. ... because it doesn't make me a very effective professional. I need to arrive at 8:00 a.m. and start the day fresh. We need to just shift our thinking of what the role of an assistant principal is. It is difficult ... right now there are four of us here and with the principal, there's five and the unwritten rule

should be two nights in a row and we don't expect to see you until 10:00 a.m. and we'll cover the position so that you can do whatever you need to do ... but that's not the mindset right now ... it's work, work, work or get sick until you drop.

A clarifying question asked after his response was: "When you're a principal, will you try to make that an unwritten code?" His response was:

I think maybe it should be part of the written code. I think we should go as far to figure out how to loosen our schedules and one day a week come in late, but I don't think there's anyone in this building, you know, sixty hours would be the minimum they put in any week so far and mostly, it's up from there. So a few hours are not going to make or break the organization.

His comments demonstrate a request for individuals to understand there is a human being doing the job of the assistant principal. He and other assistant principals want stakeholders to know that human beings fatigue and may not be doing their best thinking at times when they are required to do more than they are humanly capable of doing. Many discussed this need for flexibility in hours to allow for them to do their best work.

Improved Use of Technology

The assistant principals who are at new sites did not express technology as a concern due to the fact that sites built within the last five years have been fitted with every type of advanced technology that enables them to do their job better. However, assistant principals at the older sites made a variety of comments concerning technology.

Our technology is very archaic. I should be on InterNet. I should be communicating or having the opportunity to communicate with other administrators and teachers in the district ... to work more closely with researchers at universities and to participate in a lot more collaborative practice.

Educating Teachers in Regard to A Redefinition of the Role of Assistant Principal

Just as researchers have not chosen to research the role of the assistant principal, many assistant principals appear to believe that the teaching staff at their sites take their role for granted. Their teachers seem to be distressed if administrators are not in their office at every waking minute to be able to respond to any issue that they might need them. However, they are also distressed if assistant principals are not out on campus and distressed if they aren't in their classrooms doing observations. It is a frustration expressed by the bulk of assistant principals researched. The education of teachers to assist in improving the role of the assistant principals seems to fall under two categories. The first being that of educating them in regard to the role of the assistant principal and what their job really involves, and the second in regard to mandatory professional development for teachers so that they will be able to do their job better and thus free up the time utilization of the assistant principals who are required to bail them out.

Addressing the first desired change, that of enabling teachers to be more understanding of the role of the assistant principal, one assistant principal responded that he would prefer to get blasted for spending three hours in his office today instead of being in classrooms versus getting blasted for not punishing a kid hard enough with a referral. He believes that a restructuring of the role and educating teachers to the fact that managers are

not just there to solve problems and react to every situation they bring to them, but they are also on school campuses to be able to initiate and be proactive in regard to school change. A crossover to the concept of educating teachers in regard to the role and mandatory staff development relates to this quote.

There would be a professional philosophy. It would become public information and be posted in as many places as it could be. It would say that the number one job of an administrator is to aid education by directly working with teachers and students in regard to the classroom. And if that were the undying statement, that this is what our business is, a parent could be outraged to call and find that I was in my office rather than outraged to know I wasn't available to see them in 10 minutes. The whole permeating philosophy and expectation would be that you would be in classrooms, talking to teachers, working with kids, and that's what you'll do.

He elaborated by discussing the fact that teachers may not want to support this philosophy and become their own disciplinarians or assume the role of pseudo plant manager as this would distract from what they believe their job to be, which is teaching kids.

Another assistant principal expands that concept even further.

I think if we help teachers understand their changing role in education and we are able to support teachers in a wide variety of ways with professional development and time so they could be more successful in the classroom,

that would alleviate, I think, many of the nitty-gritty discipline things. When I was in discipline I spent 80% of my time dealing with it. You know, chewing gum in class, not bringing a pencil, those kinds of things. The teachers are so frustrated that they want the student out of their class ... and you have to respect that ... that's their need at the time. So then, if those kinds of things were dealt with by the teacher, we wouldn't be spending all of our time putting out fires. Thus, my big picture issue would be staff development for everyone.

I think there need to be more in-services ... there are some teachers that just need to go back and brush up on their skills and it would make them feel better about who they are as teachers if this could be required of them, I think that's a way of maintaining their own professional integrity. There are so many of them who have never stepped back into an academic setting themselves other than the ones they are creating in their classroom. Everyone should be held accountable throughout their career, not just their first two years.

In-Services for Assistant Principals

Professional development time for assistant principals was thought to be vital. Dialogue in regard to the benefits of job-alikes included such comments as, "When we had job-alikes it was beneficial because I received a lot of my inspiration, joy, and energy from my colleagues."

When we talk we find out it's a lot of what people do ... I think meetings that we sometimes have in the district, like our job-alikes ... you find that everyone else is going through the same thing you are and you realize that you're not alone out there in your own little lifeboat.

When I find out that others are having some of the same problems, I realize that just something is general and not unique to us.

Inservices, conferences, job-a-likes and other professional development "invigorates and challenges thinking." They are a must to prevent burnout and rejuvenate skills and focus.

I get really inspired when I hear people speak on educational matters and I go to seminars. I'm one of those corny people when I go to a seminar I come back all fired up. I think it's good. I know I have to temper that because I know that most people get turned off thinking that oh, he must have been to a seminar, so I just internalize most of this stuff and try to make it work for me ... and get that warm fuzzy feeling inside when I'm doing the right things for kids here and working well with staff members and feeling this is a really good quality educational institution moving in the right direction.

Professional development must be legitimized by having practitioners who understand the role and its subtle nuances develop and lead the inservices.

Look at staff development in terms of the assistant principal. I don't think I have ever been to one that has been directly for an assistant principal. We had job-alikes but that was not an in-service directly related to me and my world. But I think that part of that is because no one really knows what our world involves so they're not willing to commit to training us. People really don't know.

Yet the value of inservices is seen as indisputable. An assistant principal discussed a conference that he attended and the impact that it had on him.

Two years ago I got to go to a conference on time management. It was how to get organized because my desk is always a mess ... so I went and the most interesting thing I got out of it was they found out that if during your day at work if you could have like an hour where you could spend working where your phone calls were held, no phone calls, no interruptions, nobody in your door, the amount of work that you could get done is incredible. Then the presenter mentioned that they had taken a company and had implemented this one pure hour of work time and she said that it took about two to three weeks before the employees could really work during that time ... and she asked, 'what do you think happened when we started this one hour work time?' ... and I was the only one who raised my hand and said, 'they couldn't concentrate.' And she said that was right ... they couldn't concentrate because they were used to all the interruptions, that they were basically used to working 3, 5, and 10 minutes at a time and then there's something else to do. I literally, at my desk, find myself doing that. I can work for 3 or 4 or 5 minutes and then I look for something else to do. Then I come back to what I was doing. It was interesting to be allowed the time to go to this in-service and work to regroup. It has radically impacted the way I do business.

Guidelines from the District Office

Respect, information, clarity in regard to their role, guidance and training are but a few requests of the district office by practicing secondary school assistant principals.

I guess I have found myself in situations where I had wished there were better guidelines from the district office so that even though things were going to be implemented at the site, there would be some standards that they wanted us to work from so there would be some consistency throughout the district at each school. I have several times felt that the district needs to have a general guideline to operate from so that we all have a standard to work towards.

Controlling Interruptions

The final area in regard to needed changes is mentioned by the same assistant principal who discussed the benefit of the conference on time management. His philosophy is that,

I think every one of us is having to assume more and more responsibilities to the point where we aren't out there circulating as much as we should be with kids and teachers. We have to spend more hours here after school and the number of interruptions I get each day are incredible. A couple of years ago I actually wrote down each time I was interrupted and it came out to an average of an interruption every 3 minutes. Every 3 minutes I either got a phone call, someone walked into my office, I had to run to a fight...it could be anything and when you think about it, when your day is broken down into 3 minute increments, how do you get anything done? I can tell you honestly that I sit here at 5:00 p.m. and at this time I can get the work done that would probably take me about 3 hours during the school day. I wish we had the time to do the work, to use the skills learned at time management conferences, and to hire additional

people to take up the load so that we could be more efficient in what we do.

The ever-expanding role of the practicing assistant principal may ultimately need to be redefined to enable the individual striving to achieve the role to have some measure of success. The experienced participants in this research offered many suggestions that might, however, have an immediate effect. These included to reduce their supervisory time, allow them flexibility in their hours, give them more direction and inservice opportunity and empower and educate others to assist in accomplishing the challenges of the role.

Changes: Findings from Focus Group Interviews

**Table 5.1: Changes: Focus Group Interviews
Themes (Frequency) Descriptions**

Improvement programs for employees (6) Improve hiring practices; increase inservices; change evaluation practices; educate department chairs	Reduce Accessibility (1) Allow the role expectation to be changed to expect that the assistant principal should be in classrooms and, thus, inaccessible
Shift Image (2) Adjust others expectations of you	Articulate with other Assistant Principals (1)
Increased involvement at District Office Level (1)	Increase teamwork (1)
Assess the Silent Majority (1)	Change Special Education (1)

Changes described in the focus group interviews expanded the concept of providing improvement programs for employees. It was contended that if there were improvement programs for

employees, assistant principals would not have to spend the bulk of every day cleaning up others' mistakes. If there were improved hiring practices, better in-services, clearer and more impactful evaluation practices, the belief was that the role of the assistant principal could actually move towards that of providing a greater level of support for the learning process.

