Theses and Dissertations   Graduate School

2022

Leading Through Crisis: The COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on the School Principalship, A Delphi Study

Matthew J. Togna
Virginia Commonwealth University

Leading Through Crisis:

The COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on the School Principalship, A Delphi Study

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

Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

Matthew J. Togna
Education Specialist (Administration & Supervision), University of Virginia, 2016
Master of Teaching (Secondary Science), University of Virginia, 2009
Bachelor of Science (Chemistry - Chemical Education), University of Virginia, 2009

Director: Kimberly Bridges, Ed.L.D.
Assistant Professor & Ed.D. Co-Coordinator, School of Education

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
August 2022

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mom, Saralyn and grandfather, Ricardo. I understand the value of an education and putting in a hard day's work because of them. I wish they were here to see this.

We must not wait for things to come, believing that they are decided by irrescindable destiny. If we want it, we must do something about it.

—Erwin Schrödinger

Acknowledgements

Over the last four and a half years I've come to realize that earning a Ph.D. (or any degree for that matter) is not an individual endeavor. Rather, the varied efforts and contributions of so many individuals is what leads to this, the final result...that is, this dissertation and my graduation. This work would not have been possible without the support and encouragement from many people. I thank them all…especially the following:

First - I would like to thank my dad, Mark. For all of my life and most definitely since June of 2000, my dad has supported all of my academic, professional, and personal endeavors and is a major reason for why my sister and I are where we are today. My dad has always encouraged me to do my best, live with the outcome, and move on. I attribute my successes to his guidance.

Second - I would like to thank my family (especially Amy, Matt, my Grandma Dora, and of course Austyn and Harrison) and friends (Stephanie for sure) for their unyielding support and encouragement during my doctoral studies. So many of you listened so many times to my struggles throughout this program. I'm sure it was exhausting at times and I cannot say thank you enough for just being there to listen. It really meant a lot.

Third - to all my colleagues at Collegiate School, J.R. Tucker High School, and throughout Henrico County Public Schools who encouraged me and offered me support during the many stages of this work. Thank you! You all inspire me to be a better teacher and leader. I especially thank Sheralyne Tierseron. She is and always will be the greatest colleague (and friend) of all time.

Fourth - I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee - Dr. Kim Bridges, Dr. Jon Becker, Dr. Lisa Abrams, and Dr. Sue Proffitt. Dr. Bridges, your willingness to

chair my committee despite your many other personal and professional commitments was so very much appreciated. You've offered guidance throughout the program, and most importantly throughout my dissertation. I've learned a great deal from you and will take those lessons with me and use them in my professional pursuits. Dr. Becker, thank you for your support as both my advisor and committee member. You provided invaluable guidance throughout my time in the program that got me to this point. And I would be remiss if I didn't give you credit in helping me with the title of this work. Thank you for that as well! Dr. Abrams, your class inspired me to pursue qualitative research. Educational research needs to rely more heavily on the lived experiences of students, teachers, and administrators and I'll advocate for that because of you. I'm thankful for the guidance you gave throughout this project. Dr. Proffitt, thank you for being a good colleague and a role model. I know serving on my committee added to an already full plate of personal and professional responsibilities. I am grateful you chose to take this on as an added responsibility and appreciate your insights as a practicing school principal.

Fifth - An enormous "thank you" to the 26 principals who volunteered to participate in this study. Being a school principal is an extraordinarily demanding job and I am grateful for their willingness to participate and share their thoughts despite an already very busy schedule and of course while operating during parts of the Pandemic. Throughout the study, these individuals were open and honest and I am glad that they were given a voice and a chance to share their experiences from the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Sixth - I thank my teachers...ALL of them. From Mrs. Robertson's third grade class at Dumbarton Elementary School...to Mrs. Spratley's 7th grade English class at Brookland Middle School...to Mr. Hughes, Mr. Sarvey, Ms. Montgomery, Coach Savino, Coach Donahue, and Mr. N. Glenn Blackburn at THE Hermitage High School...having classes I looked forward to was

what made me want to become a teacher. These amazing educators inspired me to go into education and to teach *the* class students look forward to. And to all of my professors during my higher education journey...Professor Gerrans, Professor Bell, Professor Duke, and so many others...Thank you for challenging me to be my best and reminding me why I *needed* to go into education.

Lastly - I thank my students. You all are the reason why I do what I do, and why I love it so much. Every student that has ever walked through the door of Room 61, Room 62, or N206 has had an impact on me. Each of you inspires me to be better and to make the system better.

Thank you, all.

—M.J.T.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Abstract

LEADING THROUGH CRISIS: THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON THE SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP, A DELPHI STUDY

By Matthew J. Togna

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2022

Major Director: Kimberly Bridges, Ed.L.D.
Assistant Professor & Ed.D. Co-Coordinator, School of Education

This dissertation study examined the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the K-12 School Principalship and attempted to forecast the future of the principalship post-Pandemic. Using a forecasting method known as the Delphi Technique, I solicited public K-12 principals working in the Commonwealth of Virginia with at least 3 years of administrative experience to serve as participants. In total, 26 practicing principals completed three questionnaires offering their expert opinions on pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities of the school principal and how those roles were impacted throughout the Pandemic. Additionally, the participants made predictions about the future of the school principalship. Findings revealed the top three pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities were building relationships, instructional leadership, and promoting school safety. Participants also explained that their job throughout the Pandemic evolved from supervising virtual instruction, to monitoring COVID-19 mitigation strategies, to managing teacher absenteeism and increased student disciplinary infractions. Participants forecasted that each of the following will be long term challenges (lasting more than five years) for school principals: decreased student achievement, low morale among teachers, student social emotional challenges, and teacher shortages.

Keywords: School Principals, COVID-19 Pandemic, Crisis Leadership, Delphi Method

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

In March of 2019, the University of Virginia, like all institutions of learning across the country and throughout the world, was forced to close to in-person instruction due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. For the University, as for K-12 schools, the pivot to online learning was a challenge few were prepared for. Just prior to the shut down, University of Virginia President Jim Ryan sent a lengthy email to the University community in preparation for its indefinite closure. President Ryan wrote, "We are in this together, though I recognize that the impact will be uneven." He went on to say that "[Closing school] will also create economic challenges and hardships for some in the Charlottesville community" and that "If ever there were a time to be both great and good, this is surely it."   At that time, President Ryan's words captured several important realizations so many school leaders, regardless of the level at which they lead, needed to make themselves if ever they were to successfully lead their institutions through a multi-year crisis. Strategic, targetted, and frequent communication became the norm for leaders everywhere during the onset of and throughout the Pandemic. Furthermore, despite the size of the University of Virginia community, Ryan's words are indicative of a relational leader who cares deeply about the people who make up the institution.

In Henrico County Public Schools (HCPS), Superintendent Amy Cashwell sent a communication much like that of Ryan. An excerpt from the communication is below:

> During this unprecedented experience, we will continue to do everything possible to ensure the health and safety of our community. The HCPS Facilities and Pupil Transportation departments will conduct additional cleaning of school buildings and buses, and continue to assess the best cleaning practices. Additionally, for many of our students, the meals provided at our schools are a crucial part of their daily nutrition.

Additional plans are being made to address this vital need across the Henrico

Community. Please know that [closing schools] is not a decision that we make lightly.

We realize that any change to educational schedules is disruptive and inconvenient.

However, our priority must always be the health and safety of our students, staff members

and community. Again, more details about student learning will be forthcoming in

separate communications. We have also created a "COVID-19" page on our website

where information from the school division will be posted. We will get through this

together, and I promise you that the dedicated team at Henrico County Public Schools

will work to make you, our families, very proud.

Ryan and Cashwell's words remind us that at such an unbelievable moment in time, school

leaders were responsible for gaining community buy-in, support, and understanding for how the

Pandemic and subsequent school closures would impact their greater community. These impacts

included the following:

1. The COVID-19 Pandemic would cause challenges and hardships for all community

   members.

2. Some community members would face greater challenges than others, and inequities

   would be magnified for already disadvantaged subsets of the population.

3. School closures would impact more than just students and their families. The greater

   community would be impacted as well.

4. Successfully navigating the Pandemic would require a shared understanding and unified

   efforts from all stakeholders.

President Ryan and Superintendent Cashwell's messages were carefully crafted, I believe, and

their choice of words were deliberate. At that moment, they were attempting to promote calm

while staying mission focused. Ryan and Cashwell, like so many other school leaders throughout the world, also were attempting to protect the health and safety of the community they were charged with leading. By helping their communities understand the need for as well as the potential impacts of school closures, I contend that both Ryan and Cashwell were nurturing an environment of support for future administrative decisions that would be needed throughout the Pandemic. These as-yet unknown decisions would certainly bring about significant challenges.

The impacts of shutting down our nation's schools become readily apparent upon examination of the individual public K-12 school communities. The onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic, at the building level, forced school principals to implement crisis management plans that had no contingency for total, indefinite shutdown with the replacement of in person instruction with 100% virtual instruction followed by a return to face-to-face instruction under significantly altered circumstances. Those altered circumstances were characterized by face masking, contact tracing, social distancing, hybrid instructional modalities, etc. The need for principals to make real time decisions while also taking time to think carefully about how those decisions impacted all aspects of the organization was a reality for most principals during the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic (Iacuzzi et al., 2021).

The cases examined by Iacuzzi et al. (2021) support the need for principals and school systems in general to reassess how they went about making decisions and communicating those decisions to key stakeholders. As a result of their work, they noted that "new governance arrangements, new teaching provisions, new organizational routines and procedures, and an impetus to overcome resistance to change may well characterize the next normal for schools" (Iacuzzi et al., 2021, p. 4-5). Put differently, their work suggests a need for greater flexibility

among school personnel during emerging crises that impact how educational services are delivered to students.

Like Iacuzzi et al. (2021), Grooms and Childs (2021) used an exploratory case study design to examine how principals made decisions in real time as the Pandemic unfolded. They noted similar findings that support the above and explained how principals were forced to use sensemaking strategies (the process of using lived experiences to make sense of a situation) to make decisions during the onset of the Pandemic. Doing so, they wrote, helped principals navigate policy and practices put in place to ensure student learning continued despite the effects of the Pandemic.

Anecdotally, and through my own personal experience as both a member of society and a practicing educator, I am reminded that the COVID-19 Pandemic changed so much of how we live our daily lives. For many, going to school is a significant part of daily life. For principals, whose roles were already complex pre-Pandemic and who, like nearly everyone worldwide, had no experience handling a global pandemic, I hypothesize that leading a school into and out of a long term closure will have a lasting impact on the job itself. In other words, as we move forward and towards COVID-19 becoming endemic rather than pandemic, I believe that the principalship will evolve given all we've learned during an unprecedented time in world history. Roles and responsibilities during both normal and crisis operations will further develop and the time devoted to each may shift.

As the COVID-19 Pandemic continues to be a developing current event, scholarship continues to emerge but remains limited (McLeod & Dulsky, 2021). The early studies noted here and later in the literature review have focused on the initial impacts of the Pandemic on various individuals, groups, and organizations; however, forward-thinking, post-Pandemic research is

needed. Supporting this claim is the work of McLeod and Dulsky (2021) who noted the need for further research on the COVID-19 Pandemic's impact on schools. The objective of this study was to add to that body of literature and specifically examined the Pandemic's impact on the potential future of the school principalship.

Using the Delphi Method as described by Dalkey and Helmer (1963), evidence collected during this study was analyzed in such a way that predicts what the future roles and responsibilities of the school principal will look like. This methodology was appropriate for the present work as it is designed to surface areas of commonality from expert practitioners. Those areas of commonality were used to make predictions about the challenges ahead which can, in turn, be used to make recommendations to prepare for those challenges.   Furthermore, these "lessons learned" by practicing principals during the Pandemic were used to offer a set of recommended best practices for principals in both ordinary and crisis times. Additionally, through this forecasting, I will provide guidance and recommendations so that principal preparation programs and the job of school principal itself can be adjusted as needed to meet the future demands of the profession.

Background

The school principalship is a complex position that has grown and evolved over the course of many decades; it currently includes a wide variety of roles and responsibilities (Virginia Department of Education, 2020; Becker & Grob, 2021: Sebastian et al., 2018; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015; Lynch, 2012; Lunenburg, 2010; Portin et al., 1998). Various bodies of research have examined the school principalship in detail and those bodies continue to grow today. Several of note examine individual roles and responsibilities as well the amount of time devoted to each.

While not a comprehensive list, Table 1 provides a summary of the roles and responsibilities of school principals found throughout the literature (Sebastian et al., 2018; Lynch, 2012; Lunenburg, 2010; Portin et al., 1998) as well as in various standards for educational leaders (Virginia Department of Education, 2020; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015) with a brief description of each role/responsibility based on a synthesis of the literature reviewed (For further discussion see Chapter II).

Table 1

Roles and Responsibilities of the School Principal

Role/Responsibility	Description
Strategic Planner & Visionary	- Develops a mission and vision for school-wide success. - Promotes mission and vision to all stakeholders. - Works towards mission and vision by successfully navigating other roles and responsibilities.
Personnel Manager	- Recruits and hires faculty and staff that align with mission and vision of school and school division. - Works closely with other members of administration to supervise and evaluate all faculty and staff. - Develops faculty and staff by providing adequate supervision that includes observations and feedback.
Instructional Leader	- Conducts regular observations of faculty and provides meaningful feedback. - Promotes the professional development of the teacher workforce.
Student Disciplinarian	- Promotes a positive school culture that deters student misbehavior. - Responds to and investigates disciplinary infractions using methods that are consistent with school board policy and all relevant legal statutes. - Issues disciplinary consequences to promote growth and development and that are consistent with the school's mission and vision.
Community Relations Manager	- Engages with all stakeholders through multiple means of communication. - Seeks out opinions and ideas from multiple stakeholders. - Fosters a school environment where all members of the community are welcome at school wide events.
Financial Manager	- Develops and oversees implementation of the school's budget. - Has an awareness and implements general oversight of all funds flowing into and out of school.
Building Operations Manager	- Oversees staff responsible for maintaining the school's facilities. - Communicates with members of the facilities team to ensure proper functioning and maintenance of all school buildings.

What's not displayed in Table 1 is the time requirements needed to ensure success. In short, however, that commitment is enormous and should be noted by the reader. A discussion of principals' time use can be found in Chapter II.

The list presented in Table 1 also reveals just how very complex and demanding the job is. Lunenburg (2010) reflected on the complexity and described it as a position with a demanding and fast paced workload characterized by "variety, fragmentation, and brevity" (p. 5). In a report for the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Portin and colleagues (1998) revealed that a majority of principals felt their role has shifted from one of instructional leadership to one that is more managerial in nature. Such a shift affirms Lunenburg's (2010) characterization and may be likened to the colloquial expression of "putting out fires." In other words, school principals, according to the literature, are constantly addressing issues with immediacy rather than through a forward-thinking lens even though many see their role as visionary in nature. Portin et al. (1998) also noted that principals felt they were approaching the limit to the amount of time they could devote to the job itself.

As previously mentioned, the COVID-19 Pandemic was a novel situation where school principals were thrust into the position of long term crisis manager. Specifically, principals had to maintain their school and school division's work towards achieving a mission and vision during a time when schools were shut down for in person learning (McLeod & Dulsky, 2021).

Many expectations of schools and, subsequently, school principals went unchanged; however, the methods for meeting those expectations were altered given the set of circumstances that resulted from the Pandemic (Iacuzzi et al., 2020; Reyes-Guerra et al., 2021). Iacuzzi et al. (2020) suggested that schools do more than simply teach curriculum; they offer important services that so many families rely on. These services included daily meal provisions, child care,

and counseling. What's important to realize here is that the role of a school principal has always been filled with its challenges; however, the COVID-19 Pandemic magnified those challenges while also creating many new ones.

Statement of the Problem

Portin and colleagues (1998) conducted research over two decades ago that indicated school principals felt their job had changed and that they were reaching maximum workload capacity. Furthermore, Lunenburg's (2010) work suggested that the principalship was shifting from a role characterized by instructional leadership to one that is managerial. Taken together, these works suggest that the principalship is capable of evolution based on various situational circumstances.

Thornton (2021) indicated that during the COVID-19 Pandemic, principals were forced to adapt in order to ensure student and faculty needs were met. She goes on to conclude that lessons learned during the Pandemic could be used to inform future practices in school leadership. While in-the-moment decision-making was necessary to proceed through the onset and continuation of the COVID-19 Pandemic, lessons learned from this prolonged crisis, I theorize, will impact the roles and responsibilities of the school principal as well as how crisis situations will be handled in the future.

Although there have been various works (Iacuzzi et al., 2020; McLeod & Dulsky, 2021; Reyes-Guerra et al., 2021; Thornton, 2021) that have examined the principal's role during the COVID-19 Pandemic, it is unclear how the principalship will be impacted post-Pandemic. Using the Delphi Technique initially described and implemented by Dalkey and Helmer (1963), this study was designed in order to forecast the future of the school principalship once the COVID-19 Pandemic has concluded. Doing so, I contend, will allow for better preparation to

meet the needs of students during normal times and prolonged times of crisis. Furthermore, this work can be used to better inform school leadership preparation programs and the competencies that those programs seek to teach aspiring school leaders.

Conceptual Framework

In developing and introducing the conceptual framework for this study, I lean on the words of Anyon (2009) who wrote:

> We choose theories because, in the end, we think they will produce the most explanation parsimoniously, because their adoption may lead to new and interesting data and explanations, and—importantly—because they may provide some purchase on progressive strategies for social change (p.8).

While social change is not the goal of the present study, Anyon's words indicate that theory can, and often does, promote progress. These words remind me, and should remind the reader, that the formation of the present conceptual framework was intended to guide this research and offer some explanation for the future of the school principalship.

The objective of the framework presented here and the goal of this study was to provide new explanations and new theories for best practices in school administration. Therefore, the framework was constructed using Maxwell's (2013) notion of epistemological constructivism which is based on the idea that "our understanding of this world is inevitably our construction, rather than purely objective perception of reality, and no such construction can claim absolute truth" (p. 43). In constructing the framework for the present study, I attempted to draw solely on the literature; however, it should be noted that I am a practicing educator with experiences that undoubtedly helped shape the framework presented here. Thus, my epistemological construction of this framework, according to Maxwell (2013), was dually influenced by my own

understanding of the literature as well as by my own experiences in education working alongside other practicing teachers and administrators. The conceptual framework for the present study is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework
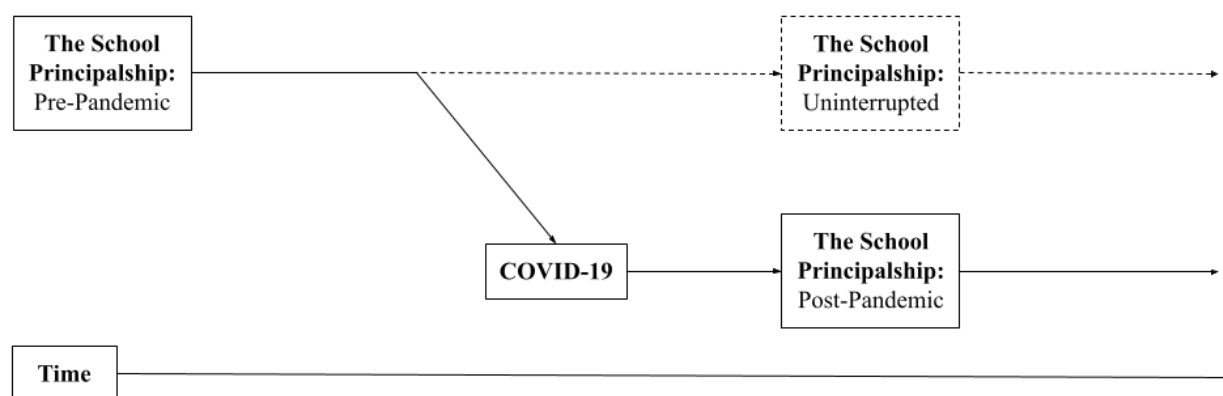
This framework shows that the school principalship Pre-Pandemic was on a course of particular evolution. That evolution would have continued and been influenced by various events in absence of the COVID-19 Pandemic. However, the interruption of the COVID-19 Pandemic caused that course to shift in a different direction. I therefore theorized that the principalship, as a result of the Pandemic, is now on a new course and will continue to evolve differently than it would have had the Pandemic never occurred. This study sought to understand that eventual forecasted evolution. In an attempt to better understand the present study, I offer a more detailed version of the conceptual framework which is shown in Figure 2.

The detailed framework indicates that the school principalship consists of seven standard roles and responsibilities that include the following: strategic planner and visionary, personnel manager, instructional leader, student disciplinarian, community relations manager, financial

manager, and building operations manager (See Table 1). These roles and responsibilities were generated using the literature reviewed as well as the performance standards for principals outlined by the Virginia Department of Education (2020). Each of these roles and responsibilities, I hypothesize, is fulfilled differently during ordinary operations and crisis operations. The framework indicates that had the COVID-19 Pandemic not occurred, then the school principalship would have continued on an evolution that now, at this moment, will no longer be reached. Instead, I hypothesize that the role of the school principal during both ordinary and crisis times will evolve differently and reach a post-Pandemic modus operandi.

Figure 2

Detailed Conceptual Framework
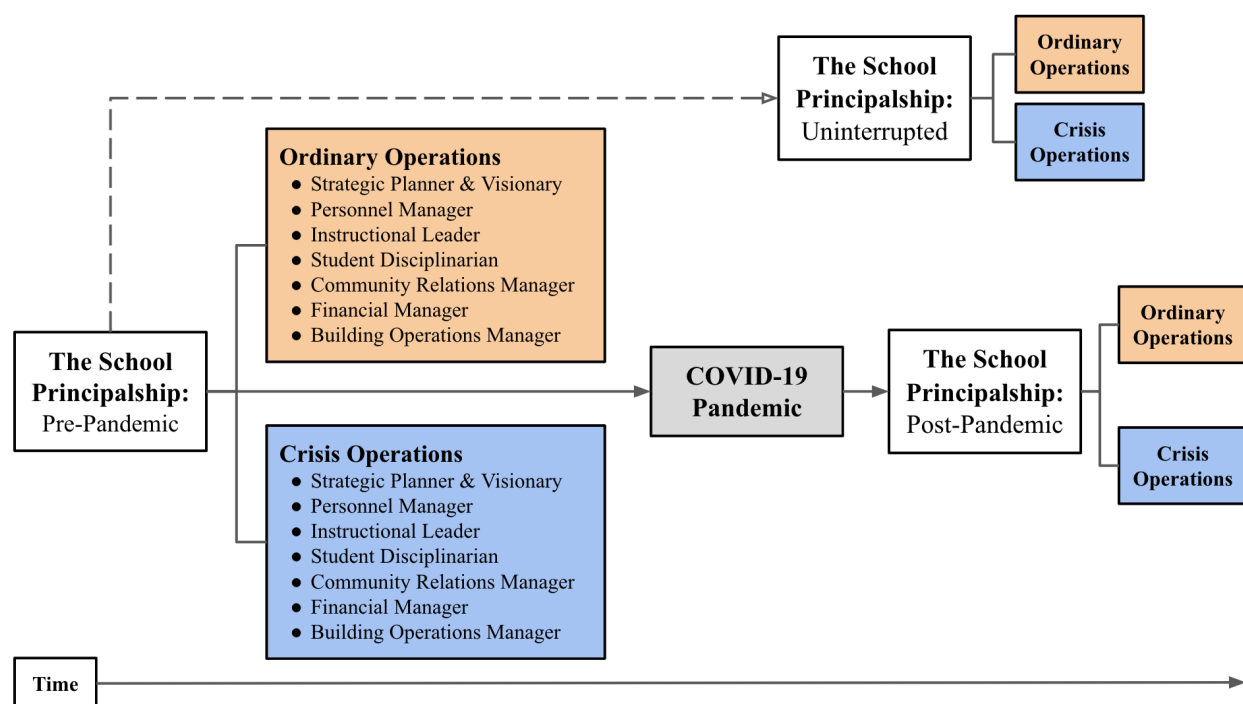
Purpose and Significance of the Study

The conceptual framework for this study theorizes that the role of the school principal has changed since the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic and that it will continue to evolve as the

world returns to normal and enters post-pandemic times. This study sought to address this evolution by forecasting its future using the Delphi Method (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963). In particular, I relied on the knowledge and experience of current school principals and sought their opinions on what their job will entail post-Pandemic. Doing so, I hope, will inform future practices during both normal and crisis operations. Additionally, knowledge gained from this work could inform principal preparation programs. Additionally, and while not necessarily a primary objective of this research, data from this study may help researchers and practitioners alike better understand how best to run K-12 schools now and in the future.

Research Questions

In order to better understand the future of the school principalship and to best prepare school leaders to be most effective, this study attempted to answer several research questions. They include the following:

1. How has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected the school principalship?

2. What lessons were learned during the COVID-19 Pandemic that will inform future practices of school principals during both normal and crisis operations?

3. How will each role and responsibility of the school principal change once the COVID-19 Pandemic concludes? Will there be new roles and responsibilities and if so, what are they?

Design/Procedures

This study employed the Delphi technique first used by Norman Dalkey and Olaf Helmer of the RAND Corporation in 1963 and as described by Green (2014). The technique relies on the opinions of a panel of experts to develop consensus. The consensus-building of the expert panelists can be used to forecast future trends and outcomes for better organizational planning.

This study followed the Delphi process outlined by Stewart et al. (2007), Skulmoski et al., 2007, Green (2014), and Rowe and Wright (2011) and as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3

The Delphi Technique

Step 1
Develop the initial Delphi question(s).

Step 2
Identify and select expert panelists.

Step 3
Conduct first round questionnaire.

Step 4
Analyze responses, provide summary feedback to panelists, develop next round's questionnaire.

Step 5
Repeat steps 3 and 4 for a second and third round of questioning and feedback-giving.

Step 6
Analyze final results and forecast future outcomes that answer the initial Delphi question(s).

Note. This figure was adapted from Green (2014).

A hallmark of the Delphi Method is its iterative approach to questioning experts for the purpose of consensus building. Expert panelists are selected based on their experience to speak intelligently about their field or discipline. Consensus is reached through at least three rounds of questioning. Each round is followed by the delivery of informed feedback provided by the researcher to the panelists. The purpose of the feedback rounds is to inform panelists of the opinions of their peers without compromising their identities. The revealing of dissensus, areas

of difference, to panelists during the iterative phases of questions, according to Rowe and Wright (2011), is what ultimately leads to accurate and well thought out consensus. It is this reaching of consensus among the experts which allows the researcher to forecast the answers to the Delphi questions.

The Delphi questions (the research questions) for the present study have been written and were identified in a previous section of this chapter. These questions were formulated with the Delphi objective of forecasting in mind. Steps 2 through 6 will be followed as outlined in Figure 3 and will include four key features as described by Rowe and Wright (1999): anonymity, iteration, controlled feedback, and statistical aggregation of group response. They are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Key Features of the Delphi Technique

Feature	Description
Anonymity	Participant identities will remain confidential such that one individual does not exert undue influence over the others.
Iteration	Participants will be surveyed over a number of rounds in order to generate a more consistent and reliable consensus of answers to the research questions.
Controlled Feedback	Following each round, participants will be given feedback on their peers' responses. This feedback often is a summary of the group response with occasional information on outlier responses. The feedback between rounds allows participants to consider revisions to their own responses for future questionnaires.
Statistical Aggregation of Group Response	After the third round of questioning, a group consensus is reached by taking the statistical average of participant responses.

Note: Adapted from Rowe and Wright (1999)

Purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013) along with convenience sampling, as described by Stewart et al. (2007), was used to formulate the panel of experts used for the present study. In short, the panel consisted of principals serving various public K-12 schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Panelists were required to have at least ten years of experience in education, five of which must have been in building-level administration and three of which must be as a principal. These requirements ensure a principal has experience as such prior to the start of the Pandemic. Once the panel was selected, the first round questionnaire was distributed via email. Participants were given seven days to complete the questionnaire and reminders were sent at regular intervals to ensure as close to 100% completion as possible.

The purpose of the first round questionnaire was fourfold. The first goal was to generate participant consensus on the roles and responsibilities of the school principal pre-Pandemic. Additionally, the Round One questionnaire was used to identify challenges principals faced during normal operations. Next, principals were asked to describe the challenges they faced during the COVID-19 Pandemic and how they viewed their primary roles and responsibilities during this time of crisis. Finally, principals were asked to predict how the COVID-19 Pandemic would impact their roles and responsibilities once it reaches an endemic rather than pandemic state. All questions in Round One were open-ended response items.

Responses to the Round One questionnaire were analyzed and coded. Following this analysis, written feedback was distributed to participants via email and a second round of questions was developed and issued. Participants were again given seven days to complete the questionnaire. Open-ended questions were distributed during Round Two with the goal of answering each of the three research questions identified previously. Round Two questions

sought consensus-forming on all of the questions raised during the prior round; however, a greater emphasis was placed on the future of the principalship once the Pandemic concludes.

Round Two responses were analyzed for themes and consensus and feedback was again provided to participants. The final round of questioning was distributed and sought 75% consensus (Diamond et al., 2014) on the future of the school principalship. Data was again collected and analyzed following the seven day questioning period. While a general consensus of the principalship's future was the ultimate goal of this study, dissenting opinions of experts will also be presented with the hope of providing a more balanced forecast. In other words, dissensus was not overlooked and was viewed as an important data point when making conclusions and recommendations. Furthermore, while 75% agreement was the target for consensus, a majority (greater than 50% agreement) was noted when and if reached.

Definition of Terms

Consensus: The goal of a Delphi study is to develop consensus among the expert panelists through iterative question and feedback sessions. The determination of consensus in Delphi work is debated, but in general, 75% agreement among panelists is typically accepted as the standard (Diamond et al., 2014).

Crisis Operations: Any period of time requiring an alteration or cessation of normal operations of school to ensure student and staff safety and/or continuation of the academic and extracurricular program.

Delphi Technique: A research method that seeks to gain a consensus of opinions from individuals deemed experts in a particular field using a series of questionnaires each followed by participant feedback. Data is analyzed to forecast future outcomes of a particular phenomena or entity (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963).

Expert: An individual in a particular field qualified to make informed judgements about their practice through a combination of both educational and professional experiences. In the present study, participants were required to have at least ten years of experience in education, five of which must have been in building-level administration, and three of which must be as a principal.

Ordinary Operations: Any period of time where a school is functioning normally and the faculty, administrators, staff, and students are working together to achieve the school's mission and vision.

School Principal: The highest ranking administrator within a school building who bears ultimate responsibility for all aspects of academic, extracurricular, and operational functioning.

Chapter Summary

The COVID-19 Pandemic created significant challenges for the world and its people. As a practicing teacher, I have seen firsthand the impacts of the Pandemic on students and their families, teachers, and administrators. In particular, research suggests that during the onset of the Pandemic and at its peak, school principals were forced to alter how they conducted business.

While principals have always faced their share of challenges during normal operations, this study sought to identify the unique challenges they faced throughout the Pandemic and how their crisis response may have affected their role long term. Using the Delphi Method (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963), I attempted to forecast the future of the school principalship. Doing so, I believe, will allow for better crisis preparations as well as better preparation overall for a demanding and complex job that will continue to evolve. Subsequent chapters will include a review of the relevant literature, the study's methodology, results and analysis, a discussion of the findings, and recommendations for practice.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

While the school district superintendent serves as the chief executive for a community's schools and is ultimately responsible for its collective successes and failures (Duke, 2010), I argue that there is no individual more directly responsible for those outcomes than the district's school principals. The demands placed on school principals are significant and make the ultimate goal of ensuring student success a difficult one to attain. These competing priorities include enforcing school rules and issuing disciplinary consequences, supervising faculty and staff, overseeing building operations and maintenance, addressing parent concerns, and ensuring student safety (Sebastian et al., 2018; Lynch, 2012; Lunenburg, 2010; Portin et al., 1998). Recently, the COVID-19 Pandemic further complicated the role of a school principal (McLeod *&* Dulsky, 2021; Weiner et al., 2021).

Since the school principalship is a highly complex position, I will first examine the traditional roles and responsibilities that make it so. By first developing an understanding of the pre-Pandemic principalship, I begin to conceptualize how school leaders were impacted by the quick onset of an ever-changing school landscape brought about by COVID-19. Following this discussion, I will review the role of the school principal specifically as a crisis manager in order to establish a baseline for their readiness to handle a novel emergency such as a global pandemic. In short, this review will suggest that principals needed more crisis management preparation pre-Pandemic (McLeod & Dulsky, 2021); however, despite the lack of training, they were tasked with leading schools through a crisis that required on demand, real time decision-making with the understanding that those decisions could be altered or thrown out altogether at any time (Weiner, 2021). Finally, while the literature is still in its infancy, and while the COVID-19 Pandemic remains an ongoing crisis, I will attempt to offer an explanation and put forth a

conceptual framework for how the Pandemic has impacted and is still impacting the school principalship. It is this third task that this dissertation will attempt to offer theory for. Moreover, this work will be forward-thinking and attempt to illustrate how sitting principals see their role evolving post-COVID-19.

The School Principalship

The school principalship is a complex and demanding position typically requiring a graduate level degree and experience as a teacher and an assistant principal. This section of the literature review is meant to present a comprehensive overview of what it means to be a school principal and will specifically examine the roles and responsibilities of school principals as well as the time allocation dedicated to each of those areas.

Roles and Responsibilities of a School Principal

The roles and responsibilities of a twenty-first century school principal are numerous, complex, and evolving constantly. According to Pawlas (2005), "the responsibilities of a school principal continue to be expanded, reviewed, and scrutinized" (p. xi). In his exploratory qualitative study, Reid's (2021) findings remind us that many of the roles and responsibilities of school principals are in a constant state of evolution. However, certain tasks central to a school's success remain constant. As this literature review is primarily focused on the principal as a crisis manager, I'll first examine their other roles and responsibilities to illustrate the variety and complexity of the job of school principal.

Based on a multiple case study analysis, Garza and colleagues (2014) found that, aside from the obvious tasks related to employee and student supervision and buildings and grounds management, a successful school principal was effective in several areas. These dimensions, they wrote, included having a well-defined vision for educational success, a desire to develop

teachers, a focus on community building, and personal attributes such as "resilience and motivation to sustain their efforts over time." Cherkowski (2016) reported similar findings and also noted that school culture was the direct responsibility of the principal and that it mattered in determining student outcomes.

Duke (2010) also wrote on many of these responsibilities and challenges faced by school districts identifying them as strategic challenges, operational challenges, and fundamental challenges. Multiple other works as well as the current *Guidelines for Uniform Performance Standards and Evaluation Criteria for Principals* published by the Virginia Department of Education (2020) add support to Duke's categories listed above. Taken together, they, along with Virginia's Administrative Code for Administration and Supervision (2018), which provides the legal framework for principal certification, allow me to identify a set of typical roles and responsibilities that I summarize as follows: strategic planner and visionary, personnel manager, student disciplinarian, instructional leader, financial manager, community relations manager, and crisis manager (Portin et al., 1998; Duke, 2010; Lynch, 2012; Sebastian et al., 2018; Virginia Department of Education, 2020). While it could be argued that this is not an all-inclusive list, I believe that each of the following captures a large percentage of what occupies a principal's time.

Strategic Planner and Visionary. One might argue that without a proper vision for the future, a principal is doomed to fail. In reviewing the literature, I decided on the title of Strategic Planner and Visionary as the first responsibility and challenge of a principal. I contend that without a suitable vision, no principal will find successes in any of their additional roles and responsibilities.

In their work investigating principals' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities, Stringer and Hourani (2016) stated that "principals demonstrate an awareness of the part they

play in bringing about change and implementing reforms" (p. 243). Furthermore, the work of Mora-Whitehurst (2013) found statistically significant correlations between elementary school principals who implemented visionary leadership strategies and student reading outcomes. Therefore, the importance of the principal's vision for their school cannot be understated and can be summarized through the following quotation from Stringer and Hourani (2016): "Principals, charged with developing a collaborative school vision of excellence and equity, are responsible for setting and achieving goals and targets using appropriate technologies as learning tools and participating in programs of self-development" (p. 226). They later write, "Principals are expected to chart a course for school improvement by designing school improvement plans based on need (Stringer & Hourani, 2016, p. 236). Their words and their main argument is closely related to the holistic process of mission and vision planning in public schools. "Charting a course," as they write, is analogous to developing a school's mission and vision.

Garza et al. (2014) noted similar findings and stated that a school's success or lack thereof can be attributed to a principal's vision and their methods for achieving that vision. The successful principal, therefore, must take steps to develop a vision and generate stakeholder interest in that vision should they hope to achieve school-wide success (Hitt et al., 2018). Only then can they begin to realize notable competence in Garza and colleagues' (2014) dimensions of an effective principal as well as the following other roles and responsibilities.

Personnel Manager. If developing and attaining a vision is a principal's primary objective, then hiring and retaining quality faculty and staff capable of assisting in achieving that goal is an essential part of a principal's job (Becker & Grob, 2021). Therefore, another important role that principals play in their schools is that of the school-based human resources manager, or the personnel manager. Norton's (2008) text reminds us about how the challenges of

any organization are closely related to the individuals that make up its workforce. For schools, most of those employees are teachers. Norton also pointed out that it is important for all employees in a particular school building to be motivated to accomplish common goals related to student achievement. Cherkowski (2016) supported such a claim and found that there is a need for school principals to foster a shared vision for learning. It is therefore vital that a principal use their role as a personnel manager to hire teachers who will embrace the shared vision and work towards the school's common goals (Lynch, 2012). The successful operation of a school building is not just related to its faculty, however. In addition to the complexities that come with hiring, developing, and retaining great teachers, principals are also tasked with managing the other support staff in their school buildings such as custodians, cafeteria workers, counselors and other administrators, and grounds and maintenance workers. All of these individuals are contributing members of a school community. Their commitment to excellence in their respective positions can assist a principal achieve his or her vision for academic success.

In addition to hiring strong teachers, one dimension of the effective principal involved capacity building (Hitt et al., 2018). Specifically, Hitt et al. (2018) cited the need for principals to focus employees on a shared vision, remind employees of the role they play in reaching that vision, address lack of performance, offer differentiated professional development activities, foster leadership development within the faculty and staff, and to ensure personnel assignments match individual strengths. Stringer and Hourani (2016) connect the "ability to influence the structure, culture, and mission of the school" (p. 228) to the principal's varied human resources responsibilities.

Instructional Leader. Another primary responsibility of the school principal is that of the instructional leader (Boyce & Bowers, 2018; Lynch, 2012; Reid, 2021; Stringer & Hourani,

2016) which I contend, is a separate role from personnel manager. While a personnel manager is more closely connected to human resources administration, an instructional leader is solely focused on the successful delivery of curriculum to students. In other words, the principal, sometimes referred to as the head teacher, is directly responsible for promoting the professional development and supervision of their teacher workforce which can, in turn, impact what happens in individual classrooms (Boyce & Bowers, 2018).

According to Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2014) "supervision is the function in schools that draws together the discrete elements of instructional effectiveness into whole-school success" (p. 9). With that in mind, it should be apparent that a principal wishing to reach his vision for success would want to be an exceptional instructional leader. Doing so, according to Lynch (2012) means that a principal bears the responsibility of ensuring that all students learn.

Student Disciplinarian. While Lynch (2012) noted that the role of the school principal has evolved beyond that of a disciplinarian, he does concede that such a responsibility is an important part of the job. Lynch bolsters his case for such a role by reminding readers that part of a principal's educational preparation should be related to student discipline. Duke's (2010) text indicated that the landscape for student safety and discipline is vast. Principals must be well versed in a variety of policies and procedures related to student discipline and have a competent awareness of various legal statutes that may come up in their practice as administrators. Duke (2010) goes on to write that the principal's authority to act *in loco parentis* "began to erode during the 1960s when a variety of court decisions established the fact that students have rights" (p. 155). Without well-defined legal guidance on appropriate responses to student misconduct, the principalship became further complicated. Nevertheless, despite the complicated nature of school law as it relates to student discipline, principals must be prepared to handle a diverse

sampling of infractions such that the mission and vision of the school can remain the focus of all stakeholders. Furthermore, there is a need to expect the unexpected when it comes to novel disciplinary infractions.

The complex nature of student rights coupled with the need to promote student safety and security creates a challenge for school administrators seeking to promote a positive school climate. Reid (2021) found that principals believe that their role will continue to evolve and that it will, in the future, require a greater focus on student safety and security. Therefore, when enforcing school rules, principals must find an appropriate balance between issuing disciplinary consequences and meeting the needs of the total school population.

Community Relations Manager. Stringer and Hourani (2016) identified the principal as one of the primary leaders in a community. According to Pawlas (2005), "understanding the community structure, the formal and informal groups that function in the community, can be an asset to the success of the school" (p. 33). Therefore, as the school leader, it is the principal who bears the responsibility of fostering strong school-community relations. While there are various community stakeholders that principals must build relationships with, perhaps those having the most direct connection with the school are students' parents.

Barr and Saltmarsch (2014) and Henderson and Mapp (2002) have noted that the relationships forged with parents can positively impact student outcomes. Therefore, it is important for the school principal to work in cooperation with the faculty to develop and maintain relationships that result in parental support of the school's vision for student achievement. Iacuzzi and colleagues (2020) reported findings that indicated the importance of a school principal to be in constant communication with all stakeholders during the COVID-19 Pandemic. That responsibility is not unique to times of global crisis. The relationship between

the principal and the community during the onset of the Pandemic will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent sections of this literature review.

   Financial Manager. A great deal of public money flows through the accounts of the nation's public schools. In fact, Baker (2018) pointed out that the funding of schools is the largest budget line item found in state budgets. Disbursements from the state to the county governments and to subsequent schools become the responsibility of the school principal. While the principal is not the ultimate gatekeeper and budget manager (those responsibilities are often charged to district level officials and school boards), Stringer and Hourani (2016) did note that principals recognize part of their job is to manage the day-to-day finances of the school building. Course fees, lunch income, ticket sales for athletic events are all examples of various school-level revenue streams. The expenses for public schools are great as well and include classroom supplies, supplies for athletics including uniforms and equipment, supplies for extracurricular activities, as well as maintenance supplies. While many schools have a dedicated financial secretary, the ultimate responsibility of managing the school's finances falls to the principal. The handling of government funds must be done so responsibly and is a task many principals have little experience in when assuming their role for the first time. Instead, they have typically had a single course that was part of their graduate coursework in school administration (Glanz, 2005).

   With all the other commitments a principal has, financial management, while important, can be a significant burden. Ensuring there are trusted individuals in various other school leadership positions to manage their departmental funds is critical should a principal wish to mitigate the time and effort spent on auditing his school finances. That said, Glanz (2005) noted how it is the principal who must have the sole handle on his school's financial situation despite

all of his other responsibilities. Furthermore, as Baker (2018) noted, in public education, the

dollars flowing into one's school building are public dollars and their handling must be done

with extreme care and with justification. Furthermore, Baker (2018) indicated that the spending

of those dollars are under intense scrutiny by multiple stakeholders who wish to ensure they are

used to promote educational equity. The visibility of a principal's actions as Pawlas (2005) noted

in the previous section can be magnified when the principal fails to spend public funds equitably,

with all students in mind.

Building Operations Manager. A final responsibility of the school principal was noted

in the work of Sebastian et al. (2018) and is labeled here as building operations management. In

short, this is the work that includes the maintenance and upkeep of the school's facilities. Portin

et al. (1998) also reported that a principal is the individual who ensures custodial and

maintenance staff keep school facilities clean and functioning properly. Like all the others, this

responsibility cannot be overlooked. Ultimately, facilities can have an impact on the other areas

a principal is responsible for, a notion that is supported by Stringer and Hourani (2016) who

found that "the quality of the school's buildings and premises" (p. 231) is one of the areas of

focus for school improvement plans. While I only mention it briefly here, I do not wish to

undervalue or overlook this responsibility. School buildings are large with many systems in need

of maintenance. Furthermore, schools of varying age may require more or less attention. Simply

put, building operations is vital to school success.

Time Allocation - The Daily Schedule of a Principal

The preceding sections focused on the individual roles and responsibilities of the school

principal; however, considering how each of these fits into the schedule of the school principal

substantiates the complexity of the job itself. Portin et al. (1998) suggested that the increasing

load of priorities compete for principals' time and make the job extremely complicated. They also noted the shift from district-level decision-making to building-level decision-making has only further spread the allocation of principals' time and dedication to various tasks.

Studies that consider the allocation of time to each responsibility (Portin et al., 1998; Sebastian et al., 2018) reveal that a principal's time is spread thin. Sebastian and colleagues (2018) tracked principals' use of time throughout the school day. They found that, on average, principals spent their time on 4.94 domains (a role or responsibility) per day. Table 3 is adapted from their work and shows the average percentage of time participants reported spending on each domain per day. That data presented in Table 3 supports the major roles and responsibilities outlined in previous sections.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Principals' Percentage Time Allotment per Domain

Role/Responsibility	*M*	*SD*
Building operations	8.44	12.19
Finances	4.39	7.74
Community/parent relations	9.83	11.93
District functions	7.20	16.21
Student affairs	21.48	18.82
Personnel issues	10.33	14.03
Planning/setting goals	9.22	13.97
Instructional leadership	16.25	18.55
Professional Growth	5.18	15.11
Other	7.67	16.04

Note. Adapted from the results of Sebastian et al. (2018)

Overlapping Roles and Responsibilities

Becker and Grob (2021) noted that the roles and responsibilities of school principals can and do overlap with one another. For example, they stated that "a principal who undertakes respectful classroom observations and competently communicates the results is being a relational trust builder and an instructional leader" (Becker & Grob, 2021, p. 15). Another example might be a principal issuing disciplinary consequences to students for fighting. Those consequences have direct impacts on the teaching personnel, safety of the students and faculty, and overall community relationships that have been previously established. This overlap, I believe further develops the picture of a complex and dynamic position requiring the careful attention from those who serve in this capacity.

The overlap can also be used to support the claim that the roles and responsibilities presented herein may not exactly align with the labels offered throughout the literature reviewed. For example, Becker and Grob (2021) noted that principals often act as a "bureaucratic shield" which could involve reducing the amount of paperwork teachers have to complete. I might argue that this function fits into my identification of personnel manager, instructional leadership, and/or community relations manager. Nonetheless, I believe that the roles and responsibilities presented here amply define what it means to serve as a public school principal.

It All Comes Down to Equity

This first section of the literature review focused on the established major roles and responsibilities of the school principal to provide a context for the roles and responsibilities of school leaders that emerged during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The school principal is charged with responsibilities that include establishing and striving to reach a shared vision, student and personnel manager, instructional leader, community builder, and financial manager. Interwoven

in the fabric of the job itself, and therefore into each of these roles, is the need to ensure educational equity without compromising excellence (Duke, 2010). As noted frequently thus far, and as will be a recurring theme throughout this work, the school principalship is a dynamic and complex position. As the field of education evolves, no one role will remain static; however, the need to maintain equitable educational experiences for all students, regardless of whatever privileged or disadvantaged background they come from is of vital importance.

Educational equity has been an educational "buzz word" for many years now; however, this literature review did not uncover its promotion as a primary responsibility of the school principal. Rather, it has simply been accepted, like I mentioned above, as innately part of education. Recently, however, the Virginia Department of Education has drafted a new set of the previously mentioned performance standards for school principals. A new standard has been developed and is currently proposed to read, "Culturally Responsive and Equitable School Leadership" (Virginia Department of Education, 2022). The language used to describe this new standard is, "The principal demonstrates a commitment to equity and fosters culturally inclusive and responsive practices aligned with division and school goals, priorities, and strategies that support achievement for all students" (Virginia Department of Education, 2021, p. 15).

Whether we are achieving or will ever achieve educational equity is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important to consider, especially for school leaders. Striving for such is of critical importance and is likely on the minds of principals in our nation's schools. As it relates to the COVID-19 Pandemic and the principalship, Dorn et al. (2021) noted a "K shaped" recovery for students in the United States. In other words, their research findings suggested that children from privileged backgrounds who are primarily White are seeing an increase in academic achievement while poor, Black students are regressing even further than pre-Pandemic

times. Issues pertaining to educational equity and educational excellence are prevalent throughout history and the literature. In considering the work of Dorn and colleagues (2021) it is theorized that the COVID-19 Pandemic will only serve to magnify the equity issues in education.

In the next section of the review, I'll focus on the principal's role in times of crisis and what the literature reveals so far about the COVID-19 Pandemic's impact on principal crisis management as well as their other daily responsibilities. Novel crises such as the COVID-19 Pandemic may disrupt the initial day-to-day operations of a school; however, ensuring educational equity while also maintaining a commitment to excellence for all students remains paramount to the success of our nation's schools. Therefore, these roles and responsibilities cannot be neglected.

The School Principal as a Crisis Manager

Liou (2015) reminds us that "in the daily administration of schools, the only certainty is that there is no certainty" (p. 248). At any time throughout the school day, situations arise that require a principal to stop, reorient, and start addressing something new. In certain instances, the school principal may be suddenly thrust into the role of crisis manager. While there are a range of challenges that occur throughout the normal school day that can divert a principal's attention, acting as crisis manager without adequate crisis plans in place I contend, and I think Liou's (2015) work would support, can totally derail one's hopes at achieving their mission and vision.

Various emergencies can happen without notice and require decisive action focused on ensuring student and staff safety. While some of these crises require cessation of learning, others, such as the COVID-19 Pandemic, require schools to remain operational so that learning continues. The remaining portion of this literature review will examine this role in detail and will also synthesize our current understanding of how principals were impacted by the

COVID-19 Pandemic. In short, and as previously mentioned, roles and responsibilities may have shifted during and throughout the Pandemic, but many objectives remained unchanged which, as the literature reveals, created complications for school principals trying to promote the continuity of learning.

The Crisis Management Plan and Response

In his book on creating safe schools, Duke (2002) reminded readers of a student's right to attend a safe school and that "the primary justification for school safety is ethical and moral in nature" (p. xiv). Furthermore, Maslow (1943) argued that in order for students to even start to learn, the basic psychological and safety needs must be met. In other words, when students know they'll be safe and secure at school, then they will be able to start the learning process. Along with that, students should know that in the event of a crisis, the school will remain safe and that they will be protected. Lastly, in the event of an ongoing emergency such as a global pandemic, safety and security must be at the forefront of principals' minds so that the aforementioned vision attainment can continue.

The responsibility for creating that safe environment and for responding during a crisis lies heavily on the school principal; however, as McLeod and Dulsky (2021) pointed out, many principals believe they are not adequately prepared to respond to a major crisis. Perhaps what can be linked to McLeod and Dulsky's (2021) findings is the work of Liou (2015) who noted the significant deficit in empirical research on school crisis response protocols. Interestingly, Reid's (2021) qualitative study that was conducted right before the COVID-19 Pandemic found that school principals felt their role would evolve in many ways over time. Specifically, Reid's participants suggested that part of this predicted evolution would be the addition of more direct responsibilities related to school safety and security.