I'm not speaking about every situation, but there are times in my position, working with the counselors, that they are much more skilled and trained in certain areas than I am, but because I am the assistant principal they think I need to do something ... but I don't need to do something. I have great faith in the people I work with to make the right decisions. Trying to teach them that it's not shirking my job to allow them to make decisions, so that they can feel better about the decisions and choices they make, is difficult. It's just a different mindset that we haven't used in our profession very often.

Another empowerment issue highlighted in the focus group relates to the need for shifting the preconceived image that others have of the role of the assistant principal. The focus group interview demonstrated the assistant principals' desire to have the image of their role and others' expectations change. They wanted increased involvement at the district office level so as to have their role be seen in more of a professional light. In addition, this adjustment of the expectations also includes adjusting their own expectations of themselves.

I think a change that is needed is accepting the fact that it does not matter how many hours you work ... there are certain responsibilities that are yours and it's not appropriate to use the excuse that I've put

in 70 hours last week. What needs to change is your own expected performance of yourself, not to allow yourself to voice the excuse about why it didn't get done.

Another change that was heartily endorsed by the assistant principals in the focus group interviews was to become more cognizant, supportive and interactive with the silent majority out there who,

Won't come to the forefront and let us know what a good job you are doing. But you and me could keep a scorecard of how many times parents, when they have an opportunity and see you in a less formal setting, go out of their way to make positive statements about the school and they like what they see is happening. They love coming on campus and they feel you have a wonderful staff. Those numbers of comments are equal to or even a few more than the negative ones because the negative ones are typically going to let you know how they feel.

Thus, a change would be how to figure out ways to assess this silent majority, and not always be so reactive to the people who are the loudest and who you hear from on a regular basis.

Miscellaneous Changes

Other miscellaneous changes that the assistant principals would make would be to increase articulation among assistant principals, to share successes and strategies, and to allow for increased teamwork. One assistant principal suggested that the site level principal. "build a sense of a team within the group of administrators and immediately support the assistant principals to build collegiality which can become a support mechanism for the whole school."

One final suggested change would be in regard to special education. This change would be to have people on site who are working in special education who have actually been trained in special education, understand special education law, and who have a knowledge of the specific needs of the diverse special education student population currently abiding on most public school campuses.

Changes: Findings from Surveys

Responses to the survey question, "If you had the power to do anything to help improve the position of the assistant principal, what would you do?" included:

- *Advertise to the world that the job is to improve instruction and that 85% of an AP's time should be in the classroom.
- *Be allowed more time in the classroom.
- *Reduce school size/class size.
- *Reduce or realign the work day.

Requests of AP's also included the desire to:

- *Limit district office involvement so as to be able to give better service to the sites.
- *Increase learning opportunities within the school for AP's.
- *Schedule "off" days to compensate for over hours of supervision.
- *Compartmentalize:
 - *AP of Budgets
 - *AP of Curriculum
 - *AP of Student Assistance/Intervention - Home School Assistance.
- *Reduce the responsibilities required of the assistant principal so people could do an excellent job in all they do as opposed to an average job.

Changes: Findings from Logs

With the average working day amounting to over 12 hours and the number of daily interactions averaging 30, the logs would support the following suggestions:

- *Increased flexibility in hours

- *A re-definition of tasks
- *The hiring of a dean of discipline
- *A reduction in the hours spent supervising and
- *The need for teachers to assume responsibility for more of their own discipline and be in-serviced in a variety of arenas.

Research question #6: What examples of leadership by assistant principals are noteworthy?

Leadership: Findings from *Individual Interviews*

Individual interviews demonstrated that assistant principals believe their role to be that of exerting leadership in the areas of implementing change in the school culture, school climate, strategic planning, and staff development. Research question #6 has been analyzed using an eclectic standard for leadership, "Leadership is a dialectical, influence relationship among individuals who intend real change reflecting mutual purposes resulting in an emancipated community." This standard is the synthesis of the leadership definitions portrayed in the review of the literature in Chapter three.

Dialectical, Influence Relationships

The first component of leadership, a dialectical influence relationship among individuals is exemplified by the continual comments by assistant principals that discuss "building relationships with people", "talking one on one with teachers" and such examples as,

I'm very strongly entrenched in the area of connectiveness. When I was a teacher, I tried to connect with students and as an administrator I'm trying to connect with students and teachers and once

you have a personal connection, I think it opens people up to hearing what you have to say, not necessarily agreeing, but at least hearing and that's the opportunity I wanted ... was to have people listen to what was perceived as some needed areas on this campus.

All of the assistant principals interviewed continually discussed the immense amount of time spent interacting with others. The concept of building relationships to assist the discipline process was mentioned repeatedly. In addition, assistant principals continually intend real change reflecting mutual purposes. When asked if he saw himself doing leadership, one assistant principal responded:

I would say probably ... we had a situation last year where the administrative team had an idea of where we needed to go and what we needed to target for staff development ... and being the new person on the administrative team, I was doing a lot of listening about what they thought we should do and I think I was very much on line with their perception of what needed to happen in the school. We headed out in that direction and immediately found our teachers as a group had a completely different idea as to what should be going on as far as staff development and areas of emphasis that year ... and clearly when we met again as an administrative team, there was some anger among team members that the teachers had brought this up, and they were going to mess up the plans, and I think I was able to exert some of my influence to open our team up ... that really the power of what was happening was whether we agreed with what the teachers wanted exactly or not, that the fact that the teachers had brought it collectively to us should be

honored, and that we could build eventually on that power that they had built their own consensus. So we took two huge steps back from where we might have gone as a school and worked on this issue for about four or five months and in that, I think I was able to show our administrative team how we could develop a process for handling what the teachers wanted and at the same time a process we could use later on for the issues that were also percolated on the campus. And I think it was a test of us as an administrative team ... whether we were going to listen or whether we would just pound ahead and it was the teachers testing us to see whether they were going to be recognized and heard and I believe we got a lot of credibility out of that ... and because of that this year we're able to do many more things and not always be called to question.

Policy Development

A situation involving another assistant principal who intended to build a campus that was safer due to the development of a dress code depicts the impact of leadership in the area of policy development.

Ours had to do with cultural diversity and conflict. The school is going through rapid demographic changes and I came from a school that went through the same process and the same patterns were re-occurring and I think part of the reason I was assigned to this school was to help having had that experience. The teachers saw the issues of climate on campus, socially responsible behavior ... students cussing, wearing inappropriate shirts, you know, the bottom line of where we thought the behavioral expectations should be was

slipping away, so they wanted to target that as the most immediate need ... they saw it real black and white ... that we'd set up these rules and it would get done and that's it ... we ended up helping them see that it's a matter of education ... having students understand why we were doing it ... what was purposeful and what we were doing and moved in that direction. I think I was instrumental in helping our administration take the risk of codifying language and clothing against the advice of the district's attorneys. And it's worked out very well ... we've had no lawsuits ... teachers believe that we listened to them and we now have a very different process for communication and facilitating decisions. So lots of things were accomplished out of what looked like a real area of conflict at the beginning.

Intending Real Change Reflecting Mutual Purposes

Assistant principals continually strive to intend change reflecting mutual purposes in the area of development of their teaching staff. The comments about teacher interactions and the ability to change their behavior so as to impact the students in their classroom, consistently involved the concept of the time that it took to develop a relationship and have any change happen. One individual discusses the process involved in working with a teacher and the difficulty, yet joy, of enacting change. The situation described a recurring problem for assistant principals. It falls on the heads of practicing assistant principals to solve the dilemma of and hold the line with groups of parents wanting their children out of the classes of teachers whom they believe to be marginal.

There's a teacher on my staff that's an exchange teacher that in the beginning of the year was having some problems with acceptance on the part of the students and

staff. This is a very specific culture at my site and when you have somebody who is new to the culture and takes the place of a very popular teacher, there are questions and lack of confidence. A person has to prove himself so to speak. For me, the process of selling that person to the community, to the students, and at the same time helping that person grow in the areas that they needed to grow and to involve not only the people in that class, but also colleagues, so it wasn't all from my standpoint, was a challenge. I did some personal observations in the classroom and worked on the classroom management. Curricularly, I took another teacher's class who was working on the same team for a couple of days and asked that teacher to go in to assist and critique ... one day she taught the class, and one day she just watched. Then we all met as a group to get a consensus of what needed to be done to make the classroom environment better, both academically and effectively. It was a combination of supervision on my part, of collegial support or peer coaching on the part of the other experienced teacher, and on the willingness of the teacher to recognize without emotionalizing that there were some areas that needed to be shored up. Those included not only classroom management, but assessment in grading and presentation of the curriculum ... that was in line with what the community is used to. So, by assuring the parent community that we would be working with this situation over time and elongating the timeframe to 3 weeks to see if they saw improvement, because they did see improvement, we held the line and did not have to honor their requests to take their students out of the class.