Since the type, duration, and scope of a crisis can vary significantly, a school's crisis plan must be adequately developed to respond in the moment, as needed (Pawlas, 2005; Kingshott & McKenzie, 2013). Gullatt and Long (1996) noted the components necessary for an effective crisis management plan. These included: an organizational structure, training for staff, both internal and external communication plans, crisis drills, access to community resources, plans to return to normal operations, and a methodology for evaluation and refinement of the plan. Of note, is that while the plan may include contingencies for multiple scenarios, it is impossible to predict all of the possible crises principals may face. Therefore, Gullatt and Long's (1996) recommendation for evaluation and refinement post-crisis is noteworthy and relevant to the present study as I seek data from acting principals that lived the early stages and continue to live through the COVID-19 Pandemic.

School Principals, Crisis Management, and the COVID-19 Pandemic

The guidance set forth by Pawlas (2005) for the development and implementation of a schoolwide crisis plan included many examples of specific crises a school could face including weather emergency, fire, tornado, and active shooter. Nowhere in his examples was there any suggestion of a global pandemic.

The onset, evolution, and continuation of the COVID-19 Pandemic reminds us of Fink's (1986, as cited in Gullatt & Long, 1996) warning to not be lured into a false sense of security by simply having a crisis management plan. Instead, however, Fink indicated that such a plan must be constantly practiced, evaluated, and refined. For school principals, the COVID-19 Pandemic created a need to develop a crisis management plan in the moment rather than relying on previously designed plans. Furthermore, Thornton's (2021) work indicated that the evolving educational landscape during the COVID-19 Pandemic transformed many of the current roles

and responsibilities played by school principals. While research on the COVID-19 Pandemic's impact on the school principalship is dynamic and ongoing, this section will attempt to synthesize what scholars know so far. In reviewing the literature, several themes emerged and are summarized in the sections that follow.

Maintaining a Vision. A central finding from McLeod and Dulsky's (2021) qualitative research was that, despite the need to run triage to preserve nearly all aspects of school life, principals felt a strong sense of obligation to maintain their vision of school success. After all, Garza and colleagues (2014) found that it was the principal's development and implementation of a shared vision that could impact total school success. The desire to maintain that vision during COVID-19 is best illustrated by the following quotation:

> Our participants shared with us that centering their crisis leadership work around the school's vision, leaning on individual and institutional values, and deploying robust communication and family engagement strategies were all critically important. Our interviewees also were deeply engaged in attempts to care for staff and build their capacity through instructional leadership and professional learning activities. The [schools'] leaders who we interviewed approached their work during the early months of the pandemic with a strong equity lens, and many of them saw the potential emergence of future organizational opportunities despite their present challenges and struggles (McCleod & Dulsky, 2021, p. 5).

From this quotation, it is clear that despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 Pandemic, school leaders remained committed to caring for all members of their school community.

Furthermore, recent work by Weiner and colleagues (2021) found, like McCleod and Dulsky (2021), that greater emphasis on the organizational structures such as school culture, led

to greater success during the Pandemic. According to Reyes-Guerra et al. (2021), school principals remained determined to reach their vision for success; however, many conceded the need to, in the moment, create a modified vision. Nevertheless, what's important to note is these principals' desire to be visionary despite the enormity of the challenges brought about by the Pandemic.

As mentioned above, the work of Weiner et al. (2021) further indicates that having a strong vision with a well established culture is critical in times of crisis. Through a series of interviews with principals about their response during the early parts of the COVID-19 Pandemic, they found that organizational structure rather than environmental conditions played a role in their success or lack thereof. In other words, principals who fostered an atmosphere of professional learning, accountability, and who gave teachers autonomy in decision making prior to the Pandemic were able to create a greater sense of psychological safety during the Pandemic. Their work suggests that visionary principals who created collegial cultures had more success during virtual learning than principals who were unsuccessful in creating such environments.

Maintaining Academic Standards and Ensuring Excellence. The closing down of schools and cessation of in-person learning during the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic was a novel situation no school principal had ever faced before. During this unprecedented time in world history, no leader was immune from the enormous need for in-the-moment decision making that preserved their organization's general functioning. For schools, that meant maintaining a commitment to educational excellence despite the challenges that came with educating the nation's children virtually.

The research of Reyes-Guerra et al. (2021) found that many principals were forced to "bend the rules" as they approached virtual learning. Additionally, Grooms and Childs (2021)

reported similar findings stating that school principals implemented new procedures to meet the needs of their students. Study participants of Reyes-Guerra et al. (2021) explained the need to lean on their school's curriculum experts for assistance with maintaining academic continuity and ensuring adequate academic progress by students. They also pointed out that various faculty members deemed "in-house experts" were essential in assisting other faculty with preparing for online learning. Furthermore, principals in their study noted how they tapped into previous professional development aimed at virtual learning. In short, principals were forced to change how they approached leading their schools during the time of online school.

McLeod and Dulsky (2021) reported that several of their study participants noted how the shift to online learning created opportunities to enhance teachers' knowledge and expertise around remote teaching practices. In several cases, participants stated that teachers received tailored training geared towards enhancing their teaching processes. Furthermore, one individual stated that the COVID-19 Pandemic created real-time professional development that would not be useful just for that moment in time, but for future years of teaching post-Pandemic. Being forced into teaching virtually, in other words, while difficult, created realtime, on-the-job training that could be put to good use in future years and is an indicator of how the principalship may evolve post-Pandemic.

Despite schools' attempts at preserving educational excellence and promoting student achievement, however, virtual learning negatively impacted scores on standardized tests. In Virginia, scores on standardized tests, when compared to those before the Pandemic, fell nine points in reading, twenty-eight points in mathematics, and twenty-two points in science (Bryson, 2021). While school leaders and faculties around the country made heroic efforts to preserve academic excellence virtually, results like these were not atypical. While student performance

outcomes are not the subject of this literature review and this dissertation, they are important to mention in this section as they create context for the seemingly insurmountable tasks of leading a school that is 100% virtual with no in person meeting time. What's also noteworthy and what connects to previously mentioned school-community relations, is that many principals reported that during virtual learning they moved from a leadership focused on test scores and state accountability to leadership that was community focused (Reyes et al., 2021). While conjecture on my part, and while not part of the literature at this time, one might hypothesize that this pivot in leadership styles may have positive impacts on student achievement in the longer term. It may also impact the role of the school principal in the future and will be an area of focus during the data collection phase of this study.

Maintaining Community Relationships. Previously mentioned was the need for school principals to develop deep, long lasting relationships with members of their greater school community. Doing so creates a positive school culture more capable of academic excellence. Therefore, I offer the following quotation to establish context for such a claim:

> The dominant aim at all institutions has been to guarantee educational continuity and the dominant resilience strategy has been to transfer all educational activities online with the emergence of interesting and innovative experiences, exchanges of good practices, and virtual communities of mutual help which will most likely have an enduring impact. But education is not only about this: the public value of this key service is much greater (Iacuzzi et al., 2020, p. 4).

The comment above provides essential context for what school principals were truly up against during the early months of the COVID-19 Pandemic and beyond. Certainly, as noted in the previous section, remaining committed to academic excellence and adequate student progress

was essential; however, as Iacuzzi and colleagues (2020) alluded to - schools are responsible for so much more than test scores. Recently, in Henrico County, Virginia, an administrator was quoted as saying that, "schools are the lifeblood of any community" and that having a "high quality of life depends on having schools that are great — from the quality of instruction and programming to the design and physical condition of the buildings" (Lappas, 2018). While not grounded in theory, this county administrator recognized what schools do for communities. School closures during the Pandemic, therefore, undoubtedly required herculean efforts by principals to maintain such school-community relationships.

McCleod and Dulsky's (2021) work indicated that during initial school closures brought on by the COVID-19 Pandemic, school leaders committed themselves to maintaining their school-community relationships. They wrote that frequent communication with all stakeholders was essential to doing so. Reyes-Guerra et al. (2021) reported similar findings and offered data that suggested school principals knew their communities very well, pre-Pandemic. They used that community knowledge to tailor their responses to meet the needs of their unique communities. Iacuzzi et al. (2020) noted that "public [organizations] need to stay in close touch with all internal and external stakeholders, understand their concern and respond effectively to avoid social exclusion" (p. 5). In brief, school-community relations are vitally important and the COVID-19 Pandemic magnified that importance.

Promoting Equity during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Staying mission-focused, continuing the commitment to academic excellence, and maintaining school-community relations are many of the competing priorities Duke (2010) mentioned as making up "the crucible of contemporary culture" and that "contexts change, and with change come new problems for educators to confront" (p. 5). Duke was alluding to the need for educational excellence without

compromising educational equity. During the COVID-19 Pandemic, this tall order was magnified exponentially and was perhaps the penultimate challenge faced by school principals.

Iacuzzi et al. (2020) discussed the inequities that were exacerbated by virtual learning for minority students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. They wrote that "online schooling does not reach everyone and dramatically reinforces and amplifies the socioeconomic and cultural differences among families at a time when support structures such as libraries are also closed" (Iacuzzi et al., 2020, p. 4). McLeod and Dulsky (2021) discussed the need for equity-oriented leadership during the early stages of the Pandemic citing that many students had limited access to the internet and other resources vital to online learning. They cited not just a need for online learning tools, however. Many students relied on their schools for meals and mental health services. School principals were therefore faced with the task of not simply bringing online learning to all students, regardless of internet access. They were also tasked with bringing the full menu of services guaranteed to economically disadvantaged students. Jameson et al. (2020) substantiate these claims and studied the needs of students with disabilities and how those needs were met during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Simply put, principals were in unique and uncharted territory when it came to ensuring educational equity.

Grooms and Childs (2021) provide accounts from school principals that illustrate how inequities were magnified during the COVID-19 Pandemic. In many cases, children were forced to take on added responsibilities to ensure proper running of the household while also attempting to attend school. Evidence from their study also suggested that principals had to navigate the challenges of meeting policy mandates that were shown previously to impede the success of marginalized students. They noted that various practices put in place during the Pandemic only further thwarted their efforts to do so.

The Return to In-Person Learning. Viner and colleagues (2021) remind us that school leaders were faced with weighing the risks associated with keeping schools closed during the COVID-19 Pandemic and returning to partial or full in person learning. In their viewpoint published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, Dibner et al. (2020) offered the following about the reopening of schools:

> The rush to respond to the [COVID-19 Pandemic] led to closures of school buildings across the country, with little time to ensure continuity of instruction or to create a framework for deciding when and how to reopen schools. States and school districts are now grappling with the complex questions of whether and how to reopen school buildings in the context of rapidly changing patterns of community spread (p. 833).

They go on to write about the complex nature of reopening schools during an ongoing health crisis. These complexities included the maintenance of the aforementioned roles of a principal coupled with the need to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 while also ensuring the student and family needs are met. Furthermore, they recognize that all of this played out in an educational landscape where significant inequities exist among disadvantaged students and that those inequities were only exacerbated by the Pandemic. Lordan et al. (2020) offered up a similar explanation of the complexities for reopening schools and stated that the operation of schools required leaders to strike a balance between ensuring the health and safety of the school community with returning to in person learning.

While principals were not the ultimate decision makers for reopening schools, they were the ones who carried the burden of communicating, implementing, and modifying the various policies and procedures necessary to do whatever their school board decided. Viner et al. (2021) offered 5 recommendations for the reopening of schools that we can consider here. These

recommendations illustrate just how complex a principal's job became as schools started to reopen. They recommended schools reopen in a staged or phased in manner with some students remaining virtual while others return to school. Additionally, they recommended the need for social and physical distancing practices, testing and contact tracing methods, and protocols for protecting the health and safety of vulnerable populations. Lastly, they stressed that all decisions must be made with respect to the most current health and safety research. Again, as stated in the opening of this literature review, if superintendents and school boards were the ultimate decision makers, then principals were undoubtedly the ones whose shoulders the burden of ensuring everyone's health and safety lay primarily on during the reopening of schools.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this literature review was threefold. The first objective was to establish a baseline set of roles and responsibilities that come with being a school principal. Pawlas (2005) indicated that the school principalship is complex and dynamic, but typically comes with several traditional roles and responsibilities. These include that of strategic planner and visionary, personnel manager, student disciplinarian, instructional leader, financial manager, school-community relations manager, and finally crisis manager. Undoubtedly then, the principal of any school is pulled in multiple directions and must therefore be equipped to balance all of these roles to achieve his mission and vision. Furthermore, the need to promote equity without compromising excellence (Duke, 2010) is a tall order that no principal can overlook. Public schools educate everyone, regardless of background and principals have the critical responsibility of ensuring every student succeeds. In short, being a school principal in normal circumstances is demanding and, in many instances, the role can change in an instant. Certainty is uncertain according to Liou (2015).

Second, this literature review sought to establish the role that a principal plays during a time of crisis. While there remains significant gaps in the literature (Liou, 2015), we do know that schools have crisis management plans in place and that the management of the plan is the responsibility of the principal. We should recall the work of McLeod and Dulsky (2021) who offered data suggesting that principals do not feel prepared to handle crisis situations as well as the work of Reid (2021) who, just prior to the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic, found that principals believed their role was evolving to one that would require additional focus on promoting safety and security of students and staff. Gullatt and Long (1996) also noted that crisis management plans cannot capture all the possibilities principals could face at a moments notice which Liou (2015) affirmed stating how there is no typical day for the twenty-first century principal. This is noteworthy for the present study since the COVID-19 Pandemic presented a novel crisis situation requiring in the moment decision making with the caveat that those decisions could be altered at any time.

Lastly, as is the focus of this dissertation, the third objective of this literature review was to provide evidence that the complexities of the school principalship were amplified by the COVID-19 Pandemic and that previous roles and responsibilities changed dramatically throughout the crisis and continue to do so. As the Pandemic is ongoing and a current event, the empirical research remains in its infancy. What is currently known is that at its onset, COVID-19 caused school leaders to completely rethink how every aspect of school life was conducted (Weiner et al., 2021). Principals effectively had to rewrite day to day operations all in an effort to promote access to educational services regardless of students' personal situations. Principals were tasked with making the seemingly impossible a reality despite the need to change that reality constantly. What is not yet known is how the COVID-19 Pandemic will permanently

affect the school principalship. The present study sought to learn how current principals believe

their roles and responsibilities will be affected post-Pandemic and beyond.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Design

The present study utilized the Delphi Method (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963) in order to forecast the future of the school principalship post-Coronavirus Pandemic. The Delphi Method according to Green (2014) "is a communication structure aimed at producing a detailed critical examination and discussion." In short, the Delphi Technique is used to predict sector-specific trends which can lead to the development and implementation of new guidelines, standards, or procedures. It has wide applicability and has become a staple methodology in graduate student dissertation research (Skulmoski et al., 2007).

Both Rowe and Wright (1999) and Green (2014) acknowledged the successful use of the Delphi Technique in a variety of industries, including education. Additionally, Ono and Wedemeyer (1994) studied the technique and concluded it to be an accurate tool in long term forecasting. Its successful history therefore made it an appropriate methodology for answering the current study's research questions which sought to forecast the future of the school principalship and provide guidance for principal performance standards, principal preparation programs, and professional development. Those research questions were initially identified in Chapter I and are as follows:

1. How has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected the school principalship?

2. What lessons were learned during the COVID-19 Pandemic that will inform future practices of school principals during both normal and crisis operations?

3. How will each role and responsibility of the school principal change once the COVID-19 Pandemic concludes? Will there be new roles and responsibilities and if so, what are they?

The Delphi Method as a forecasting tool relies on a researcher-identified panel of experts (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963; Franklin & Hart, 2006; Green, 2014) who participate in a series of questionnaires. The results of these questionnaires are used to generate best practices in a particular field or organization. Linstone and Turnoff (1975) outlined the original Delphi method as follows: First, a questionnaire is sent to a panel of experts who each, individually and anonymously provide their answers. The preservation of anonymity "avoids direct confrontation of the experts with one another" (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963, p. 458) and creates an atmosphere where all participants feel comfortable sharing their true opinions. The separation of the panelists allows for trends to emerge and ensures responses of one panelist do not influence others. Following the first round of questioning, researchers assess participant responses, provide written feedback to the panelists that summarizes all responses, and design a new questionnaire which is again completed individually and anonymously by the panel of experts.

What is unique and characteristic of a Delphi study is the returning of summary feedback to the panelist. Hsu and Sanford (2007) noted the importance of the feedback stage in Delphi studies stating:

> the feedback process allows and encourages the selected Delphi participants to reassess their initial judgments about the information provided in previous iterations. Thus, in a Delphi study, the results of previous iterations regarding specific statements and/or items can change or be modified by individual panel members in later iterations based on their ability to review and assess the comments and feedback provided by the other Delphi panelists (p. 2)

This feedback, according to Green (2014) is generated by the researcher to illustrate current consensus among the panelists and involves at least three cycles of questioning and answering to

ensure participants have an opportunity to revise their opinions based on the previous round's feedback. The purpose of the multiple rounds of questioning is to develop the most accurate consensus from the expert panelists which is used to forecast future outcomes and develop future industry guidelines and standards. Such was the precise goal of the current study. While there are multiple opinions on what constitutes consensus (Hsu & Sandford, 2007), Diamond et al. (2014) regarded agreement among 75% of the participants as a suitable threshold.

Participant Sampling and Characteristics

Purposeful sampling as described by Creswell (2013) and Maxwell (2013) along with convenience sampling as described by Stewart et al. (2007) was used to select participants for this study. Creswell (2013) stated that "the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of the study" (p. 156). Delphi studies require this same purposeful approach to sampling as the panel of experts should have more precise knowledge than covered in the current body of literature that exists on a particular topic (Franklin & Hart, 2006). Andranovich (1995) noted that participants should be identified using a predetermined list of qualifications. As such, participants for the present study met the following inclusion criteria:

1. at least ten years of experience in public, K-12 education as a teacher or administrator;

2. at least five years of experience in public, K-12 educational administration;

3. at least three years of experience in public, K-12 education as a school principal.

This set of criteria was chosen because it ensured participants had ample experience in education, and more specifically in school administration. Three years of principal experience was required in order to ensure that all panelists had spent time serving as a building principal

before the onset of the Pandemic. In other words, it would ensure that participants had some

notion of what it meant to be a principal before COVID-19 began. In addition to these

professional criteria, Adler and Ziglio (1996, as cited in Skulmoski et al., 2007) noted that expert

panelists should also possess the following characteristics:

1. knowledge and experience with the issues being studied;

2. ability and willingness to participate in the study;

3. enough time to participate in the study; and

4. effective communication skills.

Additionally, Maxwell's (2013) description of purposeful sampling includes several objectives

which include heterogeneous representativeness. Selection in this form, he writes, helps

"establish particular comparisons to illuminate the reasons for differences between settings or

individuals" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 98). I therefore attempted to find participants supervising all

public school levels (Elementary, Middle, and High) and from a variety of settings (Suburban,

Urban, and Rural). In order to cast a wide net and get the most diverse sample possible, I

contacted the Virginia Department of Education to request access to all principal emails serving

in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Upon receiving this list of email addresses, I sent recruitment

emails to all principals asking for their participation in the study (See Appendix A). I received

approximately 50 responses accepting participants in the order in which they responded while

also attempting to balance the panel in school type (Elementary, Middle, and High School) and

setting (Urban, Rural, and Suburban). In total, 31 individuals agreed to participate and were sent

a confirmation email (See Appendix B) with general directions for completing the questionnaires

throughout the study.   These individuals were sent Questionnaire #1 and 26 completed it. It was

these 26 individuals that I assigned participant numbers (1-26) to and who were the participants

of record for the present study. The remaining 5 who did not complete the first questionnaire

were excluded from continued participation.

Skulmoski et al. (2007) noted that there is no precise rule for determining Delphi study

sample sizes. They examined a number of published studies as well as graduate dissertations

that varied in sample size. Most had populations from 15 to 50. In accordance with the

previously mentioned criteria for selection, and in line with Skulmoski et al.'s (2007) sample size

recommendations, participants for this study, included 26 principals serving public elementary

($N = 11$), middle ($N = 7$), and high ($N = 8$) schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Table 4

Summary of Participant Demographics (N = 26)

Gender	*N* (%)	Race/ Ethnicity	*N* (%)	Experience	*M* (Range)
Male	11 (42.31)	White or Caucasian	23 (88.46)	Years in Education	25.15 (11 - 38)
Female	15 (57.69)	Black or African-American	3 (11.54)	Years in School Admin.	14.08 (5 - 23)
				Years as Principal	9.42 (2 - 22)

Note. Every two columns is a separate grouping. Rows should not be read across.

The participants for this study represented a shared set of experiences that are aligned

with Maxwell's (2013) recommendations for heterogeneous representativeness. That is to say,

they all had been principals before, during the onset of, and throughout the COVID-19

Pandemic; however, they also served in a variety of settings that can be classified as urban,

suburban, and rural. Moreover, by using a mixture of various settings, each of which is governed

independently with a variety of responses to the Pandemic as well as diverse demographics I was

able to further achieve Maxwell's recommendation of heterogeneity. A summary of the

participant information as well as basic school demographics gathered from the Virginia

Department of Education's (2020) *School Quality Profile* database is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Participant and School Demographics

Participant Number	Years in Education	Years as principal	School Size	School Setting	Percent Diversity	Percent Economically Disadvantaged
Elementary School Principals						
1	32	4	<500	Rural	29.3	34.2
2	33	22	<500	Rural	12.8	53.1
3	31	18	501-1000	Suburban	39.2	42.8
4	11	3	501-1000	Rural	23.1	35.9
5	16	6	501-1000	Rural	74.4	58.2
6	13	3	501-1000	Suburban	43.5	32.0
7	34	8	<500	Suburban	75.5	71.6
8	23	9	1001-1500	Suburban	63.8	28.5
9	25	9	501-1000	Urban	94.4	71.3
10	21	9	501-1000	Suburban	91.8	78.7
11	29	8	501-1000	Suburban	72.3	46.1
Middle School Principals						
12	37	19	501-1000	Suburban	66.2	58.4
13	20	7	501-1000	Rural	26.0	53.0
14	21	7	<500	Rural	8.3	52.0
15	32	6	501-1000	Urban	71.3	71.9
16	36	9	1001-1500	Suburban	82.8	47.3
17	26	13	501-1000	Rural	6.8	58.8
18	16	5	501-1000	Rural	14.8	27.9
High School Principals						
19	17	10	501-1000	Rural	15.1	28.6
20	38	18	<500	Rural	0.8	76.0
21	13	2	1501-2000	Suburban	54.9	38.9
22	19	2	1001-1500	Urban	57.0	62.3
23	34	4	1001-1500	Urban	74.1	92.4
24	33	18	>2000	Suburban	53.9	16.5
25	16	10	<500	Rural	11.2	60.1
26	28	16	>2000	Suburban	87.9	54.9

Participant Responses Across Settings and Levels

When I set out to complete this study, I cast a wide net in order to recruit the most diverse sample possible. The goal of the sampling methods was to include principals from all three levels of school (elementary, middle, and high schools) as well as those serving in urban, suburban, and rural communities throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. This objective was achieved as eleven elementary school principals, seven middle school principals, and eight high school principals each from a unique setting and student population participated. In addition to representation across school levels, a secondary goal of the sampling approach was to include principals from different school communities or settings. Principals from six of the eight Virginia Department of Education Superintendent's Regions (See Figure 4) which include urban, suburban, and rural settings each with unique demographics were study participants.

Figure 4

Virginia Department of Education Superintendent's Regions
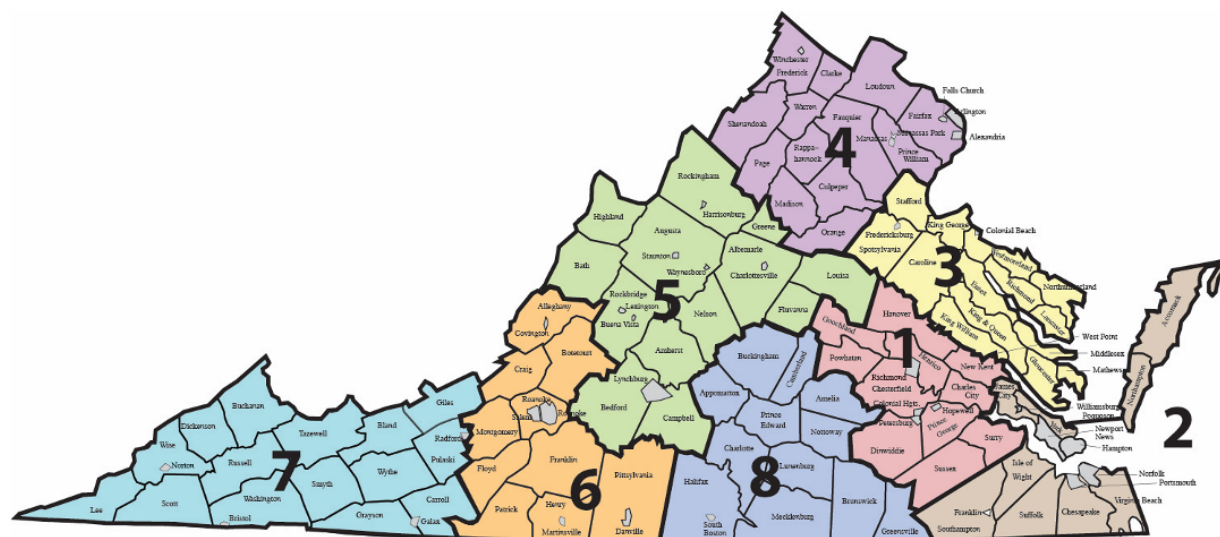
Note. Region 1 - Central Virginia, Region 2 - Tidewater, Region 3 - Northern Neck, Region 4 - Northern Virginia, Region 5 - Valley, Region 6 - Western Virginia, Region 7 - Southwest, Region 8 - Southside. Source: Virginia Department of Education.