Another assistant principal demonstrated leadership activity by impacting change on an entire department. Her role, at that

time, was curriculum and instruction. (She feels that now that she is a disciplinarian those two years that she did that were a luxury.) When asked how she felt about seeing the results of her leadership, she stated,

I'm not sure I would use the word 'leadership' ... I was given a lot of freedom to take a look at where there might be problems and have the time to go try to solve them. I did some work in the science department looking at the whole issue of whether every bio class ... whether the teacher should teach whatever they think bio is, and next door have them teach biology and not even the same topics being covered ... that was one of the areas I worked on. I worked with the math department and the foreign language department because so many of our 9th graders were not being successful and tearing apart the data looking at why that was and we made some changes in pre-algebra so they didn't cover as much that they thought they had to cover because they thought they had to do this so they could be successful in algebra ... we made some changes and found out that more kids were being successful in pre-algebra and algebra. And working with the foreign language department with the same issues in Spanish 1. We had 96 students drop out of Spanish 2 to go into Spanish 1. That's 3 sections of kids. And no one ever asked those questions ... and I think no one asked those questions because no one had the time to go in and look at it. So those are the kinds of things I got to work with.

Her quote illustrates the common thought that unites assistant principals on the topic of enacting change and that is that no one seems to have time to ask the right questions such as, "Why are 42% of the freshmen class receiving one 'F' or more?"

Many assistant principals, however, continue to impact change despite the odds.

Special Programs/Emancipated Communities

Implementation of a program that assisted disenfranchised students on a school campus is another example of practicing leadership. A small group of students who had traditionally disrupted a plethora of other classes reducing student learning was positively impacted by one assistant principal who assisted in developing an alternative program. In her estimation, the difference between this program and typical programs was that it was open-ended and designed to actually assist the kids in developing the kinds of skills to allow them to be mainstreamed back into the regular program. She exclaimed that the ultimate success of the program was due to the energy invested in the beginning thoroughly researching exactly what the problem is, the fact that there's a transition class from that class before they go back into the regular education class. These kids, she felt, needed to be welcomed into some school program and that "they typically don't feel a sense of welcome so they don't participate, and they disengage and then they create problems on a school campus." She stated that at this time they have 42 kids in that program and there is an extreme range of flexibility of their course offerings and time commitment on the school campus. Once again, the time factor of exuding leadership for programs was discussed in that she continually meets with parents and teachers and their students to hone the program so that it will have maximum effectiveness. Her excitement at the fact that many kids keep from getting lost in this program is expressed by the comment,

We've discussed the fact that we have these kids on our campus and, you know, some kids are pretty hopeless. They've had a really rough time ... and you feel that these

kids may have children one day and then if they have not been helped, the problems will perpetuate. An understanding of society would help. I think we need to deal with the problems and deal with the needs of these kids ... welcome them into our programs and find ways to structure their day and help them develop a positive self image. These kids know that they need a little extra help on some things, but they can re-engage whenever they're ready.

In depicting those areas in which their leadership had an impact, the arena of problem solving potentially violent, security threat type situations emerged as a recurring theme. Whether it was situations where a kid is being threatened off campus, or attempting suicide on campus, the techniques for handling these situations either provide leadership or can perpetuate a crisis situation. One assistant principal discussed a situation that he felt an immediate response by an administrator helped save a life as well as provide leadership in future situations of that type.

At Sierra, my first year there, we had a girl attempt suicide on campus. We got a phone call one day from this lady that her daughter probably had a gun at school and she was worried that she was suicidal. So we looked the girl up and went to her classroom. I sent a campus supervisor in to go see if she was in the classroom, because I figured if the girl was in there it might upset her a little less than to see the assistant principal, but she wasn't in the classroom. We walked back to the office and at that point, as we were walking back to the office, we got word that somebody heard a gunshot in one of the girls' restrooms ... so we ran out there and sure enough the girl was in there and she had shot herself in the stomach. That was the year we got our walkie-talkies on

campus at Sierra and all the kids and parents, of course, were upset about it. The new walkie-talkies might have saved the girl's life because we contacted the office, they contacted 911. We found out that when you call 911, they start asking you all kinds of questions. Where did she shoot herself? Is she unconscious? We were fortunately able to answer all these questions over the walkie-talkies. They sent LifeFlight out to the school and they were able to get the girl out and fly her and they said later that LifeFlight was what saved her life because they got her to the hospital quick enough where she didn't lose enough blood to die and so it did save her life. So, we felt good that we had the equipment, worked as a team and saved a life.

He continued his dialogue about how the leadership of the administrators allow campuses to be places for learning.

I'm sure everyone in administration has stopped a fight before it started ... and sometimes stopped a fight that could have been a big fight. I've spent time in group sessions with kids who are angry at each other over racial differences and all that. I think we've settled many problems before they become really bad. Just because of the job, I think you become more sensitive to what you see and you recognize things quicker than other people might. That's true in a lot of jobs ... like if you're a fireman, you might sense a fire before it starts where you can and I might not ... I see a lot of that. Over the years I've just become more aware. I think I make a difference. I want to think I make a difference just by how I deal with people and kids and the job I'm doing now. I like to think I made a difference in discipline just because I was keeping some of the problems out of

the classroom. Now being in charge of counseling and the master schedule, I feel I'm making a difference here too. I like to think I'm an integral part of what's happening ... that we're all working towards the same end and that's for helping kids get the very best education they can. Yes, I do think I make a difference ... I try to add a little humor to the day because that's just the way I am and I think there's a lot of people who appreciate that. I do the announcements in the morning. I do a trivia question every Thursday and people call in and give me their trivia answers and we give them a little prize just for the right answer. Like on the day we ask a question, we have about 15 teachers who call in. It's something that may be silly, but people appreciate it. Monday I do my sports chat thing on the all call. It's so stupid and corny but it entertains people. I do it and there are people who definitely feel that it helps the climate of the school a bit because I think we're here to enjoy ourselves too. It's the kid's job to learn, but I also think we have to make it enjoyable.

Thus, he has utilized his interactions and relationships developed with others to intend a change reflecting the purpose of having a community where people are allowed to learn.

Other assistant principals corroborated the example of providing leadership as stated above through day to day interactions where they take the time to process serious disciplinary issues that involve kids who are being jumped into gangs, or kids who are threatening to kill each other, or parents who are threatening to kill other people's children, or kids who have hit teachers, or brought guns on campus, or are selling drugs. Their philosophy is that through their advocacy for safety and their attention to the human nuances and day to day needs, over time, subtle shifts in the environment on school campuses occur.

The result of an emancipated community often comes through situations where ownership is shared with parents to control the behavior of their children. One example is from an assistant principal who had a parent come in very upset because her son had been badly beaten.

He had finally confided in his mother with an absolute death oath that she couldn't tell anyone that he had been initiated into a gang, and that it was not his choice, but in fact, it was a tradition at school where seniors took freshmen to a house that was blocks away and in the backyard with as many as 10 to 12 kids in a circle threw the freshman in the middle, kicked and beat him up and welcomed him into the fraternity, so to speak.

In going about the investigation, I had several problematic issues. One, I couldn't credit where I was getting my leads from because this parent was in death fear of ruining her relationship with her own child and recognizing that the parents of the kids who were doing the initiation would be in absolute disbelief that their children would be doing anything like that, all the way to the frustration about the parent who's house was being used because they were at work who would be outraged that they had been a victim. And so it became a matter of carefully rolling it out and starting with the kids who had been named who were the seniors and finding out from them if they had had the same thing happen to them as freshmen and latching on to how much they despised it as freshmen ... to becoming my anchor to share the fact that guys, one side of me says you can't wait to do this to other people as seniors because it got done to you, but the other side is that you despised it so much as freshmen ... I know you must recognize that it's got to stop somewhere, and as much as

you want it, it would be nice if you could get back at the kids who did it to you. But, unfortunately, you're perpetuating something that you despised when it happened to you and you hated those people with a passion but now you're caught in doing the same thing wrong. And having those kids buy into the fact that right or wrong, they are responsible for what they had done and the action was wrong. Then, having the parents of those kids come in as a group and to become a defendant of the kids was an interesting scenario, because the parents were angry at their children and I was the one who was defending them saying this is what happened, and I don't think your kids are particularly proud of it, etc. There were five senior boys who ended up being suspended for five days and five freshman boys who had to admit to their parents they had been beaten up. I became defender to those parents as to why it was truly a life threatening situation. They didn't want to tell what had happened because they feared they would get more of the same. Then, those two groups of parents had to meet to decide what they could do amongst their community so that no other senior boy would feel the pressure to carry on the tradition and that no other incoming 9th grader would be a victim of it. We've not had that scenario come back since. And that's the process ... it keeps cycling around with the kids, with the parents and with me as the advocate for safety.

This scenario demonstrates the tenuous challenging role of the assistant principal to have their leadership reflect the needs of and emancipate a community. The impact of his decision, however, reflected on the lives of that particular group of children, all from the same race and all from the same community, is immeasurable.