Instrumentation

In total, three questionnaires were developed for this study. The initial questionnaire (See Appendix C) was designed following the literature review as recommended by Franklin and Hart (2006) and Daniels (2017). Additionally, Skulmoski and colleagues (2007) suggested that the Round One questionnaire consists of broad, open-ended questions. Therefore, I generated questions for the Round One Questionnaire that were all open-ended, free-write questions and that were consistent with the research questions for the present study (Daniels, 2017). The first questionnaire also included demographic items.

Questionnaires for Rounds Two (Appendix E) and Three (Appendix G) were created after a detailed analysis of the prior round of questioning. Questions for each of these rounds were based on participant answers from the previous round. The second and third rounds of questioning were generated to work towards consensus according to Diamond et al. (2014) and Hsu and Sandford (2007). Some questions consisted of checkboxes for items in which they agreed with, some were open-ended response items, and many were Likert-scale items followed by comment boxes which allowed for the participants to clarify their selections. The Likert Scale that was used was as follows: 1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Somewhat Agree, 4-Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5-Somewhat Disagree, 6-Disagree, 7-Strongly Disagree. The purpose of the final questionnaire was to reveal final consensus and flesh out any disensus that existed at the end of Round Two.

Procedure

Prior to any participant recruitment and/or data collection, and to ensure an ethically designed study, I sought out approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Virginia Commonwealth University. Once approval from IRB was received, the procedure for this

Delphi study commenced and followed the guidelines outlined by Stewart and Shamdasani (1980, as cited in Green, 2014), Andranovich (1995), Rowe and Wright (1999), Franklin and Hart (2006), and Daniels (2017) and as outlined previously in Figure 3. Additionally, in developing these procedures, I reviewed the methodologies of several dissertations including, but not limited to Margolin (2017), Huer (2018), and Regian (2021). As such, the generalized procedures for the present Delphi study was as follows:

1. Develop the initial Delphi probe or question;

2. Select expert panelist;

3. Distribute the first round questionnaire;

4. Collect and analyze the responses from the first round questionnaire;

5. Provide feedback to panelist from the Round One responses, develop the second questionnaire based on Round One responses and distribute to panelists;

6. Repeat Steps 4 and 5 to form the questionnaire for the final round of questioning;

7. Analyze the data for consensus;

8. Inform the panelists of the final results.

These steps will be described in detail in the following sections of this chapter.

Round One Questionnaire

The Round One Questionnaire (Appendix C) was distributed to panelists via email containing a link to a secure electronic REDCap survey. Panelists had the recommended seven days to complete it. Responses were submitted to and compiled in a secure REDCap database that only the researcher had access to. In order to increase participation, email reminders were sent to all participants who had not submitted when there were three days remaining in the completion window as well as when only one day remained.

As previously stated, the questions for Round One were open-ended which is consistent with recommendations made by Franklin and Hart (2006), Hsu and Sandford (2007), and Skulmoski et al. (2007). The purpose of the Round One questionnaire was threefold. First, questions were written to gather participant opinions on the roles and responsibilities of a school principal pre-Pandemic. This allowed me to determine whether or not the expert panelists' views were consistent with the literature reviewed. Second, the Round One questionnaire had open-ended questions aimed at answering the research questions which were focused on the principalship during and after the COVID-19 Pandemic. Finally, demographic information was collected during the Round One phase of this study (See Appendix C for Round One Questionnaire).

The Round One Questionnaire (Appendix C) had a total of 25 questions, seven of which were demographic questions. The remaining 18 questions were open-ended response items in which participants were given the opportunity to discuss roles and responsibilities of the school principal as well as their experiences serving as a school principal during COVID-19. The questionnaire was distributed to 30 volunteer participants and returned by 26. These 26 individuals became the participants of record for the present study. On average, participants had 25 years of experience in education, 14 years in administration at any level, and 9 years experience as a principal. The participating principals self-identified their school setting as either Urban (4), Rural (11), or Suburban (11).

Round One Analysis and Feedback

Each question from Round One was analyzed for themes and cataloged in a spreadsheet. These emerging themes were compiled into a list which was distributed to participants as the form of summary feedback (Appendix D) as discussed by Hsu and Sanford (2007) and Gren

(2014). Accompanying the list of emerging themes was a brief narrative summarizing the data prior to the distribution of the Round Two questionnaire. This feedback highlighted both consensus and dissensus so that participants were able to adequately evaluate their own responses and determine whether or not they needed revision during future rounds of questioning. Participants were instructed to review this feedback prior to completing the next questionnaire.

Round Two Questionnaire

The Round Two questionnaire (Appendix E) was designed to give participants an opportunity to revise their responses from Round One and to begin the consensus building process. It was distributed with the feedback for Round One. The Round Two questionnaire included several question types. Many were multiple selection questions that sought participant opinions on pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities as well as challenges faced throughout the Pandemic. Additionally, using the aforementioned Likert scale, participants were asked questions about the evolution of the principalship throughout the Pandemic as well as how they viewed it developing post-Pandemic (ie: once it reaches an endemic state). Accompanying these checkbox and Likert-type questions were comment boxes for participants to elaborate and explain their selections.

Like the Round One questionnaire, the link for the Round Two questionnaire was distributed to panelists via email and panelists again had seven days to complete it. Responses were submitted to and compiled in a REDCap database that only the researcher had access to. Again, reminders were sent to all participants when there were three days remaining in the completion window as well as when only one day remained.

Round Two Analysis and Feedback

Round Two included both quantitative and qualitative data collection. In order to assess quantitative data, descriptive statistics and frequency tables were generated. Open-ended responses were analyzed similar to the responses from Round One. From both the quantitative and qualitative data, I searched for the further development of consensus while also searching for any data that resulted in dissensus. In other words, I identified overall trends and themes in the data while also noting the alternative viewpoints.

Participants were provided with a summary of the quantitative data in the form of frequency tables and descriptive statistics. They were also provided a narrative summary of the quantitative and qualitative data that highlighted the prevailing themes and dissensions from the previous round. See Appendix F for the summary feedback provided to participants after Round Two.

Round Three Questionnaire

The purpose of the Round Three questionnaire (Appendix G) was to allow participants to make final revisions to their responses after having had a chance to review the feedback provided after Round Two. In other words, Round Three was meant to bring the study to closure (Andranovich, 1995) and the hope was that the panelists reach a consensus on all or most of the research questions. As stated earlier, consensus was defined as 75% agreement (Diamond et al., 2014) among panelists or when there is strong agreement or disagreement within a particular Likert-scale item. Just as in the first two rounds of questioning, participants had seven days to complete the questionnaire with reminders sent at four and six days after distribution. The full timeline for the study implementation is shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Study Timeline

```
┌─────────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Week of April 4, 2022   │ ──> │ Week of April 11, 2022  │ ──> │ Week of April 18, 2022  │
│ Round 1 Questionnaire   │     │ Round 1 Data analysis & │     │ Round 2 Questionnaire   │
│                         │     │ Feedback Distribution   │     │                         │
└─────────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────────┘
                                                                              │
                                                                              ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Week of May 9, 2022     │ <── │ Week of May 2, 2022     │ <── │ Week of April 25, 2022  │
│ Round 3 Data analysis:  │     │ Round 3 Questionnaire   │     │ Round 2 Data analysis & │
│ Panelists Thanked and   │     │                         │     │ Feedback Distribution   │
│ Dismissed               │     │                         │     │                         │
└─────────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────────┘
            │
            ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ May/June 2022           │
│ Final Data Analysis     │
└─────────────────────────┘
```

Data Analysis

A hallmark of the Delphi process is its iterative approach to data analysis. In other words, data analysis is conducted between each round of questioning as well as at the cessation of data collection. As noted, participant responses to both the Round One and Round Two questionnaires were analyzed prior to the subsequent round of questions being issued. The purpose of this analysis and feedback was to start the consensus building process. This approach to data analysis was also used in the final analysis to generate finalized results and recommendations. Chapter IV includes the results of each round as well as finalized results and analysis.

Following the final round of questioning, participant responses were compiled into a spreadsheet and analyzed for trends and themes. All qualitative data was coded and cataloged in spreadsheets and the quantitative data reported through the use of descriptive statistics and frequency tables. Quotations from participant responses were selected and included in Chapter

IV to illustrate trends and themes as well as disensus that emerged. Taken together, the

quantitative data provided a snapshot of the evolving school principalship and the qualitative

data provided explanation and contextualization.

Daniels (2017) noted that the data analysis for Delphi studies is typically divided into two

parts which include the "level of agreement" and the "level of importance" (p. 5) assigned to

statements made by various panelists. The results of the present study were compared to what

was found in the literature. This comparison, Green (2014) noted, is to "triangulate expert

opinion with the literature" (p. 3).   Furthermore, the "level of importance" was assigned based

on the frequency of discussion found throughout the literature and the frequency of participant

responses.

Quantitative Data Analysis Procedures

Other than the demographic information collected in Round One, all quantitative data

was collected during Rounds Two and Three in the form of either Likert scale questions or

multiple response questions. For example, participants were asked the following question:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The COVID-19

Pandemic has impacted the future of the school principalship.

All Likert items used the following scale: 1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Somewhat Agree,

4-Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5-Somewhat Disagree, 6-Disagree, and 7-Strongly Disagree.

Means and standard deviations for these questions were calculated and recorded in a secure

spreadsheet.

The multiple response questions were designed so that participants could select as many

options that they thought applied to a particular question. For example, participants were asked

to select all answers that applied to the following question:

As your school reopened to in person instruction, which of the following challenges did you face (select all that apply)?

> Decreased Student Achievement and/or Lower Test Scores
> Increased Demands from Central office
> Increased Student Disciplinary Infractions
> Increased Teacher Absenteeism and/or Lack of Substitute Teachers
> Low Staff Morale and/or Teacher Burnout
> Student Social-Emotional Challenges
> Teacher Shortages and/or Vacant Instructional Positions

For these multiple response items, total counts were tallied in order to find the items that were most common to all of the participants. These are reported in Chapter IV as frequencies by percentage as well as graphically.

Qualitative Data Analysis Procedures

A large amount of qualitative data was collected throughout the entire study (all three rounds). Many questions were open-ended response items in which participants were asked to write freely. Additionally, all Likert scale items and multiple response items as described in the previous section were followed with either a specific open ended question about their answer or a "comment box" so that participants could elaborate on their selections from quantitative questions. All qualitative data was housed in the REDCap database and secure spreadsheets where it was cataloged and coded based on various themes. Codes were generated for each of the following categories:

1. Pre-Pandemic Roles and Responsibilities

2. Roles and Responsibilities Throughout the Pandemic (at the onset, during the 2020-2021 School year, at the time of reopening to in-person instruction, and during the current school year)

3. Challenges as a Principal (pre-Pandemic, during the Pandemic, and post-Pandemic)

4. Miscellaneous Codes

Using a text box window for open response in Questionnaire One, participants identified and described where participants could type their response, participants were instructed to identify and describe their primary, pre-Pandemic day-to-day roles and responsibilities. In reviewing these data, I read all participant responses and generated a set of codes that I applied to each individual response. These codes were generated as I read responses and were as follows:

- Instructional Leader/Instructional Supervision/Professional Development
- Student Supervision and Discipline
- Community Relations Manager/Communication with Stakeholders
- Interactions with Parents
- Personnel Manager/Hiring/Staff Supervision/Staff Absences
- Ensuring School Safety
- Monitoring Student Academic Performance/Testing/Data
- Strategic Planner/Visionary
- Financial Manager
- Overall Operations of School
- Building Operations Manager/Facilities Management
- Special Education
- Meeting central office expectations
- Build Relationships/Positive Culture
- Checking/Responding to Email
- Monitoring student attendance

In some cases, individual responses were coded to a single role and responsibility while others were coded to multiple. In other words, multiple codes were sometimes used to capture the meaning of participants' responses. These codes are detailed in Appendix H.

In reviewing the qualitative portion of the Rounds Two and Three data, I looked for commonalities that could be used to generalize the data and applied the relevant code as defined in Appendix H. For example, descriptors such as student mental health, student social-emotional well-being, student well-being, student happiness were all coded together as "Student Social-Emotional Needs." Likewise, teacher morale, teacher burnout, teacher mental health, etc. were also coded together as "Teacher Morale/Teacher Burnout."

Limitations of the Study

The present study had several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the data. While a diverse set of participants was sought, they were all from school divisions located around the Commonwealth of Virginia area that work under one state legislative authority while also reporting to their own local school boards. While I argue that the principalship is fairly uniform throughout the country, future work could examine the principalship in a variety of states as well as consider the differences between public and independent school principals. Furthermore, Franklin and Hart (2006) noted that panelists must be true experts in the field. While there was a predetermined set of qualifications for panelists, length of tenure and experience of the principals in this study varied and their designation as an "expert" could potentially be challenged based on service length and background. For example, some participants had been in their position for only a short period of time (fewer than five years) while others had been in their role for more than ten years.

Additionally, while the questionnaires for the study were carefully constructed and participants provided answers in a timely manner, the forecast is based on past experiences at the time of questioning. It is important to note that this study occurred during an ongoing crisis. At the conclusion of the study, other events (eg. the resurgence of COVID-19 variants that may or

may not impact schools, changes in state policy surrounding mitigation strategies, etc.) may shape the principalship in ways not predicted here. As new circumstances arise, the role will continue to evolve beyond what we can predict. Evolution of the principalship, in other words, can only be forecasted based on the knowledge of the past that we have at the time period during which the study was conducted.

Lastly, the format of the feedback, and my ability to ensure panelists read the feedback prior to beginning the next questionnaire, is an important limitation to consider. I purposefully chose to deliver the feedback as a PDF email attachment that also contained the link to the next questionnaire. There was no guarantee that participants would review the feedback; however, they were encouraged to do so. Future Delphi work could include in person feedback delivery; however this would take a substantial amount of time in order to preserve the anonymity of the panelists. Feedback integrated into the next survey to ensure that participants had access could be another delivery method.

Franklin and Hart (2006) noted that "because of the intense nature of the data collection phase, a policy Delphi study demands attention by researchers to the ongoing willingness of panelists to continue participation" (p. 242). This is the precise reason I chose to deliver feedback to the participants as an email attachment. While the possibility existed that some might not review it, I chose a mode of feedback delivery that I hoped would reduce participant attrition while simultaneously preserving their anonymity. Affirmation of this decision came from the words of Participant #3 who, when given the opportunity to make final comments regarding their involvement with the study stated, "The design of the study was interesting as it collected our thoughts as we reflected on the previous questions." Their words led me to believe that the feedback was reviewed with fidelity.

Threats to Validity

Maxwell (2013) reminds us that validity in qualitative research is a controversial topic and that some scholars abandon the term's use altogether because it is too closely related to quantitative data; however, he makes its importance clear and indicates how best to use it in conjunction with descriptive data. As a counterpoint to Maxwell, I offer the following quotation which supports the development of theory from qualitative findings:

> While human emotions and perspectives from both subjects and researchers are considered undesirable biases confounding results in quantitative research, the same elements are considered essential and inevitable, if not treasurable, in qualitative research as they invariably add extra dimensions and colors to enrich the corpus of findings (Leung, 2015, para. 1).

Ultimately, Maxwell (2013) notes that "the idea of objective truth isn't essential to a theory of validity that does what most researchers want it to do, which is to give them some grounds for distinguishing accounts that are credible from those that are not" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 122). Creswell (2013) noted that when validating qualitative work, it is important to consider the researcher as a "sociohistorical interpreter" who "interacts with the subject matter to co-create the interpretations derived" (p. 248). The Delphi Method as described by Dalkey and Helmer (1963) therefore, is ripe for interpretation, therefore making it susceptible to multiple threats to validity (Daniels, 2017). Of note is the claim made by Habibi and colleagues (2014) that the theoretical framework for Delphi studies is inconsistent. Critical, then, is the need to develop processes that are consistent with the greater literature on the Delphi Technique as a tool for forecasting.

According to Rowe and Wright (1999), the nature of the panelists can be a threat to the validity of a Delphi study. Their selection and designation as an "expert" must therefore be done with careful consideration. Furthermore, Green (2014) suggested that experts may not always be the best at forecasting as they "lack the ability to see the global picture thus, thwarting their ability to produce effective organizational decisions" (p. 6). Habibi et al. (2014), however, stated that "the collective wisdom in decision-making can lead to more complete and comprehensive decision-making" (p. 9).

Rowe and Wright (1999) also discussed consensus-reaching and therefore the Delphi methodology itself as a threat. In other words, since forecasting is a forward-thinking methodology, the results of a Delphi Study must be taken into consideration along with other possibilities.   Franklin and Hart (2006) discussed similar threats stating that "the sensitivity of the Delphi method to environmental changes is both a benefit and limitation of the method" (p. 244) and that "the Delphi method is uniquely designed to capture change over time and the reflections of experts as that change occurs" (p. 244). Relatedly, Hsu and Sanford (2007) warn of researchers who supply leading feedback between rounds of questioning. This can have an influence on panelists' responses and therefore the development of consensus.

Reducing Researcher Bias

In confronting my own biases and positionality as a former public school teacher and administrator, I attempted to develop questions that were reflective of the literature reviewed. Additionally, as the study progressed, I made consistent efforts to let the participant responses guide my writing of the Rounds Two and Three questionnaires. Lastly, all questionnaires were reviewed by the study director (dissertation chair) prior to distribution. No questionnaire is free from researcher bias; however, cognizant efforts to account for it were made throughout.

Maxwell (2013) offers many suggestions for increasing the credibility of the study findings, many of which were used in the present study. He discussed the notion of "Intensive, Long-Term Involvement" and how it allows for the collection of "rich data," both increasing study validity and reliability. Delphi studies by design are meant to collect longitudinal data over several rounds of questioning and, as Franklin and Hart (2006) noted, include the collection of large amounts of rich, qualitative data.

Also discussed in Maxwell (2013) is the "search for discrepant evidence and negative cases" (p.126) as a means to increase study credibility. While Delphi studies by design work towards consensus building, methodological guidance also calls for the identification of disensus when it becomes apparent. Chapter IV provides a discussion of the outliers in the data as a means of increasing the validity of the study.

Lastly, in order to increase credibility of the study, I chose specific, targeted moments to introduce numbers into my study as recommended by Maxwell (2013), who wrote that "many of the conclusions of qualitative studies have an implicit quantitative component" (p. 128). Questionnaires often had Likert scale items meant to gain further insight into the extent to which participants agreed or disagreed with emerging themes illustrated by the qualitative data. I calculated means, standard deviations, and percentages and based my analysis on these quantitative points to validate the written words of multiple participants (Maxwell, 2013).

The results of this study will attempt to show an accurate prediction of the future of the school principalship. That forecast should be used in conjunction with other future models of the principalship as well as with other data gathered using different methodologies. Despite these and other threats, Ono and Wedemeyer's work (1994), supports the use of the Delphi method for forecasting. Their results revealed trend forecasts as being significantly correlated with trend

interpretations and that the Delphi techniques under study had adequately forecasted future events over 50% of the time. Nonetheless, there are threats to validity and therefore this study, like all Delphies, has its limitations. The results presented herein should be interpreted and used responsibly and with the best interest of students in mind.

A Note on the Consensus-building Process

The target for assessing whether or not consensus had been reached was determined using the recommendation of Diamond et al. (2014) who noted a 75% agreement threshold among the participants as representative of consensus. For the present work, I interpreted this standard as either a 75% frequency of participant-reported phenomena or 75% of the participants "strongly agreeing" or "agreeing" (or disagreeing) to a particular Likert-scale item. However, Hsu and Sandford (2007) discussed that methods for determining whether or not participants reach consensus differs across Delphi studies. Therefore, in interpreting the data from this study, I accepted a majority (more than 50%) of participants either self-reporting phenomena or "strongly agreeing" or "agreeing" (or disagreeing) to a particular Likert-scale item. Furthermore, when considering Likert-items, means on either side of the scale with low standard divisions (less than 1.00) were considered in discussions pertaining to whether or not consensus had been reached. I concede here that there are challenges with Delphi studies related to the determination of consensus, but I used these considerations consistently when interpreting and reporting the results.

Chapter Summary

The methodology for the present study was consistent with that of the traditional Delphi technique. Panelists were selected based on specific criteria that qualified them as experts in the field of public school administration. The study commenced with a round of open-ended

questions aimed at answering the research questions. Following the first round of questions, responses were analyzed for themes and feedback was supplied to all participants.

Round Two of questioning was conducted after participants had a chance to review the feedback from Round One. Questions during this round consisted of Likert-scale items as well as open-ended questions that allowed panelists to explain and elaborate on their answers. Once the Round Two questionnaires were collected, they were again analyzed for trends and themes. Summary feedback was distributed to panelists and a third and final round of questioning took place in order to generate consensus.

The third and final round questionnaire was designed again with Likert items and open-ended questions. The objective of the third round was to build a final consensus among the panelists. Once all responses were submitted, the final data analysis phase took place. Results were compiled in order to answer the research questions. Following a detailed data analysis, a discussion of the results as well as conclusions and recommendations for future practice were made (See Chapter V).

The results of this study are limited to the opinions of the panelists who have been deemed experts in the field of public K-12 administration. The nature of the Delphi method's questioning and feedback cycles is a threat in and of itself and has the potential to lead panelists to a predetermined consensus. Nonetheless, the Delphi methodology is supported in the literature as a successful forecasting technique.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine how the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted the school principalship. Specifically, using the Delphi Method (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963), the present study's design aimed to determine the effect of the Pandemic on the principalship, offer up lessons learned for normal and crisis operations, and forecast the roles and responsibilities of the school principalship post-COVID-19 Pandemic. The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. How has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected the school principalship?

2. What lessons were learned during the COVID-19 Pandemic that will inform future practices of school principals during both normal and crisis operations?

3. How will each role and responsibility of the school principal change once the COVID-19 Pandemic concludes? Will there be new roles and responsibilities and if so, what are they?

The hope in conducting this study was to offer current and future principals guidance on what the job's roles and responsibilities during both normal and crisis operations might look like once the COVID-19 Pandemic concludes or reaches an endemic phase.

This Delphi Study was conducted over a period of five weeks in April and May 2022. Three rounds of questionnaires were issued to participants with a week in between each for data analysis. The first round questionnaire presented participants with open-ended questions that reflected key ideas in the literature on the principalship and the research questions. Round One sought participants' opinions on the pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities as well as how those roles changed throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic. Additionally, participants were asked how they thought the principalship would evolve once the COVID-19 Pandemic concludes and/or

reaches an endemic phase. Rounds Two and Three were designed according to the recommendations for Delphi Studies (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963; Rowe & Wright, 1999; Skulmoski et al., 2007; Green, 2014). Specifically, questions in Rounds Two and Three were aimed at generating consensus by including opportunities for participants to select items from a list and Likert-scale items related to the research questions. Additionally, these questions were typically followed by a comment box so respondents could elaborate on their answer. In some cases, there were specific questions that went with these comment boxes. Mainly, the objective of Rounds Two and Three was to clarify previous responses and build consensus on the answers to the research questions. The purpose of this chapter is to present the study's findings as they developed through each round of questioning.

Round One

The Round One Questionnaire produced a number of important initial findings related to the research questions. These included pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities of the school principal, roles and responsibilities of the school principal as they developed throughout the Pandemic, and initial post-Pandemic forecasts for the future of the school principalship during both normal and crisis times.

Pre-Pandemic Roles and Responsibilities

Round One served multiple purposes, the first of which was to generate a baseline set of common pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities of the school principal. Instructional Leadership/Supervision was mentioned 51 times; Student supervision was mentioned 29 times, 16 of which involved discipline; and communication with various community stakeholders was mentioned 22 times. Participants mentioned parent communications a total of 19 times. These and the other roles and responsibilities are summarized in Table 6. These responses closely align

to those presented in Table 1 and found throughout the literature (Sebastian et al., 2018; Lynch, 2012; Lunenburg, 2010; Portin et al., 1998; Virginia Department of Education, 2020; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). While there is some variation in the naming of each role/responsibility as well as some overlap (for example: School safety is often combined with student supervision and/or discipline),the list provided below in Table 6 offers common representation of the roles and responsibilities of most public school principals.

Table 6

Frequencies: Pre-Pandemic Roles and Responsibilities

Role/Responsibility	N	%
Instructional Leadership and/or Instructional Supervision	51	24.40
Student Supervision and/or Discipline	29	13.88
Communication with Community Stakeholders	22	10.53
Parent Interactions	19	9.09
Personnel Manager/Hiring/Staff Supervision/Staff Absences	13	6.22
School Safety	11	5.26
Monitoring Student Academic Performance Data	10	4.78
Strategic Planning	9	4.31
Finance and/or Budget Management	9	4.31
Overall Operations of the School	9	4.31
Building Operations Manager/Facilities Management	6	2.87
Special Education	6	2.87
Central Office Expectations	6	2.87
Building Relationships and/or Fostering Positive Culture	4	1.91
Checking Emails	3	1.44
Monitoring Student Attendance	2	0.96
Total	209	100.00

It should be acknowledged that there is potential for overlap in some of these labels (eg. Community Relations Manager/Communications with Stakeholders and Interactions with Parents and Overall Operations of School and Building Operations Manager/Facilities Management); however, participant responses differed in how they described each and I therefore decided to separate them rather than create larger, combination labels. A parent communication, for example, could be linked to a specific academic or social concern while a communication with a stakeholder might be related to an athletic competition sponsorship. Questions in Rounds Two and Three were aimed at gaining clarity in this area and will be discussed in later sections of this chapter.

Roles and Responsibilities Throughout the Pandemic

Another purpose of the Round One Questionnaire was to find trends in principal experiences throughout the Pandemic. Four questions targeted this objective and asked participants about the evolution of their roles and responsibilities at the onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic (March through June 2020), while operating virtually and/or hybrid during the 2020-2021 school year, while reopening to in person instruction during the 2020-2021 school year, and while operating during the 2021-2022 school year.