Supporting Principals

Another arena in which many assistant principals discuss their use of leadership skills is in supporting and protecting their site principals. One assistant principal divulged a situation where the principal had pulled the plug on the music of students who were performing because she had decided that they could not perform. This caused a situation where a rash of parents rushed the stage and started calling her a racist. Occasionally, assistant principals work with principal's who are not clear in their directives. In this situation, Susan continually felt her leadership was provided in the area of clarifying what the principal might have meant and striving to be proactive in terms of listening to what her plans were and trying to help her moderate them. This situation actually ended up being a life-threatening situation. It occurred when she was assistant principal in a middle school out of California Unified School District where there was a high level of crime and violence in the community. In the end of this particular interaction, three or four people had been trampled and there had been a shooting on the other side of campus. She remembers:

There were so many people that when we called the ambulance, none of these people would get out of the way for the ambulance and they were still so upset with the principal I had to go to this group of people and ask them to please come to my office and talk ... and six people responded ... 3 men and 3 women ... the men stood blocking the door. The 3 women would just not shut up. It was the same over and over again ... just reiterating the whole thing. I agreed with them. The principal shouldn't have handled it that way. Why that was ever set up as criteria (what she's referring to is that kids could not perform unless they had a certain

grade point average) yet, the principal had not alerted the students to that fact until one day before the performance. I had to keep stating I had to give them a chance to vent and get it out and say, yes, I will look into it ... I will take down your concerns and yes, that's a valid concern ... and we'll follow through and stuff like that. Getting them off the campus and into a smaller setting where they were not ranting and raving and keeping everyone else going allowed the group outside to disperse immediately as soon as the ambulance got there ... because these six were not stirring up more things. The ambulance came and took care of what they needed to do, the campus was cleared and this whole thing, probably a total of 20 minutes with them in my office, had a real calming effect on the campus.

This is one example of exerting leadership and avoiding a potential problem. Her discussion ended with an explanation of the impact on school policy of this situation and recalling the memory of the frustrations involved in the inability to communicate on school campuses which might avert many crises.

The Leadership Challenge

Many assistant principals reported that while leadership is something that they feel is vitally needed in the areas of staff development, cultural diversity, conflict resolution, curriculum and instruction, and moving a staff towards the 21st century, there is great difficulty in finding the time to practice leadership to enact these kinds of changes given the day to day fatigue factor built into the job.

Most of the comments were summed up by one middle school administrator.

The primary frustration I'm under right now is that we're expending a great deal of energy towards doing some infrastructure changes ... some basic motivating ... overcoming the inertia of the status quo and we have done all the requisite processes towards making a decision and now it's time to maybe pull a trigger and we still, and I say this very candidly, maybe collectively, that includes the 3 administrators at my site, and maybe individually, we're still not sure how to make the breakthrough. We see something that needs to happen ... we see the kids dropping like flies, we see the results of something not happening. Let me use this as a metaphor. We have the patient prepped... we know the patient's sick ... we know four areas we can do radical surgery on. Because we're not sure which to tackle first, we are hesitating on where to make the incision because the incision is in some ways, irrevocable. We'll create a chain reaction and we've got four targets and we're not sure which tumor we should tackle. And to continue with the allegory here, the patient is prepped, shaved, iodined, we're in the operating room, we have anesthetized and the three surgeons are unsure which of the four places we should make the incision. And the primary concern, and the hesitancy is we know that it's going to be painful and we're unsure of which is going to be the one incision we're going to have to make. At this point, I see it as we are agonizing over where to cut to avoid the most painful incision. Where this administrator personally is, I've got four spots with iodine, I can cut any of the four places and the patient may survive, may not survive, but one thing's for sure ... he isn't going to be any better unless we cut somewhere.

Thus, the depictions of leadership in the individual interviews were on an individual situational basis versus a global systematized plan of intended change. Clearly, from the data presented in perceptions of role, all assistant principals in this study believe themselves to have been hired to do leadership, yet once the roller coaster ride began, they found it extremely difficult either because of dizziness on the ground or never being able to get off the roller coaster, to impact change through their leadership.

As the examples and quotes above so clearly demonstrate, each and every change is a major commitment in terms of time, emotional, and physical energy and decision making processes.

The efforts of these assistant principals to engage in relationships that intend real change reflecting mutual purposes resulting in emancipated communities are, in the estimation of the practicing assistant principals researched, infrequent, but deeply satisfying.

Leadership: Findings from Focus Group Interviews

**Table 6.0: Evidence of Leadership:
Focus Group Interviews:
Themes (Frequency) Description**

Theme (Frequency) Description	Theme (Frequency) Description
Change in Climate/Culture (5)	New program in operation (1)
Success in Curricular Change (3) Teachers teaching better; increased student learning	Staff Trust is Developed (1)

Change in Student Behavior (2) Students own their own behavior	Staff utilizes you as Resource (1)
Policy Change (1)	Regarding Lack of Leadership (1) Shared decision making is a farce

During the focus group interviews the assistant principals discussed what they felt were examples of their leadership. The examples of leadership revolved around climate or culture changes, changes in curricular areas, changes in student behavior, changes in policies and programs, and changes that occur when the staff trusts them enough to utilize them as a resource.

Due to the collegial nature of the focus group interview questions, the articulation of perceived leadership by practicing assistant principals was much clearer than in the individual interviews. An assistant principal dialogued about critical indicators of successful leadership.

I think a lot of things we do impact the running of the school day to day and the things that are to be critical success indicators of what's happening with organization, where it's moving, is systematic change that is beginning. We make decisions differently. If we make decisions differently, if the culture of the school is different, if our kids are finding ways to solve their own problems and there are fewer fights and conflict on the campus, those are critical indicators of successful leadership. We've given them the skills and created a culture where students are taking care of their own situations. Since I deal in the discipline area, campus climate change for the better would indicate success.

Another assistant principal agreed that this was the area where they felt their administrative team had made the most impact.

I'll give you an indicator of success ... and it's not always an individual success. Part of what you do is being involved with a team ... and I think, last year, because our staff was really concerned about what wasn't happening with just baseline behavior, aggressive language and attitude on campus ... it percolated up the staff and thus, there was the opportunity to facilitate that process. It was painstakingly long, but in the end after meeting with parents, lawyers and everyone else, we've put out something we live by now and our students know and I think we have raised the climate on the campus to a different level ... almost more acceptable than the students can stand. It has to do with not being able to promote sexism, racism, foul language, can't use inappropriate displays of affection, and that was pretty key, I think, because it really changed an important part of the campus. It also resulted in a new process for communicating and involving staff that we're still using. Thus, it did not just initiate a change in policy, but a change in the way we go about doing our business. I'm proud of it and I think we, as an administrative team, are proud of it.

Again and again in the focus group interviews changes in the climate, the culture, and in student behavior emerged as the most successful indicators of leadership.

I would point to our campus climate and how it's changed the last year. Prior to last year we were

dealing with a lot of fights on campus, a lot of physical, you know, fist meets face type fights on a weekly basis, and now we're dealing with verbal confrontations on a weekly basis rather than a physical fight. My sense is that the word is out that we're dealing with things ... we are not going to tolerate physical fights to solve problems and that kids are more than likely taking them elsewhere ... and hopefully, it will stop at the verbal part. We did not turn our backs on our problems, but faced them head-on and proactively initiated the kinds of changes that positively impacted students' lives.

In addition to the change that results in a positive school climate, initiating change among the teaching staff again was pivotal to leadership success. Examples were given of changing the behaviors of teachers who had reputations of being "terrors and nobody wanted their child to be in their classroom" as well as changing departments who were giving an overwhelming percentage of students D's and F's. Utilizing leadership skills to get teachers involved with the issues, bring them together to dialogue about the issue, and utilize current resources to strategize potential changes, and thus, support the change process where now "an overwhelming majority of kids in the program are now successful" involved an "approach not just of telling them they had to change, but having someone facilitate for them and allowing them the opportunity to mutually recognize and make the changes themselves" was pivotal to successful leadership. Leadership, to these assistant principals, involves, ultimately, developing a sense of trust whereby the staff will utilize their facilitation and leadership skills as a resource.

Not all assistant principals agreed that leadership was happening on their campuses. Several did agree with one assistant principal who disclosed, "Shared decision making is a

farce there isn't the structure for leadership." This comment illuminated the perception that due to the fact and reality that there is no true shared decision making process and assistant principals are told what to do, leadership cannot be done by assistant principals. The issue moved from, "So you can only talk vision so much before the vision is gone" to "we don't really practice shared decision making because our structure is not set up to have that ... at least our district isn't." As Clint explained:

"We give teachers the opportunity sometimes when it's a pleasant situation to jump in and work with kids, etc. however, I have not seen a model yet in our district that even exemplifies the shared decision making because we don't have the structure. We have a hierarchical structure and that's the way the system is, so I think its a fallacy that we're doing shared decision making and allowing leadership to happen."

Leadership: Findings from Survey

The survey delineated the future goals and aspirations of practicing assistant principals. Of the eight assistant principals surveyed, one sought to remain an assistant principal as long as he remained in charge of scheduling and the counseling department and was not reassigned to discipline.

Generally speaking, the person in this position has more positive experiences. Discipline is always negative and eventually wears a person out. The principal, being the last in the chain of command, has to deal with too many issues (some very small) and ends up most of the day in meetings. People need time to do their jobs. The Principal spends too much time with P.R. work and being a politician.

Three assistant principals sought to become the director of staff development due to the potential of the position to initiate

change through leadership. Two identified Director of Curriculum and Instruction as the areas where they could best use their talents, skills and passions. Two other assistant principals chose the role of Principal as their ultimate career choice. One because she was ready for a new challenge and the other because he was 'tired." If leadership were occurring in the role of the assistant principal, would participants be so eager to seek new roles?