Regardless of school level (elementary, middle, or high school) and setting (urban, rural, suburban), most principals reported many of the same experiences throughout the Pandemic; however, how their school/school division was operating (100% remote instruction, hybrid instruction, face-to-face instruction, etc.) influenced when each participant reported having certain experiences. For example, regardless of when a school re-opened for face-to-face instruction, participants often expressed similar experiences and challenges related to that modality. Tables 7, 8, 9, and 10 present bulleted lists of recurring themes in participant

responses as well as several illustrative quotations for the aforementioned periods of operation

during the pandemic (Note: Themes/Trends items are not listed in priority order).

Table 7 presents a summary of participant experiences at the onset of the COVID-19

Pandemic (March 2020 - June 2020).

Table 7

Participant Experiences - Onset of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Theme or Trend	Example Quotation
● Acknowledgement that "everything had changed" and pre-Pandemic roles/responsibilities went on "pause" ● Need for the development of virtual/remote learning options ● Provide technical support for both teachers and students ● Attendance at frequent meetings with multiple stakeholders including faculty/staff, central office, and parents ● The need for constant communication with all stakeholders including faculty/staff, students, and parents ● Assistance with the delivery of meals to students ● A need to support of teacher and student emotional well-being ● It was frequently noted that there were no issues pertaining to student discipline	Participant 1 (Rural ES): "Almost everything changed, observation/supervision was not the same, there were no disciplinary issues that came up, monitoring Special Education and ESOL programs and instruction was through Zoom which was challenging." Participant 12 (Suburban MS): "All 'normal' tasks were suspended while meetings were held by our administrative staff at the school board level. These meetings provided guidance on how to support teaching and learning. All communication and meetings were conducted through Google meets. My main roles and responsibilities became that of communicator, professional development provider, and material handler as we had to get computers and meals to students by parent pick up lines." Participant 5 (Rural ES): "The roles and responsibilities shifted from a focus on the quality of instruction to just the ability to provide instruction. Working closely with central office staff in the county to provide students with any sort of instructional material, while also offering drive through lunch services for students."

Note. ES = Elementary School, MS = Middle School, HS = High School

Of note from the above table, is a common response among many of the participants that "everything had changed," or that "drastic changes" occurred as schools shifted from in person instruction to online instruction.

Another example indicative of the large scale changes facing principals is reflected by the comments of Participant #21, a high school principal serving a large suburban area with a diverse student body that is 38.9% economically disadvantaged, who stated the following: "A tremendous shift towards logistics and management occurred. This included training on the use of online learning tools, verifying instruction is occurring virtually, reaching out to families where communication disappears or decreases, increasing social emotional support availability." This reflects the emphasis on the shift in principal responsibilities and new learning for the principals as well as the staff and teachers they supervised. The experiences outlined in Table 7 indicate that at the onset of the Pandemic, the primary day-to-day roles and responsibilities outlined earlier and previously common to the field had been put aside indefinitely and replaced with new responsibilities unique to the emerging crisis scenario.

During the early months of the 2020-2021 School Year, many of the participants' schools were operating 100% remotely or in some form of hybrid instruction (various splits of virtual and in person instruction). Table 8 summarizes participants' experiences during virtual or hybrid instruction in School Year 2020-2021. Table 8 reveals that, once again, most of the pre-Pandemic day-to-day roles and responsibilities had been paused for other duties. Mainly, principals were operating as technical support specialists assisting students and teachers with virtual instruction platforms. They attended meetings more frequently and noted that constant, detailed communication was of paramount importance.

Table 8

Participant Experiences: Virtual and/or Hybrid Operations

Theme or Trend	Example Quotation
• Frequent need to offer technical support and training to teachers and students	Participant 17 (Rural MS): "I think we all had to become tech coaches and technical support. The vast majority of my time was working on tech issues."
• Frequent attendance at meetings with multiple stakeholders • The need for constant communication with teachers, parents, and students • The need to support teacher and student emotional well-being	Participant 7 (Suburban ES): "My responsibilities shifted to supporting the virtual learning environment. All meetings continued to be virtual rather than having staff in one place for meetings. Ongoing communication about how parents could get help with their child's devices and could receive a free Internet account was required of me. Teachers were stressed so a lot of effort was put into trying to help them feel at ease in the school environment."
• Many participants noted that there was no longer a focus on their pre-Pandemic roles/responsibilities, no instructional leadership, and no issues pertaining to student discipline	Participant 13 (Rural MS): "Student discipline dropped sharply, so there was less of that to deal with. Communicating with the parents became of major importance as they were trying to teach their children at home while they [struggled] with the pandemic and their own issues of working from home or the loss of a job or other issues the pandemic brought their families. Training staff on new programs was also critical."

Note. ES = Elementary School, MS = Middle School, HS = High School

For most participants, schools began to fully reopen or operate in some form of hybrid instructional modality later in the 2020-2021 School Year. While some of the experiences mentioned in Table 8 remained the same, participants also noted a major shift in the responsibilities that dominated their time. As mentioned earlier, there was, however, variation in participant responses that was likely due to the variation in operation modality and school division policies related to many factors that included, number of days of in person instruction, number of students in a classroom versus learning virtually, teachers working in the building or

from home, etc. Participant #10, a suburban elementary school principal serving a student body that has over 90% diversity and close to 80% classified as economically disadvantaged indicated that, among other things, their primary duty once students reentered the school building involved COVID-19 mitigation management such as ensuring six feet of spacing, enforcing mask policies, and contact tracing. They stated,

> My role as an instructional leader took a back seat. I had to contact trace, manage mitigations, create multiple master schedules to include schedules for virtual only and hybrid students. I had to track transportation needs for hybrid students, lunch/cafeteria mitigations, and how students who needed special education services and ESOL services could receive those services and maintain mitigation expectations. I was also in charge of managing staff who could not come into the building for health concerns. I was managing staff fear as well as families and students' fear.

Like Participant #10, others stated that there was a need to manage staffing shortages as well as support teacher and student emotional wellbeing. Also, many principals noted that student discipline infractions were far greater than pre-Pandemic times. As will be indicated later, these responses related to staffing shortages, student discipline, and student/teacher wellbeing become common throughout the responses in all questionnaires. Participant #20 offered a comment that, I believe, captures the sentiment of most, if not all of the participants in this study. They stated, "In 38 years [working in education], this was by far the most difficult year of my career." Table 9 provides a summary of participant experiences as schools reopened to some degree of in person instruction and highlights the new experiences that arose once students began attending school for face-to-face instruction.

Table 9

Participant Experiences: Reopening to In Person Instruction

Theme or Trend	Example Quotation
● Implementation and oversight of COVID-19 Mitigation Strategies. This included the need to enforce mask-wearing, development of classrooms conducive to social distancing, and contact tracing	Participant 23 (Urban HS): "Contact tracing took priority over almost everything else."
	Participant 22 (Urban HS): "Social and emotional support for my staff became a priority."
● There was a frequent need to support both teacher and student wellbeing	Participant 21 (Suburban HS): "Significant increase in behavior management from pre-Pandemic years."
● Managing staffing shortages	Participant 6 (Suburban ES): "When we entered into the transition phase of coming back into school in-person, the same priorities were present that were before, but now with the addition of the Safety/Security piece. We had to establish protocols and expectations to keep students safe all day in school. This included mitigation measures before, during, and after school. This took an enormous commitment from the entire staff, with the support of the parent population."
● Student discipline issues reenters the conversation	
● Constant communication with all stakeholders including parents	
● The general feeling among participants of needing to balance so many responsibilities and how challenging it was to do so.	Participant 1 (Rural ES): "I did everything. Everyday was a juggle on how to make everything work."

Note. ES = Elementary School, MS = Middle School, HS = High School

Lastly, participants were asked to discuss their experiences during the current (2021-2022) School Year. While several participants ($N = 6$) noted a return to normalcy to some extent (or at least an attempt at returning to normalcy), they also pointed out that they faced an increase in student disciplinary infractions and significant staffing challenges that included vacant teaching positions as well as increased teacher absenteeism with no substitute teachers available to fill daily absences. Table 10 summarizes this data.

Table 10

Participant Experiences: Current School Year (2021-2022)

Theme or Trend	Example Quotation
● Student discipline was noted frequently as a major challenge	Participant 13 (Rural MS): "Behaviors jumped to a major concern as students, being at home for 18 months, really struggled to reacclimate themselves to the building and to routines."
● Staffing challenges (teacher shortages, lack of substitutes, etc).	Participant 23 (Urban HS): "Determining staffing each day was a major challenge and not something I would normally be involved in."
● Continued focus on teacher wellbeing/morale ● Continued focus on student wellbeing and socioemotional wellness	Participant 11 (Suburban ES): "There was also a huge focus on the social emotional gaps that students experienced while not being in school for the previous school year on top of the learning gaps that were there due to the unfinished learning. So there was a lot of conversation about how to allocate our minimal resources to support the students so that they could be focused on learning and yet still support them while they process their trauma. Once again I found myself managing teacher stress and student stress and trying to keep the focus on rebuilding our community."

Note. ES = Elementary School, MS = Middle School, HS = High School

The data presented in in Tables 7, 8, 9, and 10 reveal an evolution of experiences that went from emergency responses (pivoting to 100% virtual instruction, frequent communication with all school stakeholders, and ensuring students had various resources) to responses that promoted the continuation of instruction while also managing staff morale, student wellbeing, and the health and safety of all those in the school building. The data presented are indicative of a long term crisis response that, until the COVID-19 Pandemic, there were no contingencies for. The reimagining of how things were done at the onset of the Pandemic was a sentiment shared by many participants early on as well as throughout the last two years of school operations.

Initial Post-Pandemic Forecasts

The Round One questionnaire also asked for participant opinions regarding the future of the school principalship once the COVID-19 Pandemic concludes or reaches an endemic state. There were differences of opinion regarding the principalship post-Pandemic. Several participants felt that, for the most part, the principalship will return to "normal" and there will be a renewed focus on the pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities. It was also mentioned by some participants that while there will be a return to "normal" operations, the Pandemic has changed how principals navigate their many pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities. For example, Participant #6 stated the following:

> I think those roles are going to be enhanced because we've learned more efficient ways to accomplish tasks and can/have applied them to these roles. For example, I can conduct several interviews in one morning, which might have taken a week or more pre-Pandemic. I can deliver a virtual presentation/message to an entire student population from my office while they sit in their classrooms and watch. Not only can they watch/hear me, but I can also interact back and forth with them. Regarding safety/security and efficiency of arrival/dismissal, this has been a game-changer!

However, other participants noted that the job of principal will evolve and they predicted future responsibilities to include: a need to supervise virtual opportunities for instruction, manage/combat teacher shortages, an increased focus on student behavior/discipline, and an increased focus on student wellbeing. Participant #9, who has 9 years of experience as a school principal and currently works in an urban setting with a student body characterized as both highly diverse (over 90% diversity, primarily African American) and highly economically disadvantaged (over 70%) offered thoughts that reflect this evolution writing that:

Technology will become the norm not the exception (for parents, teachers, children and administrators). Accessing and storing resources and support for constituents will remain; everything is available electronically now. Meetings held virtually provide convenience for all, however, some in person events will be held to encourage interaction/socialization. Able to use virtual communication to streamline operations. Pay greater attention to teachers and children's well-being more than ever. Planning for meetings and professional learning is a shared responsibility of the instructional team. With the addition of Behavior Specialists, more counselors, student wellness assistants and the like, on-going and residual mental health challenges can be addressed by more appropriately trained staff. Unfortunately, the teacher shortage will potentially create undue stress on administrators as we try to cover and adequately serve children with greater and different kinds of needs.

This disensus was acknowledged at the distribution of the Round Two questionnaire and participants were asked to comment further on their beliefs about the future of the school principalship. The findings from subsequent rounds of questioning became more detailed and nuanced and are discussed in later sections of this chapter. In brief, some of these challenges were forecasted to be long term (lasting more than five years).

Future Responses to Crises

While responses varied, most participants noted that, as a result of their experiences throughout the Pandemic, they (as an individual) are more prepared to respond to a crisis given their experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic. For example, Participant #2, who is an elementary school principal at a school situated in a rural, primarily White and fairly impoverished area indicated a renewed focus on certain priorities stating the following:

I feel school leaders are much more aware of the importance of managing a crisis than

ever before and now know where the priorities lie. I never imagined we would have had

a time like the past 2 years, but we learned and we grew and are better prepared.

Additionally, many noted greater flexibility and adaptability for circumstances that directly

impact instruction in times of a long term crisis and the time that immediately follows. While

instruction is the ultimate goal of schools, during a time of prolonged crisis operations there will

likely be other challenges that come to the forefront requiring the attention of principals. In the

case of the COVID-19 Pandemic, as noted by the participants, there was an overwhelming shift

to a focus on wellbeing that lasted throughout the Pandemic. Participant #8, a principal at a very

large, suburban elementary school with a lower percentage of economically disadvantaged

students reflected on their experiences writing,

The Pandemic taught us how to think and operate differently. It taught us how to respond

and communicate differently. We had to be the voice of knowing, the voice of

understanding, and the voice of support. Yes, I think we are more equipped to respond to

crises.

Others, however, noted that the circumstances of each crisis dictates the response and therefore

experiences during COVID-19 can only do so much to prepare principals for future crises.

Rounds Two and Three were used to clarify participant readiness for future crises and will be

commented on later in this chapter.

Round Two

All participants who completed the Round One Questionnaire also completed the Round

Two Questionnaire. The primary objective of the Round Two Questionnaire (See Appendix E)

was to clarify participant responses from Round One while also beginning the consensus

building process. There were two primary formats of the questions for Round Two. The first was Likert-scale items aimed at generating consensus around the roles and responsibilities of the school principal pre-Pandemic, the challenges faced during the Pandemic, and whether or not those challenges would become long-term (more than 5 years) challenges post-Pandemic. Participants were also asked Likert-scale questions about their crisis preparedness as well as their predictions for the future of the school principalship. There were opportunities for participants to comment on their selections for these Likert-scale items as well as several open-ended questions aimed at learning more about what principals learned during the Pandemic as well as their predictions for the future of the job itself. This section will summarize the data collected during Round Two.

Pre-Pandemic Roles and Responsibilities, Moving towards consensus

Principals mostly agreed that their top three roles and responsibilities pre-Pandemic were instructional leadership and/or instructional supervision, student supervision and discipline, and communication with all stakeholders, mainly parents. However, many noted school safety as including student supervision and discipline. Additionally, when tasked with selecting their top three roles and responsibilities from a list, building relationships overtook communication with stakeholders which had been cited in Round One as a top-3 responsibility. Frequencies of selections are shown in Figure 6. From the figure it can be seen that building relationships and instructional leadership were selected most frequently with school safety rounding out the top-3. Others were selected only a few times or not at all; however, several participants noted how certain items were encompassed in the others. For example, it was noted that monitoring student achievement data was part of instructional leadership and that student discipline is part of ensuring school safety.

Figure 6

Selection Frequencies of Top 3 Pre-Pandemic Roles and Responsibilities
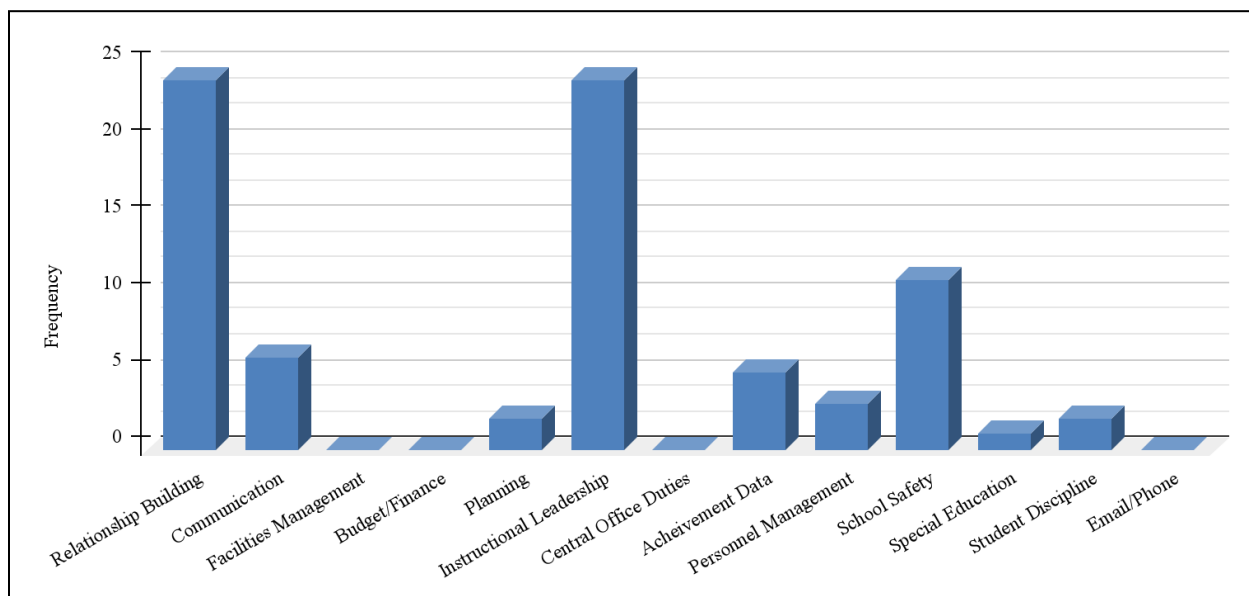
Several participants noted that hiring and supervising teachers, building relationships, and creating a safe culture allowed for effective instructional supervision. Participant #10, a suburban elementary school principal with a moderately diverse and economically disadvantaged student body offered words that summarize many participant responses for this particular question. They wrote:

> Instruction is the main goal for schools, so in my opinion instructional leadership should be a top responsibility. I include monitoring student achievement and data as part of instructional leadership though--to know where to take instruction, you must know the data. Good hiring and supervising (coaching) ensure good instruction. Ultimately no one can learn or teach if they do not feel safe so school safety is also a top priority. Several of the other responsibilities can fall under these three larger responsibilities (e.g. student supervision and discipline and facilities management can both fall under school safety).

Additionally, Participant #7's comments are indicative of the responses from many participants:

I believe that, first of all, school community members must feel safe. If they aren't safe, they can't effectively work or learn. Likewise, without positive relationships and a positive school culture, the school can quickly become a toxic environment--which is also counterproductive to effective teaching and learning. Finally, the reason we are here, in my opinion, is for teaching and learning; and so, instructional leadership is the next most important role of the principal.

The Round Three questionnaire sought consensus on the pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities of the school principal and also asked about their evolution post-Pandemic. This data will be presented in a later section.

The COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on the Principalship

While several participants noted their optimism that school will return to "normal" once the Pandemic reaches an endemic state, many believed that the COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted the future of the school principalship. Many did not believe that the roles and responsibilities will ever go back to "normal" or what they once were pre-Pandemic. As noted earlier, in Round One, a number of significant challenges faced by principals upon the reopening of their school's surfaced in the open-ended response items. Those challenges that were mentioned by multiple participants were summarized in the Round One summary data given to participants. In Round Two, participants were asked to check off which of those challenges they faced. A majority (over 50%) of participating principals faced each of the challenges listed below upon reopening to in person instruction. I've included the percentage of participants that mentioned each.

- Student Social-Emotional Challenges (96.15%)
- Decreased student achievement and/or lower test scores (92.31%)

- Increased Teacher Absenteeism and/or Lack of Substitute Teachers (88.46%)

- Low Staff Morale and/or Teacher Burnout (80.77%)

- Teacher Shortages/Vacant Instructional Positions (73.08%)

- Increased Student Disciplinary Infractions (65.38%)

- Increased demands from Central Office (53.85%)

It is worth noting that while each of these above challenges were identified as individual irrespective of one another, several can be linked together. For example, student social-emotional issues can be related to issues related to student discipline and teacher morale is a human resources issue related to increased teacher absenteeism.

Participants were also asked if each of the above challenges would be a long-term (lasting more than 5 years) challenge post-Pandemic. While there was a decrease in the number of participants who felt each of the above challenges would last more than 5 years, each of the above was selected over 33% of the time indicating that each will need attention from school officials to help mitigate their effects.   The following were predicted as being a long-term challenge by more than 50% of the participants:

- Teacher Shortages/Vacant Instructional Positions (80.77%)

- Decreased student achievement and/or lower test scores (69.23%)

- Student Social-Emotional Challenges (65.38%)

- Low Staff Morale and/or Teacher Burnout (61.54%)

Participant #6 noted the following when explaining their reasons for the above remaining as long term challenges:

> I think the return to in-person instruction completely after this school year will help to lessen teacher absenteeism and the demands for constant changes from Central Office.

However, I don't see much more than that changing for the positive. I see the social/emotional needs of students being a concern for a very long time and with that, more discipline, and more distractions in the classrooms that ultimately take away from learning and cause achievement data to suffer. All of this will continue to lead to low teacher morale and more and more leaving the profession, especially when their work is often criticized by local, state, and national politicians who use every opportunity to promote their agendas through schools and school systems.

The external criticism alluded to by Participant #6 came up in a number of participant responses and is most certainly a source of the teacher burnout and fatigue attributing to the staffing shortages that many of the participants would eventually forecast in Round Three.

Over half of all participants either "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed" that the principalship will evolve post-Pandemic and will include the following future responsibilities: a need to supervise virtual opportunities for instruction, a need to manage/combate teacher shortages, a need to increase the focus on student behavior/discipline, and a need to increase student wellbeing. Participant #15's words are illustrative of this summary, particularly for virtual opportunities for instruction. They wrote:

The Pandemic has ushered in changes that will not go away once it's over. Virtual instruction, Zoom meetings, and the like are now being incorporated into a way of life. Asynchronous instruction as an alternative has also become part of a new normal. These changes will have far reaching consequences that will not revert once the Pandemic ends.

This individual works in a medium-sized, urban middle school with significant diversity in its student body, many of whom live at or below the poverty line.

Participants also believe that they are more prepared to handle various crisis scenarios given their experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic. It was noted that you can never prepare for novel crisis situations; however, being able to draw on past experiences makes one more prepared for whatever situations arise.

Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic

One of the final questions in the Round Two Questionnaire was, "What lessons (if any) were learned during the COVID-19 Pandemic that will inform future practices of school principals during both normal and crisis operations?" Participants noted the need to be flexible and less rigid in the decision making process. Respondents noted that principals should embrace creativity in decision making. Additionally, many participants noted that they learned how important clear and consistent communication with all stakeholders was throughout the Pandemic and that it can greatly assist with the building of relationships. Those relationships mattered when attempting to reach goals throughout the Pandemic. Participants also noted how communication and relationships will matter in the future as well to ensure total school success. Many also discussed how students were negatively impacted by the Pandemic and that managing their social-emotional challenges was very important and will continue to be well beyond the Pandemic. Table 11 highlights several representative quotations from participants on what they learned while leading during the Pandemic.

Table 11

Representative Quotations for Lessons Learned during the Pandemic

Participant #	School Type	Diversity, Econ. Disadv.	Quotation
13	Rural MS	Low, Moderate	Be prepared for anything, which many principals are. I always felt that the building principal has to be everything from a warden to a psychologist to a medical doctor to a teacher. The pandemic has only diversified these roles and can pull principals in various ways. Being flexible, always important even pre-COVID, became more important. Meeting kids where they are, important pre-COVID, becomes more important. Systems examination is also critical. COVID caused us to review systems that we may not have reviewed. Cafeteria processes, dismissal and how best to handle those.
3	Suburban ES	Moderate, Moderate	I think we were reminded that it is the teacher that is the main educator and everyone else is in support of that person.
15	Urban MS	High, High	The emotional well being of the learner is more important than almost any other aspect of learning.
25	Rural HS	Low, Moderate	Communicate and build that trust and lasting relationships with students and staff. It will pay off when times are tough.
26	Suburban HS	High, Moderate	Be flexible and understanding.

Note. The middle two columns of this table represent the setting and demographic characteristics of the participant's school. ES = Elementary School, MS = Middle School, and HS = High School. Percent Diversity and Percent Economically Disadvantaged (Econ. Disadv.) are classified as Low (≤33%), Moderate (>33.0% and ≤67.0%), or High (>67.0%).

Round Three

The Round Three Questionnaire (See Appendix G) was distributed to and completed by

the 26 participants who completed both the Round One and Round Two Questionnaires giving

this study a zero percent rate of attrition. The primary objective of the Round Three Questionnaire was to reach consensus from the first two rounds of questioning. Participants were presented with Likert-scale questions which were typically followed by open-ended response questions. These open-ended questions allowed participants to comment on their selections to the Likert items. In addition to reviewing the quantitative responses, the open-ended-responses were used to generate a group rationale for the Likert rankings.

Pre-Pandemic Roles and Responsibilities, Consensus reached

The first two rounds of questioning developed strong consensus among the participants about the Pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities of the school principal. While not in all cases, much of that consensus was in line with the 75% agreement recommended by Diamond et al. (2014). However, Hsu and Sandford (2007) claimed that the threshold for consensus can vary. In the present study, and more specifically in Round Three, Likert scales were used and therefore consensus could be determined when the mean response was at either end of the scale.

In Round Three, participants were first asked to select from a list of all of their typical day-to-day roles and regular responsibilities. This list was generated from items checked by all or by 25 of the 26 (noted below) participants during Rounds One and Two. It is closely aligned with the roles and responsibilities identified throughout the literature and as summarized in Table 1. The consensus among participants was that the following make up the primary day-to-day roles and responsibilities of a school principal:

- Building relationships and/or creating positive school culture
- Communication with all stakeholders (parents, students, teachers, etc)
- Student Supervision and discipline
- General planning for longer term goals (single school year and/or multi school year)
- Instructional Leadership and/or Instructional Supervision
- Meeting Central Office expectations

- Monitoring student achievement, testing, and data

- Personnel management to including hiring and general supervision

- Responding to phone calls and/or emails

- School safety

- Special education (selected by 25 of 26)

- Facilities management (selected by 25 of 26)

- Financial or budget management (selected by 25 of 26)

Additionally, participants were asked about their top-3 pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities as selected during the first two rounds of questioning which were identified as follows, and in priority order:

1. Building Relationships and/or creating positive school culture

2. Instructional Leadership and/or Instructional Supervision

3. School Safety

In the third round, participants generally "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed" ($M = 1.54$, $SD = 0.71$) that these were the top-3 roles and responsibilities; however, when provided the opportunity to comment on their selections, many noted that it was difficult to narrow the job of a school principal down to just three items. Furthermore, several stated that they believed school safety was the top priority. Others commented on how student discipline and school safety could be linked. Participant #24, a high school principal working in a rural setting serving mainly White students of which over 60% are classified as economically disadvantaged noted the following:

It's really hard to narrow a principal's responsibility to just three things, even trying to rank them. However, Instruction and Safety should always be at the top of the list. Setting a positive culture, creating a vision for excellence is necessary to lead a successful school for students and the community.

Compare Participant #24's statement to that of Participant #7 who works at an elementary school in a suburban area with high diversity and high poverty characterizing its student body. They made the following statement:

> First of all we have to engender a feeling that the school is safe. Without that, people cannot function at optimum capacity. That has always been true. Relationships/positive school culture will be necessary to retain staff. Instructional leadership has always been the most [important] role of a principal after ensuring school safety in my opinion. Instruction is why we are here.

Regardless of individual ordering, consensus was reached regarding the day-to-day roles and responsibilities as well as the top-3 most important among those.

The Evolving School Principalship and Future Challenges

In Rounds One and Two, participants generally believed that the school principalship will evolve and face a continuation of the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic. These challenges were presented to participants in Round Three and they were asked the following question: To what extent do you agree or disagree that each of the following will remain a long-term (more than 5 years) challenge for school principals POST-PANDEMIC? Generally, participants either "Somewhat Agreed" or "Agreed" that each of these challenges will be long-term (five years or more). The Likert-scale ranking was as follows: 1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Somewhat Agree, 4-Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5-Somewhat Disagree, 6-Disagree, and 7-Strongly Disagree. Results are summarized in Table 12.

Table 12

Forecasts for Long Term Challenges

Challenge	*M*	*SD*
Teacher Shortages/Vacant Instructional Positions	1.50	0.58
Student Social-Emotional Challenges	1.69	0.62
Increased Teacher Absenteeism and/or Lack of Substitute Teachers	2.38	1.39
Decreased student achievement and/or lower test scores	2.54	1.45
Increased demands from Central Office	2.54	1.30
Low Staff Morale and/or Teacher Burnout	2.69	1.26
Increased Student Disciplinary Infractions	2.85	1.52

Table 12 reveals that, most noteworthy are the forecasted continuation of a teacher shortage as well as the need to address student social-emotional needs going forward post-Pandemic. Each of these possessed a mean Likert score between "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" with less than 0.70 standard deviations, indicating that most participants felt each of these challenges was very likely to remain long term. The lower standard deviation indicates there was less fluctuation in Likert selections. These two areas could be linked to Low Staff Morale and/or Teacher Burnout and Increased Student Disciplinary Infractions, respectively. Additionally, while the other challenges of increased teacher absenteeism/lack of substitute teachers, decreased student achievement/test scores or increased demands from Central Office had higher Likert scores, they all fell within the "Strongly Agree" to "Somewhat Agree" range with standard deviations in the 1.20 - 1.50 range, again indicating minimal variation in Likert selections.

Table 13 includes representative quotations from the participants about their predictions for the future of the principalship post-Pandemic and the challenges they predict will accompany the job moving forward.

Table 13

Representative Quotations for Future Challenges

Challenge	Example Quotation
● Decreased student achievement and/or lower test scores	Participant 23 (Urban HS): Students missed so much when they were out and did not have the structures needed. Participant 13 (Rural MS): State and local governments will continue to pressure educators for high [test] results, even with the learning gaps that exist.
● Increased student disciplinary infractions	Participant 3 (Suburban ES): Increasing student discipline takes time from the rest of the roles. It can be exhausting as the students' behavior gets more violent toward teachers and admins. I had a PreK kid actually bite me on the buttocks yesterday in an emotional breakdown. The physical attacks on staff are more frequent and demoralizing. We are spending time this summer in professional development around student discipline to try to be proactive. I see this approach as long term and developing over the years.
● Student Social-Emotional Challenges	Participant 24 (Suburban HS): Students' mental health (social/emotional well-being) must be prioritized by the country or we will continue to have long term issues. Students' struggles in this area are not all because of the Pandemic, but it certainly has complicated the matter. I find that leaders (politicians, superintendents, School Board members) can all talk about its importance, but no one is doing anything or no one knows what to do. It is a serious, serious issue that is complicated. As usual, those in charge (as named above) want to simplify the issue.
● Challenges related to teachers	Participant 12 (Suburban MS): I have spent every week this year interviewing and have maintained two vacancies all year in science classroom, which have been filled by subs. Even these subs have not remained, so, there is little consistency in instruction and the rigor is missing.

Accompanying the questions regarding these long-term challenges were questions that asked participants to compare how challenging they felt their job as school principal was before the Pandemic compared to during the Pandemic as well as how challenging it was before the Pandemic compared to what they foresee post-Pandemic. On average, participant responses were in agreement, falling between "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" ($M =1.85$, $SD = 1.32$) when prompted with the statement that it was more challenging to be a principal during the Pandemic than before. Additionally, participant responses fell between "Strongly Agreed" and "Agreed" ($M =1.73$, $SD = 1.22$) regarding the statement that the job would be more challenging once the Pandemic concludes than it was before the Pandemic began.

Flexibility, Communication, and Novel Crisis

The final portion of Questionnaire #3 asked participants about their beliefs surrounding the decision making process, communication and relationships, and their emergency preparedness. Specifically, using the aforementioned Likert-scale, participants were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with various statements. Respondents mostly either "Strongly Agreed" or "Agreed" that communication with stakeholders will continue to be important and that the decision-making process will require a continued need for flexibility. Participants also acknowledged that they were more prepared to handle future crisis scenarios given their experiences throughout the Pandemic. Lastly, they mostly agreed that relationship-building will matter more post-Pandemic than it did pre-Pandemic. These statements and responses are summarized in Table 14.

Table 14

Forecasts for Decision-making, Communication, and Crises

Statement	*M*	*SD*
Going forward, POST-Pandemic communication with all stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, etc) will be important to ensuring overall school success.	1.31	0.47
Going forward, POST-Pandemic, the decision-making process will require flexibility and a willingness to change course at a moment's notice.	1.88	0.99
Given my experiences as a principal throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic, I am now better equipped to handle various crisis situations.	2.08	1.38
Building relationships with stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, etc.) matters more now than it did PRE-PANDEMIC.	2.65	1.65

Note. The Likert-scale ranking was as follows: 1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Somewhat Agree, 4-Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5-Somewhat Disagree, 6-Disagree, and 7-Strongly Disagree.

Agreement across settings

In developing such a diverse sample by region and school level, it is natural to assume that I was in search of comparative data between these various demographics. That was not the case; however, given the sample heterogeneity, it is important to offer up discussion of the similarities and differences. Doing so, however, represents an enormous challenge given the great volume of qualitative data collected. Rather than assess every question and every line for differences, I will present various subsets of data to illustrate that while there were differences across school level and setting, participants were mainly in agreement with the findings presented in previous sections of this chapter.

Table 15 shows a breakdown of means and standard deviations for participant level of agreement for prediction of post-Pandemic challenges asked about in Round Three. Participants

were asked to select their level of agreement for each of the items listed in the Table as indicated

in the following prompt: "To what extent do you agree or disagree that each of the following

will remain a long-term (more than 5 years) challenge for school principals

POST-PANDEMIC?" As shown, mean values closer to 1.00 indicate strong agreement while

values closer to 7.00 indicate strong disagreement.

Table 15

Participants' Level of Agreement on Post-Pandemic Challenges

	Overall		Elementary		Middle		High	
Forecasted Long Term Challenge	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Decreased student achievement and/or lower test scores	2.54	1.45	3.36	1.57	1.43	0.53	2.38	1.19
Increased demands from Central Office	2.54	1.30	2.82	1.47	3.14	1.21	1.63	0.52
Increased Student Disciplinary Infractions	2.85	1.52	3.18	1.78	2.57	1.27	2.63	1.41
Increased Teacher Absenteeism and/or Lack of Substitute Teachers	2.38	1.39	2.18	1.33	2.00	1.41	3.00	1.41
Low Staff Morale and/or Teacher Burnout	2.69	1.26	2.91	1.58	2.00	0.82	3.00	0.93
Student Social-Emotional Challenges	1.69	0.62	1.91	0.54	1.57	0.79	1.50	0.53
Teacher Shortages/Vacant Instructional Positions	1.50	0.58	1.36	0.50	1.43	0.53	1.75	0.71

Note. The Likert-scale ranking was as follows: 1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Somewhat Agree, 4-Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5-Somewhat Disagree, 6-Disagree, and 7-Strongly Disagree.

While there is some variation in the extent of agreement between school levels, it is

important to recognize that nearly all of the standard deviations are around 1.00, therefore

decreasing the overall variability in the data for this and other data sets in this study. In other words, the small standard deviation indicates that there is general agreement within the groups.

Additionally, when examining the qualitative data for variations, many similarities were noted across level and setting. For example, when asked in Round Two to comment on the future challenges principals will face post-Pandemic, Participant #9, an elementary school principal situated in an urban setting with high percentages of diversity (94.4%) and economically disadvantaged students (71.3%) wrote:

Recovering from learning loss will take years to recoup and my hope is that we continue to expect growth without the consequence of being tagged a failing school. Teacher shortages are no longer limited to schools considered to be hard to staff but are impacting all schools in all districts in all states. The Pandemic made it acceptable for people to think about their mental health and well-being where before everyone was expected to push through.

Contrast Participant #9's words to those of Participant #13 who serves a rural middle school with lower diversity (26.0%) and a lower, but significant percentage of economically disadvantaged students (53.0%). He wrote:

I believe there will be a bubble of students who struggle academically because of the Pandemic. They will have reading problems because of the lack of instruction they received in K-2 instruction. We were seeing teacher shortages prior to the Pandemic. With added demands placed on teachers during, finding quality teachers is like finding a needle in a haystack. The added pressures placed on the teachers leads to lower morale and self-efficacy.

Finally, consider the comments from Participant #24 who serves a suburban high school with moderate diversity (54.9%) and a moderate percentage of economically disadvantaged (38.9%) students pockets of affluence. They stated:

> The demands placed on school level faculty have created a low morale in current teachers which created a lack of interest in future generations joining the profession. The increased demands from central office are generally tied to the expectations of the state. As long as we continue to see the long term impacts in achievement and the standards for accreditation remain the same, we are likely to see demands staying high.

Each of these participants serves a very different school community yet we see a high level of agreement in their statements. Regardless of school level, school setting, socioeconomic status, and percent diversity several themes emerged when these three (and the other participants) were asked about the future challenges school principals will face post-Pandemic. These include the following: predictions of decreased student achievement and teacher shortages. Additionally, in their Likert-scale responses that preceded the comment box, each identified decreased student achievement and teacher morale and/or teacher shortages as future challenges. This comparison exemplifies the similarities found throughout the data collected across all rounds of questioning.

Outliers in the Data - Acknowledging Disensus

While comments like those shared in the previous section were typical throughout the data collection, it is important to acknowledge that there were times of disagreement. This dissensus primarily emerged in Round One of this study and centered around whether or not the principalship would evolve post-Pandemic. While many participants, even early on in the study, felt the job would evolve, there were some who did not.

Table 16 provides several examples of participant statements that were in contradiction to the majority of participants regarding the principalship's evolution post-Pandemic. These statements are important to consider and suggest the possibility of a return to normalcy post-Pandemic; however, comments like the ones in the table were limited and evolved as the study progressed. These statements shown in the table were taken from the Round One Questionnaire.

Table 16

Statements of Dissensus on Principalship Evolution

Participant #	School Type	Diversity, Econ. Disadv.	Quotation
4	Rural ES	Low, Moderate	We are back to pre-pandemic roles. I can not think of anything different that was changed due to the pandemic that will stay long term in terms of my responsibilities.
17	Rural MS	Low, Moderate	I believe a return to normal with my primary role returning to instructional leader. This has already happened to a great extent.
18	Rural MS	Low, Low	In an endemic state, we should return to the pre-pandemic primary roles
20	Rural HS	Low, High	At this point my division has transitioned back to pre-COVID education. My roles and responsibilities have returned to normal.

Note. The middle two columns of this table represent the setting and demographic characteristics of the participant's school. ES = Elementary School, MS = Middle School, and HS = High School. Percent Diversity and Percent Economically Disadvantaged (Econ. Disadv.) are classified as Low (≤33%), Moderate (>33.0% and ≤67.0%), or High (>67.0%).

What's important to recognize here is that while these participants stated a return to normalcy early on in the study, their responses changed as the study progressed. For example, in Round Two, Participant #20 wrote the following when asked about the principalship returning to

normal post-Pandemic: "The pandemic has drastically changed the principalship roles forever. I do not feel it will ever return to pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities." These words strongly contradict the comments from Round One and are an example of how some participants modified their responses as the study progressed.

While this change of opinion did not occur often, it is noteworthy and worth mentioning. From Chapter III, I cited the work of Hsu and Sanford (2007) who warned of researchers who supply leading feedback between rounds of questioning. Could the feedback between rounds have influenced Participant #20's future responses, or were the comments from their peers enough to cause Participant #20 to legitimately re-think their answers? I do not believe that I am capable of fully answering that question here; however, I remind the reader that while there were varying opinions throughout the study, a majority of participants discussed the evolution of the principalship and were in some level of agreement with the notion that there would be future, long term challenges brought about by or exacerbated by COVID-19.

Chapter Summary

The questionnaires for the present Delphi study were designed with the intention of learning more about principal experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic and how participating principals felt the Pandemic impacted the future of their profession. Participants reached consensus regarding their top-3 pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities which were identified as:

1. Building Relationships and/or creating positive school culture

2. Instructional Leadership and/or Instructional Supervision

3. School Safety

Participants also explained and reached consensus around the evolution of their job throughout the Pandemic. Early in the Pandemic participants noted how their job had completely changed course and that they spent most of their time managing technology issues related to virtual instruction. Participants reflected on how their roles and responsibilities changed as the Pandemic progressed and schools began to reopen to some form of in person instruction.

While not reaching the threshold for consensus outlined by Diamond et al. (2014), many participants felt that the following would be longer term challenges post-Pandemic: decreased student achievement and/or lower test scores, low staff morale and/or teacher burnout, student social-emotional challenges, and teacher shortages/vacant instructional positions.   Additionally, many participants were asked about their predictions for the future of the school principalship. Many agreed that the job of school principal would evolve to some extent and would require an increase in the amount of communication with all stakeholders and a need to build strong relationships with students, teachers, and parents. While many noted a need for flexibility in the past, that need now more than ever will become increasingly important as the schools move into post-Pandemic times and beyond. Chapter V will provide a discussion of these data and offer recommendations for practice.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In March of 2020, school principals, along with the rest of the world entered uncharted territory with the onset of COVID-19.   What it meant to be a school principal changed overnight as schools entered a period of total shutdown and a cessation of in person instruction replaced by 100% virtual instruction. Throughout the last two years, school principals were constantly thrust into novel situations without notice or training and were expected to maintain all of the services public schools offered. Expectations were high, and the stakes were even higher.

Furthermore, the political context in which schools and school divisions were situated throughout COVID-19 can be characterized as volatile and highly polarized, as much of the Pandemic occurred in the midst of and immediately following the 2020 Presidential Election. Additionally, racial tensions were ignited by the murder of George Floyd in May of 2020 which sparked protests around the United States. In Virginia, Floyd's death propelled months of public protests and demands for the removal of confederate soldiers' statues along Richmond's Monument Avenue.

Reyes-Guerra and colleagues (2021) acknowledged the unique political landscape that school leaders had to navigate throughout the Pandemic, stating:

> The COVID-19 Pandemic, bringing to the forefront and catalyzing long-unconfronted racial and economic inequities, in addition to economic collapse and deep political divisions - which all impact students and schools – has resulted in a compound crisis requiring a novel conceptualization of school leadership during times of crisis (p. 1).

For principals, the challenges of COVID-19 could not be isolated from the political and racial tensions that plagued the country. Those challenges were not lost on the participants in the present study. As one wrote: "With the tremendous increase of political issues coming into the

school setting and causing friction in all that we do, principals are constantly under pressure to appease many groups with vastly different beliefs and values" (Participant #6). These words capture what I would characterize as a near impossible task. How does a principal appease groups that are so in opposition of one another? I don't claim to have the answer and only ask the question to illustrate the point that principals were up against so much during the Pandemic. Participant #21, a principal serving a diverse suburban high school with a moderate percentage (38.9%) of economically disadvantaged students, also identified the complexities that came with the coupling of COVID-19 with the political divisiveness by listing the associated challenges:

> Significant increase in behavior management from pre-Pandemic years. Monitoring hybrid teaching to ensure students in the classroom and home were receiving adequate instruction. Managing parent and community complaints that increased exponentially from pre-Pandemic with political views driving most complaints. New duties included COVID contact tracing and parent phone calls. As we reopened in a hybrid setting, the COVID tracing was less than in the 21-22 school year. Constant changes in expectations from the Governor and district create conditions for constant logistical reorganization and communication to faculty, students and parents.

Simply put, throughout the Pandemic and moving into the future, principals faced and will continue to face significant challenges related to, among others, students and teachers. With those challenges comes the need to navigate the hyperpolarized political landscape that only further complicates the role of school principal. The purpose of this chapter is to present the major findings of this study, their implications for educators, and related recommendations that can inform future research, policy, and practice within this new and continuing context.

Purpose of the study

This study sought to understand what principals went through during the COVID-19 Pandemic and how their experiences translated to lessons learned for the profession. Using a forecasting methodology known as the Delphi Method (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963) I attempted to garner principal opinions on how the Pandemic impacted their jobs and translate those impacts into predictions for the future work of school administrators. Table 17 presents a summary of the answers to the study's research questions.

**Table 17**

Summary of Research Question Answers

Research Question	Answer According to the Findings
How has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected the school principalship?	• More responsibilities have and will continue to be placed on the school principal. • Principals' time was spread thin pre-Pandemic. It will be spread to a greater extent post-Pandemic.
What lessons were learned during the COVID-19 Pandemic that will inform future practices of school principals during both normal and crisis operations?	• Relationships matter. • Timely, consistent communication matters. • Flexibility from all stakeholders is critically important to ensure school success, especially during times of crisis.
How will each role and responsibility of the school principal change once the COVID-19 Pandemic concludes? Will there be new roles and responsibilities and if so, what are they?	• Many roles and responsibilities will be as they were pre-Pandemic even as new ones require attention. • Principals will need to devote greater efforts towards building relationships with all stakeholders, especially teachers and students.

Major Findings

While much of the findings in the present study did not meet the threshold for consensus as outlined by Diamond et al. (2014), I lean on the work of Hsu and Sandford (2007) who, as previously stated, noted how consensus is determined can vary greatly in Delphi research. The qualitative and quantitative data from a majority (more than 50%) of the participants suggests an evolving school principalship resulting from the COVID-19 Pandemic. Despite a return to normalcy, or at least the desire to do so, the findings from this study suggest that the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted the school principalship and set it on an alternative pathway that it would not have initially taken had the Pandemic not happened. This alternate pathway is precisely the answer to the first research question and is elaborated on throughout this Chapter. In short, the conceptual framework presented in Figures 1 and 2 is an accurate depiction of the school principalship's evolution that resulted from the COVID-19 Pandemic; however, I concede that further research is needed to validate much of what was found and concluded here. In reflecting on the results, I modified the original conceptual framework which is shown below in Figure 7 and reveals a new evolutionary pathway for the school principalship.

Figure 7

The Current Evolutionary State of the Principalship
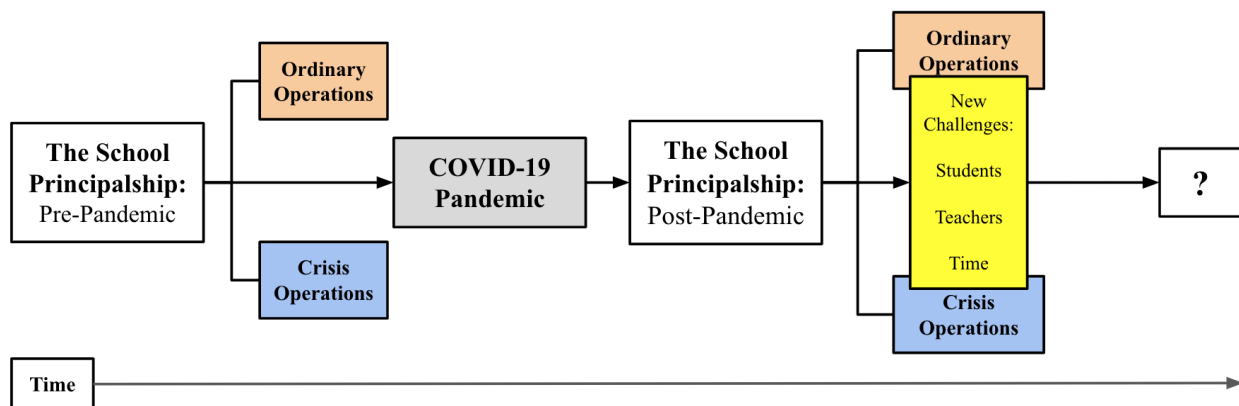
From Figure 7, and in accordance with the findings of the present work, we can see that, as hypothesized, the school principalship evolved from the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. While the COVID-19 Pandemic likely played a major role in the most recent evolution of the principalship, there are undoubtedly other forces of influence, such as the divisive political and racial landscapes that plagued the United States during the 2020 Presidential Election and leadership transition. Moving forward, post-Pandemic, school principals will still operate in either normal or crisis circumstances; however, now, as forecasted by the participants, they will face deepened challenges related to students and teachers. Those include decreased student achievement, low staff morale and/or teacher burnout, student social-emotional challenges, and teacher shortages/vacant instructional positions. With that, and as has always been the case, comes the need for more time to be able to meet all of the new and existing responsibilities of school principals. Additionally, as shown in Figure 7, the principalship will continue to evolve in response to new environmental changes. It is that future evolution that is unknown and requires further research on the professional lives of school principals.

This study found what the roles and responsibilities of a school principal consisted of before, during, and throughout the Pandemic and forecasted their job's future trajectory. Participants candidly expressed the hardships they faced and revealed how they felt the Pandemic would impact education and ultimately the job of school principal. A summary of the evolution of the school principalship and forecasts for the future is shown in Table 18. Of note in this summary table are the priorities of relationship-building both pre-and post-Pandemic, the consistent expression of a need for more time regardless of the time period or external context, a forecasts return to most pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities in the future, as well as many forecasted challenges brought about by the Pandemic.

Table 18

The Evolution of the Principalship According to the Participants

Pre-Pandemic	Early Pandemic	Late Pandemic/ Currently	Future Predictions
Planner	Cessation of pre-Pandemic Roles & Responsibilities	Begin returning to many pre-Pandemic Roles & Responsibilities	Return to pre-Pandemic Roles & Responsibilities
Personnel Manager	Virtual Instruction	COVID Mitigation	Managing of Teacher Shortages
Instructional Leader	Technical Support	Contact Tracing	Addressing Decreased Student Achievement
Student Disciplinarian	Frequent Meetings	Staffing Shortages	Addressing Student Socio-emotional Concerns
Community Relations Manager	Constant Communication	Low Morale	Greater Need to Build Relationships
Finance Manager	No Disciplinary Infractions	Increase in Disciplinary Infractions	Need for more time
Building Operations	Meal Delivery	Student Socio-emotional concerns	
Need for more time	Need for more time	Need for more time	

Note. The table is to be read downward by column, not across by row. Each column represents summary roles/responsibilities/challenges identified by participants at each stage of the Pandemic and their forecasts for the future.

Evolving Roles and Responsibilities

Earlier in this dissertation, I referenced a quotation by Liou (2015) who stated that, "in the daily administration of schools, the only certainty is that there is no certainty" (p. 248). Additionally, I offered up thoughts from Lunenburg (2010) who characterized the job of school

principal as including "variety, fragmentation, and brevity" (p. 5). Lastly, Pawlas (2005) stated

the following as it pertains to the school principalship: "the responsibilities of a school principal

continue to be expanded, reviewed, and scrutinized" (p. xi). All of these words paint a picture

of a job that, prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, was already demanding, complex, and

ever-changing. Findings from the literature review illustrated that point and are supported by the

results of the present study.

Additionally, school principals are pulled in many directions and with many competing

responsibilities (Becker & Grob, 2021: Sebastian et al., 2018; National Policy Board for

Educational Administration, 2015; Lynch, 2012; Lunenburg, 2010; Portin et al., 1998). The

works of Portin et al. (1998) and Sebastian et al. (2018) demonstrated that principals' time is

spread thin throughout the days, weeks, and months of a school year. Findings from the present

study support this theme from the literature.