Leadership: Findings from Logs

Activities relating to leadership appeared with extreme infrequency in the logs. Essentially, they revolved around the issues of:

*Providing leadership for a variety of committees, foundations, and other miscellaneous activities. These included chairing educational foundation committees, district curriculum committees, strategic planning committees, shared decision making task force, long-range planning committee, planning staff trainings in certain areas, and providing leadership for such community involved committees as the Human Relations Committee.

Conclusion: Leadership?

Thus, a primary frustration with the role of assistant principals as depicted by the four data gathering techniques is the lack of time for purposeful, systematic engagement in leadership activities. The fact that leadership occurs at all is due to an insatiable desire to improve the lives of each and every child, parent and staff member. Unfortunately, the magnitude of the knowledge base needed to achieve the role, the ever-increasing responsibilities, and the lack of time for training and re-training might indicate a decline in actualizing leadership potentialities for practicing assistant principals in the future.

It is imperative for the enhancement of the leadership component to the role that the suggested changes made by practicing assistant principals be considered by policymakers, site and district office personnel. The leadership function of the role is typically what entices individuals to seek the position and it is vital to their overall esteem and to schools in general.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS,
AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On a busy spring day in the faculty room at a local secondary school, a group of teachers stood around the job board where the openings for both middle and high school assistant principals were posted. "I heard that there were five openings alone at the middle school level" one of them exclaimed. Another teacher laughed and said, "Why would *anyone* want that job?" A more important question that one might ask is, "What *is* that job?" This is an excellent question to ponder and respond to in the conclusions of a research study on the role of the secondary school assistant principal. For perceptions of the role of the assistant principal depend upon your vantage point within the total educational arena.

How do the constituents involved in the education of the nation's youth view the assistant principal? Individual teachers observe the assistant principal wearing many hats. They see the assistant principal at the time they are evaluated, at faculty meetings or with a stop sign after school. Or they may see the assistant principal making arduous attempts to change a course of study to align an antiquated course with a new state framework. Other teachers may gain their perceptions from the documentation on the disciplinary referrals received back from the assistant principal. And still other teachers might have had just one crisis intervention interaction with the assistant principal or just see the assistant principal on supervision in the quad every day. Thus, the role teachers see for the assistant principal depends on their awareness, needs and types of administrative interactions.

And what is the parent perception of the assistant principal? It has been demonstrated in chapter four that some parents seem

to have a somewhat negative perception of the assistant principal as punisher of kids, as the 'hold the line' person in regard to schedule changes, as the one who is suspending, transferring, expelling and otherwise removing their children from the educational arena of their choice, or as one who, for unknown reasons, just doesn't like their children. The other side of the coin is the parent who works with the assistant principal on the school newsletter, the ESL committee, the Program Quality Review or WASC accreditation team, or on the Gifted and talented advisory board who might see assistant principals as intellectual change agents. There is also the parent who sees the assistant principal as one who saves their child from continual harassment by building his or her interpersonal skills. Another parent might see the assistant principal as the one who gave their child CPR when the child was hit by a school bus, or as one who got their child through school by teaching the little terror how to choose to behave appropriately. With parents as with teachers, it is the frequency and type of interactions that determine the individual's perceptions of the role of the assistant principal.

The purpose of this study was to construct a realistic portrayal of the assistant principal's daily professional life in the educational arena by collecting data from the individuals who fulfill the role and daily observe all its intricacies: *practicing assistant principals*. Through use of individual interviews, focus group interviews, background information surveys and two-day logs documenting the activities and encounters of practicing assistant principals data were collected to answer a series of research questions. The literature review demonstrated the need for further research on the role of the assistant principal so as to gain insight into a role that has escaped clear conceptualization throughout the years. Chapter five contains a summary of the study, the conclusions in regard to the role of the practicing secondary school assistant principal, conclusions and implications of the research questions, and recommendations for future study.

Specific implications for higher education, site principals, district office personnel, and future qualitative researchers are highlighted in the last section of the chapter.

Summary

The literature on the assistant principal revealed that the focus of prior work regarding school leadership centered around the role of the principal and superintendent. Research on the assistant principal is limited and the assistant principal is rarely, if ever, mentioned in administrative texts. With little knowledge or mention of the role, it has escaped clear understanding.

This research was a qualitative, ethnographic study of eight practicing secondary school assistant principals in San Diego County, California. The study was designed to stress depth, richness, and accuracy to realistically depict the lived experience of practicing secondary school assistant principals. This depiction included the singular and collective voices of the participants. The data analysis has been shared with practicing assistant principals who state that it does indeed replicate as closely as possible the range and complexity of the professional experiences in which they exist.

The researcher interviewed the eight participants both individually and together, in two groups of four, in focus group interviews. Additional clarifying or confirming data was gained from a background informational survey as well as from two one-day logs where secondary school assistant principals documented activities and interactions. Analysis of the transcriptions of the interviews, survey results and compilation of the wealth of practical information from the logs resulted in the data from which to address the research questions, conclusion, implications and recommendations.

Conclusions

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (1991) recently produced a small monograph on "Restructuring

the Role of the Assistant Principal.' The foreward stated: "The assistant principalship is an important and dynamic resource in the continuing improvement of education for youth. The increasing emphasis on instructional leadership has caused schools to refocus their efforts on ways administrators can enhance the teaching/learning process. One vital resource to be used in this effort is the often underutilized ability of the assistant principal" (p. v). Yet, without an understanding of the current role of the assistant principal, how is it possible to refocus efforts to utilize the abilities of the assistant principal? Conclusions and implications for each of the predetermined research questions related to the role of the practicing secondary school assistant principal follows.

Research question #1: What is the assistant principals' role in the secondary school setting?

The data demonstrated that the role is reactive, all-encompassing, and is both "what you make it by your choices of what to respond to", and "what your principal allows it to be." The lack of definition or conceptualization of the role might be a result of the diversity of expectations. These varied expectations include handling all crises yet remaining accessible for teacher and parent drop-ins; keeping the campus safe while learning the schematics for the new technology laboratory; and responding to the principal's requests, despite an occasional lack of clarity. The role is a series of choices in regard to utilization of limited time and energy for completion or analysis of an endless array of tasks and interactions.

Although discipline emerged as the primary responsibility for secondary school assistant principals, they are consistently judged on their ability to juggle a plethora of other diverse tasks. Their responsibility is to problem solve, initiate change and support the staff while conducting evaluations and serving as a

resource to students, parents and staff. Throughout the data the need emerged to prioritize their activities to enable them to achieve their own goals while ensuring that the goals of the principal and the district office are met. The role may include serving as police officer, doctor, lawyer, psychologist or educator. Assistant principals work with adults and children whose behaviors range from rational to psychotic, set up special events, and seek to motivate, inspire, and develop the strengths of all individuals with whom they interact. Providing daily supervision before, during and after school, and evening supervision at all events, parent meetings, and athletics utilized much of the available time, energy and creativity of practicing assistant principals.

The role of the secondary assistant principal, then, is a catch-all, and appears to encompass the entire spectrum of running a school campus in such a way that the teachers are allowed to teach and the students are allowed to learn in a safe and orderly environment. It is a role where potential violence and the anxiety inducing fear of making the wrong decision due to 'lack of clarification of a situation' or 'time to find out all the pertinent facts' are givens. The role has the potential to contribute to the betterment of educational programs through the insights gleaned by practicing assistant principals through the sheer numbers of daily interactions with all stakeholders on a public school campus.

Research Question #2: What challenges do secondary school assistant principals face?

The perceived and documented challenges for assistant principals consistently revolve around the issue of limited hours in each day or school year in which to address limitless issues. Attempts to remain positive and proactive often crumble in the face of the realities of the workload. Learning the politics and subtleties of the role is the initial, overwhelming challenge.

Individuals who were highly successful in the classroom due to their independence, innovative thinking and task completion abilities had to rapidly re-assess their way of being to accommodate and offer support to an entire school system. The challenges of making the right choices, decisions or actions for themselves and others is pivotal to the ultimate professional and personal success of these hard-working talented individuals.

One of the greatest challenges for success in the role is accumulating the required knowledge-base in regard to all areas of assumed responsibility. Even upon gaining this knowledge, in the area of technology, for example, it may be constantly changing. Many assistant principals judged their professional success on their ability to amass and share an immense amount of information about the current school's programs and policies while providing vision through accurate information about potentialities for the future.

The challenge of time may be exacerbated by the influx of new high speed technology. Voice mail, E-mail and communications on the Internet have increased the rate at which people expect a response and can communicate with each other. The fast pace of today's world combined with this perceived need for immediate responses increases potential for error in decision making. Parents who used to expect a call back within a day or two after leaving a message show a high degree of frustration if they have not received a call within the hour.

Responding to the ever-increasing stakeholders while balancing personal needs will be an ongoing challenge for assistant principals. The numbers of students on each school campus is growing, yet, the number of assistant principals is decreasing. Many sites in the California School District are, due to the reduction in salary, choosing to hire a TOSA (Teacher on special assignment) instead of an assistant principal. While these individuals are typically aspiring administrators, they are not given the title or responsibility for evaluating personnel and thus,

may also prove to be an additional hardship for practicing assistant principals.

The effects of close public scrutiny, an increased workload, and a decrease in the numbers of assistant principals are taking a toll on the practicing assistant principals. Although educational challenges are increasing and resources are declining, assistant principals continue to strive to meet the challenges.