The literature also revealed commonalities on the specific roles and responsibilities of a

school principal. These included strategic planner and visionary, personnel manager,

instructional leader, student disciplinarian, community relations manager, financial manager, and

buildings operation manager (Virginia Department of Education, 2020; Becker & Grob, 2021:

Sebastian et al., 2018; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015; Lynch,

2012; Lunenburg, 2010; Portin et al., 1998).   Participants of the present study agreed that these

were the primary roles and responsibilities. In short, the job of school principal is one that

requires a high degree of competence in multiple fields and the ability to juggle multiple

responsibilities with a constant readiness to change course "on the fly," often without notice.

At this point, it is worth noting that, as this work evolved, so did the literature around

schools, the principal, and the Pandemic's impact. Entering this project, the literature was

emerging and ongoing. I would still characterize it as such; however, more recent searches reveal a growing body of research that can accompany and support the findings and recommendations presented here. For example, Westberry et al. (2021) recently examined the school principal during the Pandemic and how the job evolved throughout. In some ways, their work mirrors what was found here. Specifically, using a mixed methods approach, they suggested that going forward, principals will need to develop soft skills, particularly in the areas related to communication with stakeholders. This is consistent with the study's findings and recommendations made later in this chapter surrounding relationship building.

Forecasted Challenges

While some participants acknowledged that many of their primary pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities are returning to the forefront, others noted that there have been and will continue to be changes as a result of COVID-19. They forecasted current challenges brought about by the Pandemic as long term, lasting more than five years. These include: decreased student achievement and/or lower test scores, low staff morale and/or teacher burnout, student social-emotional challenges, and teacher shortages/vacant instructional positions. Participants also stated that there will continue to be a greater need for flexibility and adaptivity in the decision-making process and that crisis preparedness should remain on their minds at all times. The COVID-19 Pandemic represents just one specific type of long-term crisis; however, the skills developed through a reactive Pandemic decision-making process could support principals as they are able to return to their primary role of schoolwide planner and visionary. In other words, the ability to be more proactive, flexible, and adaptive decision-makers–regardless of whether schools are operating normally or in times of crisis– benefit the post-Pandemic

principalship. The words of Participant #6 highlight much of what principals stated throughout this study:

> We had to adjust and learn how to do things quickly and differently. This is a skillset that won't be lost on us because it isn't only in times of crisis that we need these skills. I feel like we need this skillset all the time now!

Participant #6's words reflect the crisis-honed skills of adaptation and continual improvement. The question, then, that I'll ask is - how do current and, more importantly, future principals develop these skills so that they're ready for the next novel crisis? A rethinking of the school principalship and the preparation that goes with becoming a school principal may be in order. This revamping mindset is one that will be a recurring theme throughout the remaining pages of my dissertation.

Prioritizing Responsibilities

So now, I return to the dilemma of time. In accordance with the study findings as well as the literature, principals don't have enough to adequately meet all of their job responsibilities and to work on the soft skills such as relationship-building. Portin et al. (1998) and Sebastian et al. (2018) verify such a statement. Findings suggest that building a positive school culture falls on the shoulders of the school principal. If so, then perhaps some of the primary responsibilities such as operations, finance, and discipline should be delegated to assistant principals. If, however, one were to ask assistant principals about their opinion on this matter, I would hypothesize that they too are spread thin and taking on a greater number of responsibilities is simply impractical. I do not claim to have the answer to the question of who does what, but I do recommend that leaders at the district level and politicians take a serious look at the roles of school principals and what they really need to be doing. There has to be an adjustment in their

day to day roles and responsibilities if ever they are to have the time to build culture with intention.

Anecdotally, from my own ten year experience working in a public school, I was witness to the strain placed on school administrators. They were pulled in an increasing number of directions with fewer and fewer opportunities to build community. We (the teachers) needed them in our classrooms offering feedback. We needed them walking the halls and supervising students outside of the classroom. We needed them to build the school up even when times were tough. In order to build teachers up, principals, I believe, must rely on the advice provided by Kruse and Lewis (2008) who wrote extensively about positive school culture. That is, principals must establish a "professional community" where everyone has the shared responsibility of reaching the schools' goals and teachers must be given the autonomy to do so. Furthermore, they write about principals building trust through relationships with teachers, among other stakeholders. Again, this takes time and prioritizing responsibilities while removing others.

Implications and Recommendations

Moving past the Pandemic for principals will undoubtedly be a relief; however, with that progress will come the ongoing challenges presented here. As Participant #14 stated, "The only way to move forward toward a common goal is through positive relationships." I think that this sentiment has always been shared among school leaders and educators alike, but perhaps now more so than ever before will those relationships be the key to school success. As such, relationships form the foundation for the study's implications and my subsequent recommendations.

When considering the forecasted long term challenges for principals, three were student-centered and three were teacher-centered. Student-centered challenges included

responding to social-emotional concerns, increased student disciplinary infractions, and decreased student achievement. The teacher-centered challenges included low morale, increased teacher absenteeism, and teacher shortages. Therefore, in constructing the next sections of this chapter, I divide implications and recommendations into three parts, each with one focal group: Teachers, students, and the community. I start with a discussion surrounding teachers and principals followed up by a discussion centered around students and principals. Finally, I'll foreground relationships as the key to all of this discussion. In addition to these sections, I'll also introduce a proposal for a reimagined school principalship that seeks to address the challenges and evolving roles and responsibilities forecasted by the participants of this study.

Teacher-Centered Implications for Principals

> *The best way for a principal to address teacher shortages, low morale, and absenteeism is to create a positive culture in which teachers are appreciated and want to come to work.*
>
> —Participant #1

Participant #1's words get at the challenge of a forecasted teacher shortage identified in this study. Many participants expressed concern and frustration about teacher absenteeism and vacant instructional positions that are prevalent in the schools they supervise. They predicted this trend to continue long after the Pandemic concludes. Recent data reported by the Virginia Public Access Project (VPAP) supports their predictions of a more pronounced teacher shortage and further exacerbates the need for action. Recently, VPAP (2022) published data from the Virginia Retirement System showing that nearly 500 more teachers retired after the 2020-2021 school year than in the previous four school years. Furthermore, they showed mid-year retirements during the 2020-2021 as well as the 2021-2022 school years were higher than in

prior years. This increase in retirements is only one of the causes of a larger-than-expected

teacher shortage that participants in the present study predicted. It does not take into account

teachers who leave the profession mid-career.

At the national level, teachers are also leaving the profession at increasing rates.

According to a recent report published by the National Education Association (NEA), there are

currently 567,000 fewer educators in the United States now than prior to the COVID-19

Pandemic (Jotkoff, 2022). They further reported a ratio of new hires to jobs open of 0.57 which

is an all time low. The multifaceted issue of teacher shortages is one that has plagued school

leaders for years, but now is becoming a crisis of its own post-Pandemic. Practicing teachers are

calling out more frequently and there are fewer substitutes. Additionally teachers are leaving the

profession at an alarming rate and there are fewer qualified individuals to fill those positions.

The participants in this study verified these trends as occurring in their own school buildings and

school divisions.

Relationship to the Literature

So what can be done? The literature on teacher turnover and attrition is vast and growing

constantly. Just prior to the Pandemic, Nguyen and Springer (2019) released a report finding that

certain organizational factors influence teacher turnover. They wrote about a need for positive

school culture and administrative support that includes response to student discipline problems as

well the positive impacts of accountability through the observation and feedback cycle.

Supporting these claims is the Learning Policy Institute report authored by Carver-Thomas and

Darling-Hammond (2017) who, like the participants in this study, predicted pre-Pandemic a

significant teacher shortage. Their work also indicated that the most cited reason for teacher

turnover and attrition was job dissatisfaction. Additionally, Zee and Koomen (2016) found that

teacher self-efficacy, or a teacher's beliefs that they are capable of finding success in their classroom, is positively linked to psychological well-being and overall job satisfaction. When considering the data collected in this study, participants identified low teacher morale as a major issue in their schools and one that they forecasted to be long lasting. They further forecasted teacher shortages as lasting more than five years and oftentimes related it to morale and well-being.

Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond (2017) present recommendations to combat turnover and attrition which include better compensation, stronger training programs for pre-service teachers, and significant support from school administrators. The NEA (2022) released a report substantiating these recommendations now more so than ever before. While compensation and training are beyond the scope of this work, meaning that principals in school divisions generally have little to no say in determining teacher salaries as well as the requirements for teacher licensure, the piece that fits here, for this study, and where principals can have an impact, is the continued call for greater administrative support of teachers and, as Participant #1's above quotation affirms the need for positive school culture. It cannot be overstated that teacher job satisfaction is directly related to a positive school culture and it is the principal's responsibility to build that atmosphere to preserve their teacher workforce. Doing so, however, will require changes in the daily responsibilities of a school administrator. Some of the managerial tasks such as building operations, finance, and discipline should be reassigned to other individuals.

Participant #10 also noted the teacher shortage as being a significant challenge for years to come post-Pandemic writing:

The biggest challenge will be teacher shortages. This is not something principals can fix

alone. Principals that create safe, collaborative, supportive environments will help retain teachers--there are fewer numbers of people going into teacher [preparation] programs. This is a societal issue that needs to be fixed from a global perspective, not a school-based one.

Principal Leadership as a Retention Incentive

While Participant #10 alludes to the fact that this shortage is a societal issue requiring, as stated above and in alignment with the research, a multipronged approach, they also note the need for principals to foster a positive school climate. While salary and compensation are generally outside of the responsibilities for a typical school principal, Becker and Grob (2021), who were originally cited in the literature review, offer substantive recommendations for principals wishing to promote teacher retention in their own school buildings. Specifically, they targeted five "focus areas" for school principals which include the following:

1. Principals should create a "shared vision" which all teachers are committed to.

2. Principals should work on creating "relational trust" between themselves and their faculties.

3. Principals should be committed to instructional leadership which focuses on substantive feedback and appropriate professional development for individual teachers.

4. Principals should create safe working conditions for teachers.

5. Principals should act as a "bureaucratic shield" and minimize the amount of pressure from central office and other entities for teachers to perform their duties.

All of these focal areas presented by Becker and Grob (2022) are discussed in various literature in some form and are consistent with Northouse's (2010) interpersonal definition of authentic leadership.

Northouse (2010) writes on multiple dimensions of leadership, but in his authentic leadership style he notes characteristics of a leader which align closely with Becker and Grob's recommendations above and the need for leaders to build relationships among teachers and administrators. These characteristics include leaders who have passion and purpose, strong values, are consistent, are compassionate, and who work towards connectedness with their followers by building relationships. In the school building, as it relates to teachers and principals, action on the above means principals are visible and constantly interacting with their faculty and staff. They are not in their offices working on tasks related to items such as school finance and building operations. In brief, they are prioritizing time spent with teachers.

Student-centered Implications for Principals

It will take years to recoup what our students didn't

get over COVID both academically and socially!

—Participant #11

Much like the intentional efforts described in the previous section surrounding decreasing teacher burnout and turnover, principals must be given the time and resources to assist with student socio-emotional wellness as well as student achievement. As Participant #15 stated, "The emotional well being of the learner is more important than almost any other aspect of learning." While principals cannot bear the entire burden of helping students who suffer from psychological challenges, as the head teacher in their building, they must be given an opportunity to work with the most vulnerable children. Furthermore, if one considers the work of Dorn and

colleagues (2021) that was presented in Chapter II, the K-shaped recovery will mean a greater gap in student achievement between the primarily White, middle and upper class students and the primarily minority, economically disadvantaged students. Therefore, student wellbeing and student achievement are, like teacher morale and attrition, multidimensional challenges that require a team approach, but at the head of that team is the school principal who bears the ultimate responsibility of student success.

Recommendations from the Literature

Byrne and colleagues (2020) reported a number of school-based recommendations for promoting student social-emotional wellbeing that included the following:

> the provision of a positive school climate; maintenance of a sense of (student) connectedness with the school; positive inter-student and student/teacher relationships; fostering expectations of high achievement; participation in extracurricular activities, and; the provision of support and professional development for teachers (p. 440).

Their work supports relational leadership in schools and is consistent with the claim that school culture should remain the focal mission for school principals.

Related to Byrne and colleagues (2020) work is the work of Barnett (2021) who recently published a piece in *Education and Urban Society,* that examined the literature on children and hope in their education and future post-COVID-19 Pandemic. He reported findings that mirror what participants reported in the present study. These findings raise concerns about students' social-emotional wellbeing and the impact on their academic achievement. Acknowledging the seemingly insurmountable task of helping struggling students, Barnett (2021) offers recommendations for educators including school principals that address the issues presented in this study. He recommends avoiding approaches that promote "false hope" which include a

focus on "hard work and perseverance" and that "future conditions and events will be drastically better" (p. 8). Instead, Barnett (2021) suggests that educators promote "critical hope" which is rooted in the need for positive relationships among students, teachers, and administrators. Once again, I return to the need for more time in the daily schedule of school principals. The next two sections will discuss the related need for time and that of relationship-building.

Relationships - The Common Thread

With everything that changed, relationships are going to be key moving forward.

—Participant #14

Going forward, post-Pandemic, the results of this study suggest that it cannot be understated that principals must work together in cooperation with their students, teachers, parents, and the greater community if ever they want to ensure total school success and close gaps. Doing so will pay dividends and move schools forward.

Participant #23 seemed to tie most of the results together with the following statement, writing, "The social-emotional challenges of the students have increased significantly and lead to the increased discipline and low staff morale." In short, all of these pieces intermingle and lead to a productive (or unproductive) school community. This finding was echoed in the literature. In her case study that analyzed how one school principal built a positive school culture, Brown (2015) found that gaining the trust of all school stakeholders was essential. Furthermore, the text by Kruse and Lewis (2008) is rooted in the need for relationships with all school community members. Brackett (2019) affirms this notion writing that "research shows that our emotions and moods transfer from one person to another and from one person to an entire team (p. 222). He goes on to write about how when teachers who have a higher social-emotional wellbeing, so do the students which impacts their overall success and academic achievement. So then, for the

school principal, taking time to promote social-emotional wellness and forging positive relationships will undoubtedly benefit the entire school community.

For principals, the visibility necessary to build these relationships is tremendous. Principals wishing to make deep connections with teachers, students, parents, and other community members must be out of their offices and in all parts of the school building. They should be in classrooms observing. They need to be in the lunchroom talking to students. They need to be at school wide events mingling with parents. They must be able to do all of this without the interference of other burdensome responsibilities pulling them back into their offices. Central office administrators must rethink the principalship if ever all of this were to work. Leaning on my experience in independent schools, I suggest that the principalship transition to a role much like that of a Head of School whose single focus is ensuring the long term success of the school primarily through relationship building. However, this also requires the time to be the face of their school community.

Time, A Precious Commodity

Now it feels like I am expected to be a principal 24/7 with no break and

no regard to the other parts of my life. This demand is not sustainable.

—Participant #10

A major finding that emerged from this study was the notion of time. Simply put - principals don't have enough of it to do all that they are expected to do. In the literature review I cited the work of Sebastian and colleagues (2018) and summarized their work in Table 3. Those findings mirror what participants in this study stated. That is, they are spread thin. They were pre-Pandemic; they were during the Pandemic; and they will be post-Pandemic. In this, the final chapter of this work, I recommended that going forward, in order to combat the challenges

brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic, principals focus their time and energy on their teachers and their students. Doing so will build a positive school culture where all can thrive. Participant #19's words substantiate this recommendation. They advised future principals to "Keep working hard, being visible and enthusiastic. Do everything you can to boost morale with teachers." These words are indicative of an individual that knows the value of building relationships and the cost of not doing so.

Lee et al. (2021) indicated that leadership literature surrounding principals' formal and informal interactions with teachers as well as their focus on instruction has positive implications for developing school culture and promoting total school success. They also present data indicating that a principal's interactions with students can improve school safety and the learning environment. Additionally, Huang and colleagues (2021) conducted research whose results suggest what the present study calls for as well, writing:

> Our research, as well as earlier studies, empirically points to a collective urgency
> to look for ways that will support principals to become better instructional leaders.
> One approach focuses on changing conditions in schools that prevent principals
> from devoting more time to instructional leadership. This approach assumes that
> when relieved of the management responsibilities, principals will be able to
> commit to high-leverage instructional leadership activities (p. 319).

The findings on the top three principal roles and responsibilities mirror the recommendations spread throughout the literature: in order to be effective instructional leaders and build school culture, principals must have time in their daily schedules to do so.

This recommendation coincides with the work of Spillane et al. (2002) who examined the principal as a middle manager as well as the post-Pandemic work of Kaul et al. (2022) who did

as well. Both works acknowledge the challenges that come for principals when attempting to meet school division and lawmaker demands for performance while also addressing the concerns of those closest to them – students, teachers, and parents. Kaul and colleagues (2022), I believe substantiate the claims made here and are exemplified through their closing remarks, part of which were as follows: "At every level of the system, organizational routines and policies need to be flexible enough to leverage the expertise of those closest to the work" (p. 13). The flexibility they write of must be acknowledged by central office administrators and policy makers alike if ever principals are to get back to what matters most – building relationships and instructional leadership. This recognition has implications for the practice of other individuals and therefore requires a reinvention of the public school principalship.

Future Research and Policy

This work surfaced multiple issues related to the future of the school principalship that require further research and policy action. Given that principals identified building relationships, instructional leadership, and school safety as their top three roles and responsibilities pre-Pandemic and that, as a result of the Pandemic and in accordance with the present study, principals are now further encouraged to engage in these tasks, it is recommended that future research carefully examine the jobs of all school-based and central office-based officials. Doing so, I believe will help policy makers and bureaucratics at the school division level re-think task distribution and the roles and responsibilities of many positions within school systems thereby giving principals the time they need to focus on relationship building and instructional leadership. Again, while conjecture on my part, I'd hypothesize that new school division central office positions have grown at rates far greater than school-based positions. Researchers could examine this in the future and perhaps then, as suggested in the previous section, a redistribution

of central office officials back to school-based positions may alleviate some of the operational responsibilities that fall to the school principal.

Consider the following quotations from several participants:

- Participant #1: "Central office staff needs to do a reality check. They need to look at a typical day of a principal and find ways to make it a reasonable job that people would want to do."

- Participant #4: "I think having a central office that looks for things to take off of teachers/administrators plates would help combat administrator shortage."

- Participant #10: "The expectations and responsibilities need to be pulled back. Just like not adding more to teachers' plates without taking something off, so too for principals. Principals should be able to walk away at the end of the day and leave work at work."

- Participant #14: "Increase pay, more support for central office, and look to eliminate some responsibilities."

These are just a few of the sentiments shared by participants in this study. The common theme is the need to reduce or re-allocate responsibilities. If such reductions or re-allocations were strategically made, a principal could focus more on the top 3 roles and responsibilities they identified in this study, which were: building relationships and/or creating positive school culture, instructional leadership and/or instructional supervision, and school safety.

Principal 2.0 - Reimagining the Role Post-COVID

Mentioned already was the need for distributed leadership within a school which will require a reimagining of school based leadership and, perhaps, leadership beyond the schoolhouse. This study and the extant literature confirm that the principalship is becoming all-consuming and that the time of those in the role is spread too thin across multiple areas. In
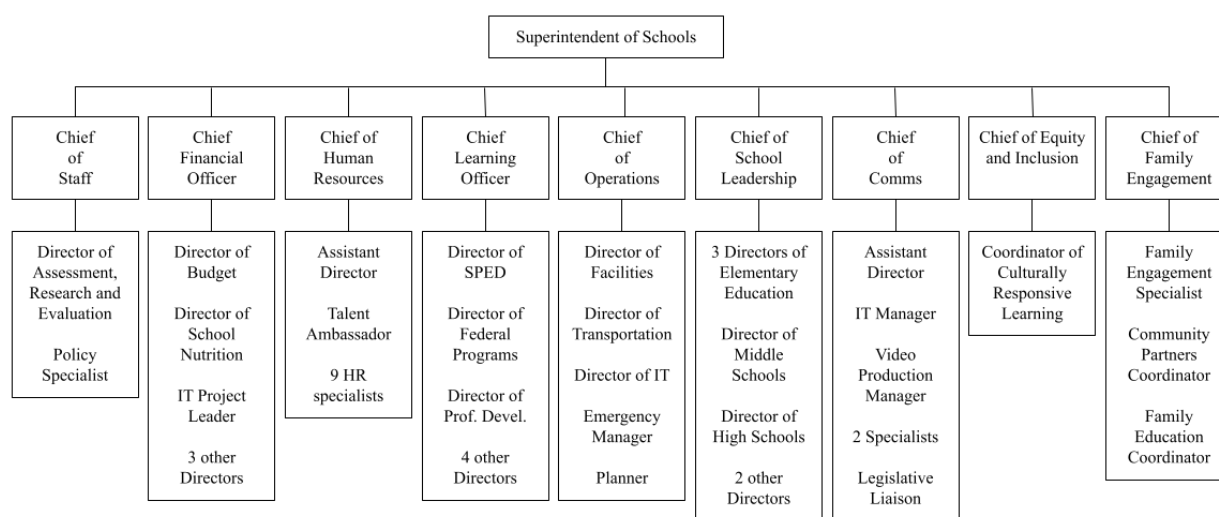
order to leverage the most crucial skills and leadership, there must be a concerted effort to redistribute tasks. That effort must be both creative and innovative. It must dismantle the traditional central office, and redistribute personnel into schools. In short, much like the Tenth Amendment reserves certain powers for the States and how in Virginia, Local School Boards have broad oversight over their division rather than the state, power must be given to the individual schools rather than the division offices. The practice of using the principal as a middle manager (Spillane et al., 2002) must be discontinued.

Within the school building are many administrators (associate principals, assistant principals, department chairs, and various directors), who already have significant responsibility; however, some of the less involved tasks such as handling dress code violations or organizing student parking could be delegated elsewhere or distributed to one individual. Perhaps the duties of teachers could be reassigned. The department chairperson's role could possibly be reinvented. To break down and rebuild a school organization in this paper would take pages and pages of explanation; however, I will briefly attempt to offer a reimagined school house leadership structure that could allow a principal to focus their efforts on relationship building. It starts with the dismantling of central office. While I have no empirical evidence to support this claim, I would venture that school division offices have grown at a rate that outpaces the growth of school based personnel and specifically, school based administrators. Consider Figure 8 which is an example of the school division organizational chart for a large school division in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Many of the "chiefs" and "directors" from this organization have administrative assistants and staffs of their own. Nearly everyone shown in Figure 8 has a salary well into the six figure range. While I don't contend that what these individuals do is unimportant, I do argue that much of this oversight promotes the middle management

principalship rather than the visionary, relationship building principalship that I recommend and believe will cause schools to thrive.

Figure 8

Example School Division Organizational Chart

Superintendent of Schools

Chief of Staff	Chief Financial Officer	Chief of Human Resources	Chief Learning Officer	Chief of Operations	Chief of School Leadership	Chief of Comms	Chief of Equity and Inclusion	Chief of Family Engagement
Director of Assessment, Research and Evaluation	Director of Budget	Assistant Director	Director of SPED	Director of Facilities	3 Directors of Elementary Education	Assistant Director	Coordinator of Culturally Responsive Learning	Family Engagement Specialist
Policy Specialist	Director of School Nutrition	Talent Ambassador	Director of Federal Programs	Director of Transportation	Director of Middle Schools	IT Manager		Community Partners Coordinator
	IT Project Leader	9 HR specialists	Director of Prof. Devel.	Director of IT	Director of High Schools	Video Production Manager		Family Education Coordinator
	3 other Directors		4 other Directors	Emergency Manager	2 other Directors	2 Specialists		
				Planner		Legislative Liaison		

In considering Figure 8, the reader should remember that the principal, in a way, reports to all of these individuals. Simply put, they are situated in a position that reports to too many people. Autonomy is limited. While they supervise large numbers of employees and oversee the instruction of hundreds of students, they aren't given the final "say so" in so many areas. Their hands are tied, often waiting on central office to make a decision when, the reality is, the principal should be the one making the decision and answering for that decision. Furthermore, with more autonomy in decision making, principals could focus on their specific school population and develop programming to meet the needs of their unique communities.
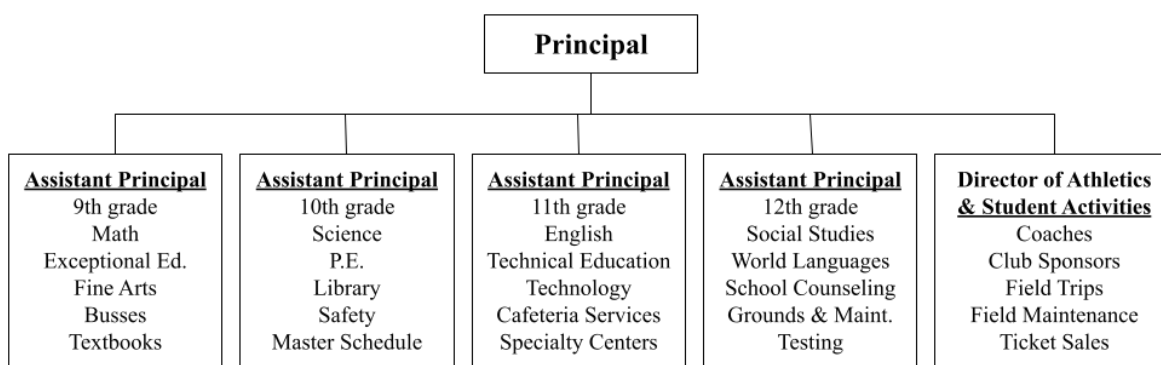
Rethinking the Organizational Chart

As I mentioned previously, I lean on my experience in independent schools and suggest that perhaps public schools redevelop their school's organizational structure. In brief, this would mean that one administrator, rather than having multiple responsibilities that are also shared

among all other administrators (eg. discipline by alphabet or grade level; supervising various departments), single administrators have one sole focus with other small, less demanding affiliated tasks. Furthermore, it would mean eliminating certain central office roles such as the ones shown in Figure 8 as well as many of their staffs and redistributing the personnel into school administrative positions. There would be a leaner, more productive central office that provides support to larger school based administrators, each with their own central focus. At the helm would be the school principal who is tasked with general oversight of these departments and who is mission and vision driven and focused on relationship building.