Research Question #3: How do they meet these challenges?

Strategies to successfully meet the challenges of their role and fulfill their professional and personal obligations consistently emerged throughout the data. Utilizing the other team members' strengths and support, partaking in a daily form of stress reduction, giving up past beliefs and practices and "going with the flow" are but a few of the coping skills practiced by assistant principals. Their sense of humor keeps them sane, their innate interpersonal skills and intellect keeps them afloat and their consistent desire to help kids to be successful keeps them motivated. Successes are cherished and failures utilized as learning platforms. Secondary assistant principals are achieving success in overcoming the challenges of the role through long hours, intestinal fortitude, initially readjusting of their expectations of themselves and others, and with an insatiable desire to help people achieve their goals.

Of particular interest is the role the administrative team plays in allowing assistant principals to meet their daily challenges. Calabrese, (1987), discussed the assistant principal's consistent feelings of alienation, or isolation. Yet, in this research, many participants discussed their amazement and joy in the support and collegiality from their administrative team. Collaboratively working with, laughing with and learning from other administrators was the overarching strategy for meeting their recurring challenges.

The focus group interview truly reinforced these conclusions in regard to collegiality as the key to ultimate success in the role of assistant principal. The synergy and positive regard for each other was observed by the researcher throughout the interviews in the form of mutuality, reinforcement of responses, and empathy for their plight as practicing assistant principals. Had there been only surveys and logs, the strength of this component as pivotal to meeting challenges might not have been present in the findings.

Research Question #4: How do assistant principals assess their higher education training, initial support or preparation, and ongoing professional development?

The assessment of the formal education received by practicing assistant principals was bleak. On-the-job-training was the status quo and seen to be the greatest learning platform available. One suggestion for higher education was to align the administrative coursework with the day to day responsibilities assumed by assistant principals. Other suggestions were to offer a course titled, "The Assistant Principalship", and to add a mandatory internship to their program offerings. Higher education instructors need to have a greater understanding of the actualities of the role and to have their administrative programs address the fact that their graduates often begin their administrative careers as assistant principals. Current methods of training and curriculum, with the focus on training individuals to become site-level principals, may be limiting the initial success and promotability of assistant principals due to a lack of pertinent skills and knowledge in areas of immediate responsibility.

The suggestions for areas of increased training seemed to focus on specific situations where the assistant principal was highly accountable to and responsible for individuals and situations requiring high-risk decisions. Practicing assistant principals asked to be forced to learn laws, practices and

techniques that will offer them a greater chance of initial and ongoing success due to an accurate knowledge base about the realities of special education, gangs, weapons, disciplinary procedures, conflict resolution, diffusing difficult people, and problem solving. Their collective concern was to amass the necessary knowledge with which to provide continuous safety, accurate information, and appropriate learnings for all individuals involved in the educational institution called school.

The assistant principals held a firm belief that their site level principals and individual districts must increase their responsibility for the training of assistant principals by offering inservices or sending the assistant principals to conferences or workshops. Realizing that this might take them from their sites, it was still felt that it was imperative if they were to stay invigorated and responsive.

In conclusion, if indeed, the role of the assistant principal is to work with the dysfunctional side of education, training must also address that responsibility. Assistant principals must be taught the causes of and provided information about dysfunctional families, teachers or parents. They must be provided with case studies that allow them to brainstorm options and internships that allow them to observe viable solutions to the overwhelming number of diverse problems they face.

Research Question #5: If practicing assistant principals could make any changes in regard to their position, is there anything about their position that they would change?

Listening to the voices of experienced, practicing assistant principals provided a wealth of suggestions for potential changes to improve the position. These changes included a desire to bring the position into closer alignment with the vision of the role that these individuals had prior to becoming assistant principals. Suggestions to hire a dean of Discipline, compartmentalize the role, or educate others in regard to their own positions in order to free

the assistant principals from endless clean-up jobs surfaced. This would allow the assistant principal more time to be a proactive change agent. It is possible, however, that that is not the role of the assistant principal. The role may be, in actuality, more attuned to the nitty gritty running of the school and the leadership activities may, indeed, be more the role of the principals.

Assuming the role will remain much the same as it currently exists, other suggestions to make it more viable were to give assistant principals flexibility in setting their own hours, assistance in their supervisory responsibilities, greater autonomy and more frequent learning opportunities. Participants would agree with the suggestion of Panyako and Rorie, (1987), that assistant principals need to be freed from some of the mindless tasks that keep them out of the classroom. Consistent in the research was the belief that the pervasive feeling of continual exhaustion, disempowerment, and other daily frustrations might be remedied by the implementation of these changes.

Research Question #6: What examples of leadership by practicing assistant principals are noteworthy?

Leadership involvement in symbolic inspirational activities seems to be minimal in descriptions of the role of the secondary school assistant principal. Like apricots that are only on the tree for about a week, leadership activities are seized when the opportunity arises, but scarce on a consistent basis. The perceptions of leadership are as varied as the participants in the research study. As depicted in the survey, the participants all sought to change their current role so as to be in a position that offered more avenues to initiate the change process and use their leadership skills. Leadership interactions were, however, embedded throughout the depictions of the role of the assistant principal.

Foster, (1986a), described four components of leadership: critical, transformative, educative, and ethical. Assistant principals strive to critique the current systems and provide insights to others into the trappings of remaining in the 'Jurassic' period. They seek to be transformative through ethically educating policymakers and constituents on school campuses. The leadership arena in which they have the most pride revolves around those situations where their leadership had provided new insights and ways of empowering others to educate for more ethical, emancipatory conditions for all.

Changes in the tone on a school campus, increases in student and teacher learning, improvements in the working relationships of the total staff due to strategic planning, and improved interactions with parents are all examples of the emancipatory leadership enacted by practicing assistant principals. For most, however, sporadic engagement in these leadership activities was not enough. A recurring theme was a frustration in their inability to structure time to be doing more leadership. They intend, and continually see the need for, much more change than is actualized. The fact that leadership occurs at all is due to purposeful time utilization, will power, and a high level of commitment to the betterment of humanity.

Implications for Site level Principals who have
Assistant Principals

Implications of the research on practicing assistant principals include the following recommendations for site level principals:

1. Gain input from your assistant principals regarding their areas of responsibility.
2. Seek strategies for implementing flex-time.
3. Seek extra supervisory assistance from such individuals as counselors, teachers and instructional aides.

4. Allow for and encourage assistant principals to attend workshops and inservices.
5. Provide initial professional growth and/or training.
6. Build a team. Support and listen to assistant principals; their vantage is immeasurable.

Implications for District Office Personnel

The implications of this research on the role of the secondary school principal has the potential to offer district office personnel a vital new resource. It is recommended that District Office personnel:

1. Seek strategies to allow current personnel working on their administrative credentials to participate in an internship.
2. Offer mandatory Assistant Principal inservices in a variety of areas including: discipline, law, Special Education, and Health Office concerns/laws.
3. Seek valuable input and participation from Assistant Principals on district level committees. Possibly one assistant principal could attend each monthly principal meeting.
4. Evaluate possibilities and ramifications of hiring a Dean of Discipline.
5. Have District Nurse give a workshop on handling medical emergencies.
6. Offer increased support for the role.
7. Increase dissemination of information to assistant principals through a newsletter that might contain information on successful disciplinary strategies, what gangs were acting up, latest weapons seen on local campuses, etc.....
8. Set up time to informally reflect for assistant principals. This could be in the form of a job-a-like or other workshop.

Implications for Higher Education

Many suggestions were made to improve the training received from higher education. The goal would be to align the

training received with the realities of the position. Suggestions to achieve this goal include:

1. Offering a course on the Assistant Principalship that could teach them the major areas of responsibility such as:

- *Conducting Searches
- *Counseling families
- *Working with the police
- *Managing/diffusing difficult people
- *Calling Child Protective Services
- *Handling suicide attempts
- *AIDS information

2. Include other practical coursework that would give a realistic portrayal of the position. These courses might include case study analysis, interviewing practicing assistant principals, shadow studies, assignments to actually develop an instructional minutes report, room utilization report, master schedule, etc....

Recommendations for Further Research

This study served to gain insight into the role of the practicing secondary assistant principal. Other informative studies that may offer additional insight might include:

1. Conducting an analysis of perceptions of the role from different stakeholders such as parents, students, teachers, the principal, or community members.

2. Analyzing the need for and development of inservices specifically designed for assistant principals.

3. Completing a dissertation on the training needs of assistant principals.

4. Replicating this study in a different district or at the elementary level and do a comparational analysis.

5. Having practicing assistant principals keep logs and then conduct interviews with participants to cooperatively analyze their decision making strategies.

6. Completing a study on the impact of the role of the assistant principal on the total school environment.
7. Conducting a shadow study of practicing assistant principals to even further clarify their role.
8. Delving into the leadership issue regarding assistant principals by determining those assistant principals who perceive themselves to be doing leadership. An analysis of what criteria or factors are in place to allow this to happen could be researched.
9. Researching the effects of site-based management on leadership potential of practicing school administrators.
10. Contrasting this research with a case study on a model district or school (For example, Central East High School in Harlem when Deborah Meier was principal) that is striving to redefine the role of the assistant principal.
11. Conducting a study on the effect of school size on the potential leadership efforts of assistant principals.

Reflections on the Study

This research contributed to the belief that assistant principals are at-risk administrators. The fact that someone was taking the time to focus on them as a group was praised endlessly in dialogues with participants following the interviews and clarifying sessions. There is so much that assistant principals want to be able to do within the constraints of a public school campus. It is my fervent hope that the information and conclusions gained from this qualitative study will assist them in achieving their goals.

The qualitative methodology utilized in this research brought out many insights that might have been stifled through a quantitative study. For example, if surveys had only been utilized there would not have been the heading, "Medical Emergencies" and the descriptions of volatile daily interactions would not have occurred. Each data collection technique added new dimensions to a role that has lacked prior conceptualization. Qualitative research

brought out the human factor in the role and allowed a window into the worlds of practicing assistant principals. It is a window depicting an administrative role where high stress and possible violence are givens and where individuals are consistently striving to make changes that will positively impact all with whom they interact. I am deeply grateful to all participants who gave their valuable time, energy and insights to allow for the completion of this research project.

REFERENCES

- Adams, J.D. (Ed.). (1986). Transforming leadership: From vision to results. Alexandria, VA: Miles River Press.
- Altheide, D.L. & Johnson, J.M. (1994). Criteria for Assessing Interpretive Validity in Qualitative Research. In Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) Handbook of Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Anson, R. (1992). School leadership research in changing times. Educational Administration Quarterly, 28, 299-303.
- Astin H.S. (1989). Women and power: Collective and empowering leadership. Paper presented at the meeting of Research on Women and Education, a Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.
- Astin, H.S. & Leland, C. (1991). Women of influence, women of vision. New York: Jossey-Bass.
- Atkinson, P. & Hammersley, M. (1994). Ethnography and Participant Observation. In Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) Handbook of Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Austin, D.B. (1972). The assistant principal--what does he do? Theory Into Practice, XI, 68-72.
- Bass, B.M. (1990). Leadership and performance beyond expectations. New York: The Free Press.
- Bates, R. (1989). Leadership and the rationalization of society. In J. Smyth (Ed.), Critical perspectives on educational leadership (pp. 131-156). London: Falmer Press.
- Bennis, W. (1984). Transformative power and leadership. In T.J. Sergiovanni & J.E. Corbally (Eds.), Leadership and

organizational culture (pp. 64-71). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

- Bennis, W., & Nanus, B. (1985). Leaders: The strategies for taking charge. New York: Harper & Row.
- Black, A.B. (1978). Secondary assistant principals: their roles as perceived by self, superiors, peers and subordinates (Doctoral dissertation, Temple University, 1978). Dissertation Abstracts International, 39, 1939A.
- Black, A.B. (1980). Clarifying the role of the assistant principal NASSP Bulletin, 64, 33-39..
- Blanchard, K., Zigarmi, P., & Zigarmi, D. (1985). Leadership and the one minute manager. New York: Morrow.
- Blumberg, A. (1989). School administration as craft - Foundations of practice. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc.
- Bowsher, J. (1989). Educating America lessons learned in the nations corporations. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Burgess, L. (1976). The assistant principalship: where now? NASSP Bulletin, 60, 76-81.
- Burns, J.M. (1978). Leadership. New York. Harper & Row.
- Calabrese, R.L. & Adams, C.F. (1987). A comparative analysis of alienation among secondary school administrators. Planning and changing, 18, 90-97.
- Cherryholmes, C.H. (1988) Power and criticism: Poststructural investigations in education. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Clements, Z.J. (1980). Enriching the role of the assistant principal. Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 64, (478), 14-22.

- Clemons, M.J.(1989). The assistant principal's responsibility in school-based management systems. NASSP Bulletin, 73, 33-36.
- Connelly, F. & Clandinin, J. (1990). Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry. Educational Researcher, 19, 2-14.
- Croft, J.C., & Morton, J.R. (1977). The assistant principal: in quandary or comfort. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY.
- David, J. (1989). Restructuring in progress: Lessons from Pioneering Districts. National Governors' Association. Washington, D.C.
- Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.). (1994). Handbook of Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, CA:Sage.
- Fiedler, E.E. (1967). A theory of leadership effectiveness. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Ferguson, M. (1980). The aquarian conspiracy: Personal and social transformation in our time. Los Angeles: J.P. Tarcher.
- Fontana, A. & Frey, J. (1994). Interviewing: The Art of Science. In Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) Handbook of Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Foster, W.(1986a). Paradigms and promises: New approaches to educational administration. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus.
- Foster, W. (1986b). The reconstruction of leadership. Victoria, Australia: Deakin University Press.
- Foster, W. (1989). Toward a critical practice of leadership. In J. Smyth (Ed.), Critical perspectives on educational leadership. (pp. 39-62). London, England: Falmer Press.

- Fulton, O.K. (1987). Basic competencies of the assistant principal. NASSP Bulletin, 71, 52-54.
- Garawski, R.A. (1978). The assistant principal: His job satisfaction, and organizational potency. The Clearing House, 52, 8-10.
- Gardner, J. (1987). The nature of leadership. New management.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.
- Gorton, D. & Kattman, B. (1985). The assistant principal: An underused asset. Principal, 65, 36-40.
- Greenfield, W.D. (1985). Developing an instructional role for the assistant principal. Education and Urban Society, 18, 85-92.
- Greenfield, W. (Ed.). (1987). Instructional leadership: Concepts, issues, and controversies. Newton, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Grob, L. (1984). Leadership: The Socratic model. In B. Kellerman (Ed.) Leadership: Multidisciplinary perspectives. Englewood: Prentice Hall.
- Guba, E.G., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1985). Effective evaluation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Guba, E.G., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1989). Fourth generation evaluation. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Hartzell, G.N. (1990) Rookie Year: The on the Job Surprises of 1st Year Public High School Assistant Principal's Dissertation. UCLA.
- Hess, F. (1985). The socialization of the assistant principal: from the perspective of the local school district. Education and Urban Society, 18, 93-106.

- Holmes, M., Leithwood, K., & Musella, D. (1989). Educational policy for effective schools. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies on Education.
- Hunt, J.G. (1984a). Leadership and managerial behavior. Chicago: Science Research Associates.
- Hunt, J.G. (1984b). Organizational leadership: The contingency paradigm and its challenges. In B. Kellerman (Ed.), Leadership: Multidisciplinary perspectives (pp. 113-138). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Hunt, S.M. (1984). The role of leadership in the construction of reality. In B. Kellerman (Ed.), Leadership: Multidisciplinary perspectives (pp. 157-178). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Iannaccone, L. (1985). Vice-principal research: a window on the building. Education and Urban Society, 18 pp. 121-130.
- Immegart, G. (1988). Leadership and leader behavior. In N. Boyan (Ed.) Handbook of research on educational administration: A project of the American education research association. (pp. 259-277). White Plains: Longman.
- Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (1988). Student achievement through staff development. New York: Longman.
- Kellerman, B. (Ed.). (1984). Leadership: Multidisciplinary perspectives. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Kelly, G. (1987). The assistant principalship as a training ground for the principalship. NASSP Bulletin, 71, 13-20.
- Koerner, T. (1986). Conversation with Thomas Koerner, Editor, NASSP Bulletin.

- Kouzes, J., & Posner, B. (1987). The leadership challenge: How to get extraordinary things done in organizations. San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.
- Kriekard, J.A. and Norton, M. Scott. (1980). Using the competency approach to define the assistant principalship. Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 64, 1-8.
- Leithwood, K. (1989). Education policy for effective schools Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Leithwood, K.A. (1992). The move toward transformational leadership. Educational Leadership, 49,(5), 8-12.
- Leithwood, K. (1994). Leadership for School Restructuring. Educational Administration Quarterly, 30(4), 498-518.
- Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- MacIntyre, A. (1981). After virtue: A study in moral theory (2nd ed.). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Marshall, C. (1985a). Appropriate criteria of trustworthiness and goodness for qualitative research on education organizations. Quality and quantity, 19, 35-373.
- Marshall, C. (1985b). Professional shock; The enculturation of the assistant principal. Education and Urban Society, 18, 28-57.
- Marshall, C. (1989a). Goodness criteria: Are they objective realities or judgment calls. Paper presented at the Alternative Paradigms Conference in San Francisco, CA.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G.B. (1989b). Designing qualitative research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Marshall, C. (1992a). The Assistant Principal: Leadership Choices and Challenges. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Marshall, C., Mitchell, B., Gross, R., & Scott, D. (1992b). The assistant principalship: a career position or a stepping stone to the principalship? NASSP Bulletin, 76, 80-88.
- Marshall, C. (1993). The unsung role of the career assistant principal. National Association of Secondary School Principals. Reston, VA.
- Mauriel, J. J. (1989). Strategic leadership for schools. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.
- McCormick, K. (1987). The vaunted school executive shortage: How serious is it? Executive Educator, 9, 18-21.
- McLaren, P. (1989). Life in schools - An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education. New York: Longman.
- Merriam, S. (1988). Case study research in education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Miller, W. L. & Crabtree, B. F. (1994). Clinical Research. In Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (Eds.) Handbook of Qualitative Research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Mitchell, D.E., & Tucker, S. (1992). Leadership as a way of thinking. Educational Leadership, 49 (5), 30-35.
- Musella, D. (1989). Education policy for effective schools. Toronto: Ontario Institute for studies in education.
- Panyako, D., & Rorie, L. (1987). The changing role of the Assistant Principal. NASSP Bulletin, 71, 6-8.
- Patton, M.Q. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods. (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage.

- Payzant, T. (1989). To restructure schools, we've changed the way the bureaucracy works. The American school board journal, 176(10), pp. 19-20.
- Peters, T.J. & Waterman, R.H. (1982). In search of excellence: Lessons from America's best run companies. New York: Harper & Row.
- Peterson, K. (1985). Obstacles to learning from experience and principal training. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Research Association in Chicago.
- Pfeffer, J. (1977). The ambiguity of leadership. Academy of management review, 2(1), pp. 104-112.
- Popkewitz, T.S. (1991). A political sociology of educational reform: Power/knowledge in teaching, teacher education, and research. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Purkey, W. & Novak, J. (1984). Inviting school success: A self-concept to teaching and learning. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Reed, D.B. (1984). The work of the secondary vice principalship: a field study. The American Educational Research Association. New Orleans, April 23-27.
- Reed, D.B., & Himmler, A.H. (1985). The work of the secondary assistant principalship: A field study. Education and Urban Society, 18, 59-84.
- Rossner, J.B. (1990). Ways women lead. Harvard Business Review, 68(6), 119-125.
- Rost, J.C. (1985). Distinguishing leadership and management: A new consensus. Paper presented at the Organizational Development National Conference. San Francisco.

- Rost, J.C. (1989). The nature of leadership in the postindustrial era. Unpublished manuscript, University of San Diego.
- Rost, J.C. (1991). Leadership for the twenty-first century. New York: Praeger.
- Schein, E. (1985). Organizational culture and leadership: A dynamic view. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Sergiovanni, T.J. (1987). Foreword. In W. Greenfield (Ed.), Instructional leadership: Concepts, issues, and controversies (pp. vii-x). Newton, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Sergiovanni, T.J. (1990). Adding value to leadership gets extraordinary results. Educational Leadership, 47(8), 23-27.
- Sheive, L.T., & Schoenbelt, M.B. (Eds.). (1987). Leadership: Examining the elusive. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Silins, H. (1992). Effective leadership for school reform. Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 38, (4), 317-334.
- Simon, R. (1988). For a pedagogy of possibility. Critical pedagogy networker, 1(1).
- Smircich, L., & Morgan, G. (1982). Leadership: The management of meaning. Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 18(3), 257-273.
- Smyth, J. (1989). A "pedagogical" and "educative" view of leadership. In J. Smyth (Ed.), Critical perspectives on educational leadership (pp. 179-204). London, UK: Falmer Press.
- Tesch, R. (1984). Phenomenological Studies: A critical analysis of their nature and procedures. Paper presented at the 1984 AERA Annual Meeting in New Orleans.

- Tichy, N., & Devanna, M.A. (1986). The transformational leader. New York: Wiley.
- Van Manen, Max. (1989). Researching lived experience. London, Ontario, Canada: Althouse Press.
- Watkins, P. (1989). Leadership, power and symbols in educational administration. In J. Smyth (Ed.), Critical perspectives on educational leadership (pp. 9-37). London: Falmer.
- Weick, K. (1980). Loose coupling: An unconventional view of educational bureaucracy. Paper presented at the Convention of the American Educational Research Association in Boston.
- Wheatley, M.J. (1992). Leadership and the new science: Learning about organization from an orderly universe. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Wynne, E.A. (1989). Managing effective schools: The moral element. In M. Holmes, K. Leithwood, & Musella, D. (Eds), Educational policy for effective schools, (pp. 128-142). Toronto: Ontario Institute of Studies in Education.
- Yin, R. (1984). Case study research - Design and methods. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Zaleznik, A. (1983). Managers and leaders: Are they different? In E. Collins (Ed), Executive success: Making it in management (pp. 123-139). New York: Wiley.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A-LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

December 12, 1994

Dear Colleague:

As I am currently gathering data for my doctoral dissertation on assistant principals, I would greatly appreciate your help by becoming a participant in my research. The data will be utilized to study practicing assistant principals and their professional worlds, responsibilities, challenges, and training. It has the potential to assist in redefining the role of assistant principals and liberate their leadership potential through better preparation programs.

Your cooperation would involve the completion of two-one day journals describing the day's activities, completion of a brief survey, and participation in both an individual and a focus group interview.

The need for administrative leaders has never been greater. Exploring the untapped leadership resource of the assistant principal is a step toward the development of a vitally needed, powerful, collaborative leadership model. In appreciation for your assistance and time contributed, I will be sending you a University of San Diego T-shirt. Thank you ever so much for your important contribution to this project and your dedication to the young people in our schools.

Sincerely yours,

Victoria Halsey
Assistant Principal
Meadowbrook Middle School

APPENDIX B-INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This form shall serve as a written agreement to protect the rights of the participating assistant principals in Victoria Halsey's doctoral research project.

1. The purpose of the study is to portray the professional experience of the practicing assistant principal in the secondary school setting.
2. The procedure for the research will be qualitative in design.

Participation will involve:

A. Completion of two one day logs depicting a typical day. Subjects will be asked to choose the two days ahead of time to avoid selection of an atypical day.

B. Completion of a survey prior to the individual interview.

C. Attendance at and participation in a tape-recorded, forty-five to sixty minute interview which will be held in the gym conference room at Meadowbrook middle school or in the conference room of the school of the participating assistant principal. This interview will be transcribed verbatim.

D. Attendance at a tape-recorded, focus group interview which will last one hour and be transcribed verbatim. Participants will have an opportunity to review all transcriptions to add, delete or correct any portion of the interviews.

E. If necessary, a follow up interview by phone may be held to ensure clarity when analyzing and compiling data.

3. No risks other than those encountered in daily life are anticipated.

4. All responses will be confidential. A pseudonym will be used to protect the anonymity of the subjects, schools and district. Tapes and transcripts will be kept in a locked file during the study, then destroyed upon completion of the research.

5. Each subject will have an opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification before agreeing to participate in the research. The study is voluntary and subjects may withdraw from the study at any time.

6. There is no agreement, written or verbal, beyond that expressed on this consent form.

I, the undersigned, understand the above explanation and, on that basis, consent to my voluntary participation in this research.

Signature of Subject

Date

Signature of the Researcher

Date

Signature of a Witness

Date

Done at _____

City

State

APPENDIX C-SURVEY-BACKGROUND INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

Prior to the beginning of the individual interview the following background information will be obtained:

1. Name _____
2. School _____
3. #Years as administrator _____
4. Areas of responsibility _____
5. Age _____ Gender _____ Ethnicity _____
6. Age when you first entered the profession _____
7. #Of principals you have worked for _____
8. What do you perceive to be the role of the assistant principal on a secondary school campus? _____

9. Formal training you received _____
10. Value of your formal training to your success as an assistant principal. Low 1 2 3 4 5 High
11. Please list any professional development activities that you have participated in that have specifically related to the position of the assistant principal.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Value--Low 1 2 3 4 5 High</u>

12. Please list any areas of professional development or training that you feel would be of value to you as a practicing assistant principal.

13. If there were coursework specifically designed to prepare individuals to become assistant principals, what should the content focus on?

14. What areas of the assistant principalship were you specifically unprepared for?

15. On what duties do you spend the majority of your time?

16. What advice would you offer a person just hired as an assistant principal?_____

17. If you had the power to do anything to help improve the position of the assistant principal, what would you do?

18. If you could be placed in any administrative position, what would that position be?_____
Why?_____

APPENDIX D-INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell me about a typical day in the life of an assistant principal?
2. How is this the same or different from when you originally went into the profession?
3. What do you like best about your role of assistant principal?
4. What do you like least?
5. Where do you spend most of your time?
6. What internal problems do you face in your position?
7. What external problems do you face in your position?
8. How do you perceive others to view your job?
9. What inspired you to make the decision to become an A.P.?
10. How much is the job you do in alignment with the vision you had of yourself when choosing this profession?
11. What was the most difficult challenge for you as you began your journey into administration?
12. How did you compensate for this challenge?
13. Where do you get your sources of inspiration, joy, and energy?
14. Where do you see yourself as having the most impact? The least?
15. As the front line for many potentially negative interactions, how do you initiate and attain a semblance of control?
16. As a practicing assistant principal, are there any areas you wish you had received more training prior to acquiring your position?
17. What has had the greatest influence on the way you carry out the business of being an assistant principal?
18. Are there any areas that you feel are 'musts' for higher education to include in training programs for assistant principals?
19. What might help you to do your job better, more efficiently, or more in line with your vision of how you should be able to do your job?
20. Lastly, tell me about a situation that stands out in your mind as one that could have been a real mess but you did a great job of handling.

APPENDIX E-FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. I'd like to begin by having you discuss what you perceive your role as assistant principals to be about.
2. What are the greatest challenges to overcome as you seek to be effective assistant principals?
3. What, in your opinion, is the role of the site principal in regard to job satisfaction of assistant principals?
4. What do you view as critical indicators of your success as assistant principals?
5. Is there anything you would change about the profession or any last insights you would like to share in regard to your thoughts on the role of secondary school assistant principals?