Consider Figures 9 and 10 which are organizational structures for a traditional secondary school administration and a reimagined secondary school administration. Figure 9's focus is on the principal's direct reports. I've shown the primary responsibilities of these direct reports, while intentionally omitting those of the principal.

Figure 9

Traditional Secondary School Leadership Structure

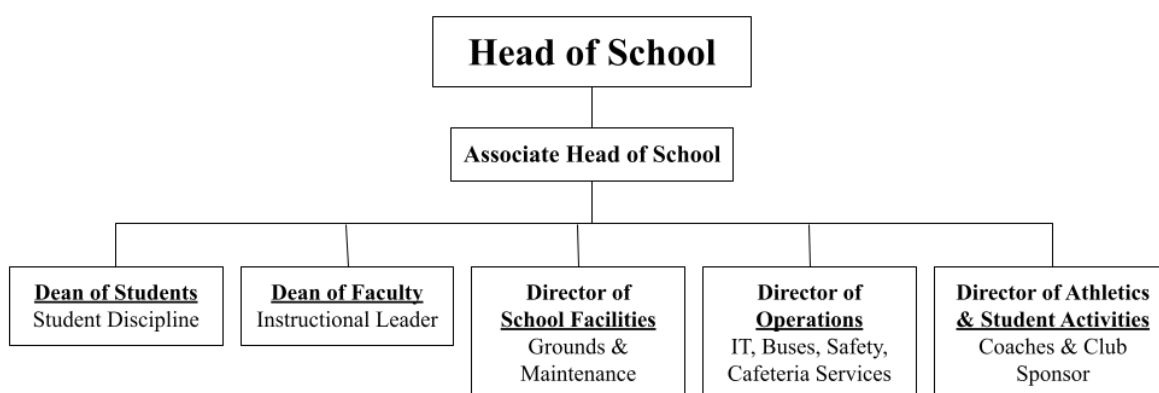| Principal				
Assistant Principal	**Assistant Principal**	**Assistant Principal**	**Assistant Principal**	**Director of Athletics & Student Activities**
9th grade	10th grade	11th grade	12th grade	Coaches
Math	Science	English	Social Studies	Club Sponsors
Exceptional Ed.	P.E.	Technical Education	World Languages	Field Trips
Fine Arts	Library	Technology	School Counseling	Field Maintenance
Busses	Safety	Cafeteria Services	Grounds & Maint.	Ticket Sales
Textbooks	Master Schedule	Specialty Centers	Testing	

While assistant principals have general oversight of these various items, they are ultimately the responsibility of the principal, and as participants in this study and the literature reviewed have indicated, they are often left to oversee the management of each of these areas. I

hypothesize that this micromanagement is necessary because, like the principal, each of these direct reports (4 Assistant Principals and the Director of Athletics and Student Activities) each has multiple areas of responsibility that pull them in various directions. They, like their supervising principal, are spread thin and overburdened with too many areas of responsibility. Therefore, I recommend that each of these direct reports be reimagined to focus on one area rather than many and that they bear the ultimate burden of ensuring success in their specific area. This awarding of autonomy and authority to these single individuals, I propose, will allow the principal the opportunity to focus their efforts on general oversight rather than micromanagement and ultimately the building of relationships throughout their school community.

Figure 10 illustrates this reimagined secondary school leadership structure. The changes in title of the "Principal" to "Head of School" as well as the changes to four of their direct report titles, is not simply in name; however, the title now communicates a single, more direct focus for each individual. In other words, the new titles more fully communicate the primary function of each individual so that there is no role confusion.

Figure 10

Reimagined Secondary School Leadership Structure

Rather than having four assistant principals, each is assigned a new title specific to their primary day to day functions. For example, the Dean of Students has the sole function of handling student discipline and academic matters while the Dean of Faculty is the direct supervisor of all teachers in the school building. In either case, these individuals have a single daily task that also relates back to the findings from this study that relate to either teachers or students. Additionally, the choice to use "Head of School" instead of "Principal" creates no confusion on who is ultimately in charge of the entire school.

Each of these reinvented positions leads in one area rather than multiple, and each shall be held accountable for their success or lack thereof directly by the Head of School who, with specific individuals overseeing various aspects of the total school program now has time to focus their efforts on the total success of the school. More importantly, they have time to build relationships. Also of note is the addition of the Associate Head of School whose position would be funded by the trimming down of the central office as mentioned earlier. This individual would have more general oversight of each of the five departments and would be part of a pipeline for those wishing to become a principal.

With a reimagining of the school principalship as discussed in previous pages and as envisioned in Figure 10, one might contend that those responsible for training future leaders as well as policy makers may need to re-think programs for educational administrators as well as policy surrounding their primary performance standards. I don't think that's the case here. The principalship will always be demanding and require individuals with a bandwidth to serve in multiple capacities; however, with the reimagining of the school leadership structure coupled with the addition of an Associate Head of School, those wishing to become Principals (now Heads of School) should be trained as they always have been with increased focus on

relationship building. Furthermore, they should seek professional growth in multiple areas such as becoming a Dean of Students for several years followed by perhaps a tenure occupying the role of Director of Operations. From there, one might ascend to their penultimate role as Associate Head followed by a transition to eventual Headship. Regarding these individuals' formula university training - little should change and coursework should include the elements that have always been in place (eg. school law, supervision of instruction, technology leadership. etc.); however, it may be prudent to give aspiring leaders a chance to specialize in one or two areas and those wishing to ascend to the principalship may need lengthier training.

This section of Chapter V is visionary in nature. It is forward thinking and would require a great deal of change and flexibility to work; however, I believe that is in line with what participants said in this study. With individuals who are focused in one area such as Dean of Faculty or Dean of Students, greater emphasis can be placed on meeting the needs of those various constituents without the burden of other tasks.

Additional Areas for Research

Additionally, much of this chapter focused on principals working to build community and address issues related to teacher morale and student well being. Large bodies of research exist on socioemotional wellness and methods to promote it. Future research in the form of case study analysis could examine the effects of principals who implement social-emotional learning practices into their school day on their students' and teachers' wellbeing and overall school success. Results of such work could inform policy that leads to substantive change in how school leaders create the daily schedule of classes and activities for students and teachers.

Ultimately, future research and policy should keep the results of the present study in mind. In short, this study has demonstrated that COVID-19 has impacted education and set it on

an altered course. School principals are now left to navigate communities through the resulting landscape and, as participants have noted, they are in need of assistance.

Research and policy should more directly focus on the principalship and examine ways to get the job back to a place where being the "head teacher" means just that. Westberry et al. (2021) recommended a need for principals to develop soft skills in relationship building and communication as well as in instructional leadership. Relatedly, Kaul et al. (2022) recommended that, post-Pandemic, principals need greater support at the district and policy levels. Future longitudinal work could examine how post-COVID policies related to school principals impacted the job and the time principals had to focus on instruction – mainly, how they were able to focus on students and teachers.

Chapter Summary

I think I can handle just about any crisis after surviving this pandemic.
I have taken on roles and responsibilities that I never envisioned when
I became a principal.

—Participant #20

There is a segment of the population that is looking for [schools] to
fail, blaming us for a myriad of things, and have become unforgiving.

—Participant #24

I thought the words of Participants #20 and #24 were fitting to close out this chapter as they are so very dichotomous; however, both are powerful and paint pictures of the future of schools and thus the principalship that we must properly prepare for. One is a statement of great hope and optimism, while the other is filled with hopelessness and skepticism. Ultimately, this work is meant to be reflective of the first of these two outlooks and, I believe, has presented data

and recommendations that are simple and effective, but do, however, require substantive action from policy makers.

This chapter is being written at the end of the 2021-2022 school year and during the summer going into the 2022-2023 school year. In many ways, public schools are operating as they were pre-Pandemic with some exceptions (e.g. masking is an option for some, there are still quarantine procedures in place, and some counties are offering a virtual option for instruction although those are starting to dwindle). Perhaps the critical lens that Participant #24 sees things through will remain indefinitely and the success or failure of schools is really in the eye of the beholder and a matter of public opinion. Much of this external opinion is out of the control of school principals, however, if given the time to build a school culture that all stakeholders can buy into, their schools will find success and many of the challenges brought on by or exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic will be lessened thereby improving this external scrutiny Participant #24 identifies.

Much of this chapter focused on the relationships between teachers and principals and students and principals. It also presented a recommendation for exploring a new principalship that is given the time to focus on relationship building while specific assistant principals are reinvented to oversee one area such as instruction, discipline, or operations rather than multiple. Whether or not this reinvention is possible is beyond the scope of this work; however, principals can, at the very least, attempt to focus their efforts more on relationship building. When principals take the time to foster and develop those positive relationships in schools, all stakeholders thrive and students benefit. Moving forward, school leaders and policy makers alike should work towards performance standards for principals that are primarily focused on those top-3 roles and responsibilities that were identified by participants in this study. By

creating safe schools and building relationships while also focusing on instructional leadership, principals will find that their school communities thrive.

Afterwards

Prediction is very difficult, especially about the future.

— Niels Bohr

This work is bookended by the words of two physicists who I greatly admire. An odd choice given that another scientist who I love and teach about, Ernest Rutherford, stated, "if your experiment needs a statistician, then you need a better experiment," and "the only possible conclusion the social sciences can draw is: some do, some don't." As dissertation fatigue has surely set in, I'm not sure I'm up for making an argument against the Father of Nuclear Physics. Although, I think I could; however, I'll save that for another day…another paper…another lifetime.

This study was conducted using a forecasting methodology known as the Delphi Technique. I relied on the opinions of volunteer participants who I deemed "experts" in the field of educational administration. I view the 26 participating principals as such - **experts**. That said, predicting the future, as Bohr noted, is not an easy task. However, I've attempted to do so and believe that the participants in this study provided ample evidence that the COVID-19 Pandemic disrupted the institution of public education (and all education for that matter) greatly. In many ways, however, it might be argued that the results of this study were somewhat, shall we say, predictable. Afterall, if you'd asked me or any one of the 26 participating principals pre-Pandemic what they thought education would look like following total indefinite shutdown to in person instruction and a transition to 100% virtual instruction followed by a staggered reopening marked by high levels of student and teacher absenteeism, increased student discipline, and a need for principals to monitor the health of all those in their buildings, I bet we'd all agree that a) it would be unimaginably difficult and that b) things would change (and not

for the better). So then, one might argue that education is simply on a path of "irrescindable destiny." Perhaps it always has been.

The results of this study didn't surprise me, but that doesn't make them unimportant. My time in this doctoral program and, more longitudinally, my time in education reminds me that educational phenomena are cyclic and predictable. The COVID-19 Pandemic, while an extraordinary time in our history causing tremendous suffering and disruption to our daily lives in ways we could never have predicted, really didn't change, in my opinion, what we know about education today. It just exacerbated it and magnified it like never before. Teachers and administrators are overworked and burned out. We knew that. Kids are still falling behind academically and they need social-emotional support from the adults in their lives. We knew that, too.

So, to Niels Bohr I say, prediction is difficult, but not in education. We know what's coming. And to Schrödinger, our destiny in public K-12 education doesn't have to be "irrescindable." Today's educators, scholars, and policy makers can make changes that impact schools and children. It's time for real policy and real change in education that meets the needs of educators and students alike.

I have learned that there is almost always a way to make things happen.

It takes creativity and a clear vision.

If we put students first, we can make things work. There is always a way.

—Participant #1

REFERENCES

Administration and Supervision preK-12, 8 V.A.C. § 20-543-570 (2018).

    https://law.lis.virginia.gov/admincode/title8/agency20/chapter543/section570/

Andranovich, G. (1995). *Developing community participation and consensus: The Delphi*

    Technique. California State University.

Baker, B.D. (2018). *Educational inequality and school finance: Why money matters for*

    American students. Harvard Education Press.

Barr, J., & Saltmarsh, S. (2014). "It all comes down to the leadership": The role of the school

    principal in fostering parent-school engagement. *Educational Management*

    Administration & Leadership, *42*(4), 491–505.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213502189

Becker, J. & Grob, L. (2021). The School Principal and Teacher Retention. Richmond, VA:

    Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium.

Boyce, J., & Bowers, A. J. (2018). Toward an evolving conceptualization of instructional

    leadership as leadership for learning: Meta-narrative review of 109 quantitative studies

    across 25 years. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *56*(2), 161–182.

    https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-06-2016-0064

Brackett, M. (2019). *Permission to Feel: The Power of Emotional Intelligence to Achieve*

    Well-being and Success. Celedon Books.

Brown, G. (2015). Strong One Lasting One: An Elementary School Principal's Ability to

    Establish a Positive School Culture by Building Trust. *Journal of Cases in Educational*

    Leadership, *18*(4), 309–316. https://doi.org/10.1177/1555458915606768

Bryson, A. (26 August 2021). SOL scores drop statewide and in Henrico, as expected. *Henrico*

*Citizen.*https://www.henricocitizen.com/articles/sol-scores-dip-statewide-and-in-henrico-as-expected/

Byrne, D., Carthy, A., & McGilloway, S. (2020). A review of the role of school-related factors in the promotion of student social and emotional wellbeing at post-primary level. *Irish Educational Studies*, *39*(4), 439–455. https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2019.1697949

Carver-Thomas, D. and Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Teacher turnover: Why it matters and what we can do about it.* Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute.

Cherkowski, S. (2016). Exploring the Role of the School Principal in Cultivating a Professional Learning Climate. *Journal of School Leadership*, *26*(3), 523–543. https://doi.org/10.1177/105268461602600306

Christakis, D. A., Van Cleve, W., & Zimmerman, F. J. (2020). Estimation of US Children's Educational Attainment and Years of Life Lost Associated With Primary School Closures During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic. *JAMA Network Open*, *3*(11), e2028786. https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.28786

Creswell, J.W. (2013). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Dalkey, N., & Helmer, O. (1963). An Experimental Application of the DELPHI Method to the Use of Experts. *Management Science*, *9*(3), 458–467. https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.9.3.458

Daniels, J. (2017). *A Matter of Opinion: The Delphi Method in the Social Sciences*. SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526410603

Diamond, I. R., Grant, R. C., Feldman, B. M., Pencharz, P. B., Ling, S. C., Moore, A. M., & Wales, P. W. (2014). Defining consensus: A systematic review recommends

methodologic criteria for reporting of Delphi studies. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, *67*(4), 401–409. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclinepi.2013.12.002

Dibner, K.A., Schweingruber, H.A., & Christakis, D.A. (2020). Reopening K-12 Schools During the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Report From the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, *324*(9), 833–834. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2020.14745

Dorn, E., Hancock, B., Sarakatsannis, J., & Viruleg, E. (14 December, 2021). COVID-19 and education: An emerging K-shaped recovery. *McKinsey & Company.* https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/covid-19-and-education-an-emerging-k-shaped-recovery

Duke, D.L. (2010). *The challenges of school district leadership.* Routledge.

Duke, D.L. (2002). *Creating safe schools for all children.* Allyn & Bacon.

Franklin, K. K., & Hart, J. K. (2006). Idea Generation and Exploration: Benefits and Limitations of the Policy Delphi Research Method. *Innovative Higher Education*, *31*(4), 237–246. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-006-9022-8

Garza, Jr, E., Drysdale, L., Gurr, D., Jacobson, S., & Merchant, B. (2014). Leadership for school success: Lessons from effective principals. *International Journal of Educational Management*, *28*(7), 798–811. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-08-2013-0125

Glanz, J.G. (2005). *What every school principal should know about operational leadership*. Sage.

Glickman, C.D., Gordon, S.P., & Ross-Gordon, J.M. (2014). *Supervision and instructional leadership: A developmental approach* (9th ed.). Pearson.

Green, R. A. (2014). The Delphi Technique in Educational Research. *SAGE Open*, *4*(2),

215824401452977. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014529773

Grooms, A. A., & Childs, J. (2021). "We Need to Do Better by Kids": Changing Routines in

U.S. Schools in Response to COVID-19 School Closures. *Journal of Education for*

Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR), *26*(2), 135–156.

https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2021.1906251

Gullatt, D. E., & Long, D. (1996). Components of a School Crisis Management Plan. *American*

Secondary Education, *24*(2), 16–30.

Habibi, A., Sarafrazi, A., & Izadyar, S. (2014). Delphi Technique Theoretical Framework in

Qualitative Research. *The International Journal Of Engineering And Science*, *3*(4), 8–13.

Huang, T., Hochbein, C., & Simons, J. (2020). The relationship among school contexts, principal

time use, school climate, and student achievement. *Educational Management*

Administration & Leadership, *48*(2), 305–323.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143218802595

Huer, J. B. (2018). *Higher education technology leadership: A delphi study* (Order No.

10928855). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2149672642).

Retrieved from

http://proxy.library.vcu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/hig

her-education-technology-leadership-delphi/docview/2149672642/se-2?accountid=14780

Hitt, D. H., Woodruff, D., Meyers, C. V., & Zhu, G. (2018). Principal Competencies that Make a

Difference: Identifying a Model for Leaders of School Turnaround. *Journal of School*

Leadership, *28*(1), 56–81. https://doi.org/10.1177/105268461802800103

Hsu, C., & Sandford, B. A. (2007). The Delphi Technique: Making Sense of Consensus.

Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, *12*(10), 1–8.

https://doi.org/10.7275/pdz9-th90

Iacuzzi, S., Fedele, P., & Garlatti, A. (2020). Beyond Coronavirus: The role for knowledge

management in schools responses to crisis. *Knowledge Management Research &*

Practice, 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1080/14778238.2020.1838963

Jameson, J. M., Stegenga, S. M., Ryan, J., & Green, A. (2020). Free Appropriate Public

Education in the Time of COVID-19. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, *39*(4),

181–192. https://doi.org/10.1177/8756870520959659

Jotkoff, E. (2022, February 01). *NEA survey: Massive staff shortages in schools leading to*

educator burnout; alarming number of educators indicating they plan to leave

profession. National Education Association.

https://www.nea.org/about-nea/media-center/press-releases/nea-survey-massive-staff-shor

tages-schools-leading-educator

Kaul, M., Comstock, M., & Simon, N. S. (2022). Leading From the Middle: How Principals

Rely on District Guidance and Organizational Conditions in Times of Crisis. *AERA Open*,

8(1), 233285842210773. https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584221077303

Kingshott, B.F., & McKenzie, D.G. (2013). Developing Crisis Management Protocols in the

Context of School Safety. *Journal of Applied Security Research*, *8*(2), 222–245.

https://doi.org/10.1080/19361610.2013.765339

Kruse, S., & Louis, K. S. (2008). *Building strong school cultures : A guide to leading change*.

SAGE Publications.

Lappas, T. (10 October 2018). Henrico's decision to rebuild Tucker, Highland Springs came

unexpectedly. *Henrico Citizen.*

https://www.henricocitizen.com/articles/henricos-decision-to-rebuild-tucker-highland-springs-came-unexpectedly/.

Lee, M., Pollock, K., & Tulowitzki, P. (Eds.). (2021). *How School Principals Use Their Time: Implications for School Improvement, Administration and Leadership* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi-org.proxy.library.vcu.edu/10.4324/9780429327902

Leung, L. (2015). Validity, reliability, and generalizability in qualitative research. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, *4*(3), 324–327. https://doi.org/10.4103/2249-4863.161306

Liou, Y.-H. (2015). School Crisis Management: A Model of Dynamic Responsiveness to Crisis Life Cycle. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *51*(2), 247–289. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X14532467

Linstone, H.A. & Turnoff, M. (Eds.). (1975). *The Delphi Method: Techniques and Applications.* Addison-Wesley.

Lordan, R., FitzGerald, G.A., & Grosser, T. (2020). Reopening schools during COVID-19. *Science*, *369*(6508), 1146–1146. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abe5765

Lunenburg, F. C. (2010). The Principal and the School: What Do Principals Do? *National Forum of Educational Administration and Supervision Journal*, *27*(4), 1–13.

Lynch, J. M. (2012). Responsibilities of Today's Principal: Implications for Principal Preparation Programs and Principal Certification Policies. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, *31*(2), 40–47. https://doi.org/10.1177/875687051203100205

Margolin, C. G. (2017). *Competencies for competency based higher education: A delphi study* (Order No. 10257761). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

(1874345350). Retrieved from

http://proxy.library.vcu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/com
petencies-competency-based-higher-education/docview/1874345350/se-2?accountid=147
80

Maslow, A.H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological review, 50,* 370-396.

Maxwell, J.A. (2013). *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach* (3rd ed.). Sage.

McLeod, S., & Dulsky, S. (2021). Resilience, Reorientation, and Reinvention: School Leadership

During the Early Months of the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Frontiers in Education*, *6*, 1–13.

https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.637075

Mora-Whitehurst, R. (2013). The Relationship Between Elementary Principals' Visionary

Leadership and Students' Reading Performance. *The Educational Forum*, *77*(3),

315–328. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2013.792897

National Education Association. (2022, January 20). *Solutions to the Educator Shortage Crisis.*

https://www.nea.org/resource-library/solutions-educator-shortage-crisis

National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015). *Professional Standards for*

Educational Leaders 2015. Reston, VA.

https://www.npbea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Professional-Standards-for-Educatio
nal-Leaders_2015.pdf.

Nguyen, T. & Springer, M. (2019). Reviewing the evidence on teacher attrition and retention.

Brookings. Brown Center Chalkboard.

Northouse, P.G. (2010). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (5th ed.). Sage.

Norton, M.S. (2008). *Human resources administrator for educational leaders.* Sage.

Ono, R., & Wedemeyer, D. J. (1994). Assessing the validity of the Delphi technique. *Futures*,

26(3), 289–304. https://doi.org/10.1016/0016-3287(94)90016-7

Pawlas, G.E. (2005). *The administrator's guide to school-community relations* (2nd ed.). Eye on Education.

Portin, B. S., Jianping Shen, & Williams, R. C. (1998). The Changing Principalship and Its Impact: Voices from Principals. *NASSP Bulletin*, *82*(602), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1177/019263659808260202

Regian, C. S. (2021). *Finding expert consensus on the components of cooperating teacher training: A quantitative delphi study* (Order No. 28549122). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (2572595649). Retrieved from http://proxy.library.vcu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-the ses/finding-expert-consensus-on-components/docview/2572595649/se-2?accounti d=14780

Reid, D. B. (2021). US principals' sensemaking of the future roles and responsibilities of school principals. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *49*(2), 251–267. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143219896072

Reyes-Guerra, D., Maslin-Ostrowski, P., Barakat, M. Y., & Stefanovic, M. A. (2021). Confronting a Compound Crisis: The School Principal's Role During Initial Phase of the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Frontiers in Education*, *6*, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.617875

Rowe, G., & Wright, G. (1999). The Delphi technique as a forecasting tool: Issues and analysis. *International Journal of Forecasting*, *15*(4), 353–375. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0169-2070(99)00018-7

Sebastian, J., Camburn, E. M., & Spillane, J. P. (2018). Portraits of Principal Practice: Time

Allocation and School Principal Work. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *54*(1),

47–84. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X17720978

Skulmoski, G.J., Hartman, F.T., & Krahn, J. (2007). The Delphi Method for Graduate Research.

Journal of Information Technology Education: Research, *6*, 1–21.

https://doi.org/10.28945/199

Spillane, J. P., Diamond, J. B., Burch, P., Hallett, T., Jita, L., & Zoltners, J. (2002). Managing in

the Middle: School Leaders and the Enactment of Accountability Policy. *Educational

Policy*, *16*(5), 731–762. https://doi.org/10.1177/089590402237311

Stewart, D. W., Shamdasani, P. N., & Rook, D. W. (2007). *Focus groups* (2nd ed.). SAGE

Publications, Ltd. https://www-doi-org.proxy.library.vcu.edu/10.4135/9781412991841

Stringer, P. & Hourani, R. B. (2016). Transformation of roles and responsibilities of principals in

times of change. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *44*(2),

224–246. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143214549971

Thornton, K. (2021). Leading through COVID-19: New Zealand secondary principals describe

their reality. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *49*(3), 393–409.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143220985110

Viner, R. M., Bonell, C., Drake, L., Jourdan, D., Davies, N., Baltag, V., Jerrim, J., Proimos, J., &

Darzi, A. (2021). Reopening schools during the COVID-19 pandemic: Governments

must balance the uncertainty and risks of reopening schools against the clear harms

associated with prolonged closure. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, *106*(2), 111–113.

https://doi.org/10.1136/archdischild-2020-319963

Virginia Department of Education. (2020). *Guidelines for uniform performance standards and*

evaluation criteria for principals (Attachment B).

https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/performance_evaluation/principal/index.shtml

Virginia Department of Education. (2022). *Guidelines for uniform performance standards and*

evaluation criteria for principals (Attachment B - DRAFT).

https://www.doe.virginia.gov/boe/meetings/2022/item-f.pdf

Virginia Department of Education. (2022). School Quality Profiles.

https://schoolquality.virginia.gov/advanced-search

The Virginia Public Access Project. (2022). *In the Pandemic, More Teachers Opt to Retire.*

https://www.vpap.org/visuals/visual/in-pandemic-teacher-retirements-up/

Weiner, J., Francois, C., Stone-Johnson, C., & Childs, J. (2021). Keep safe, keep learning:

Principals' role in creating psychological safety and organizational learning during the

COVID-19 Pandemic, *5*, 282. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2020.618483

Westberry, L., Hornor, T., & Murray, K. (2021). The Need of the Virtual Principal Amid the

Pandemic. *International Journal of Education Policy and Leadership*, *17*(10), 1–22.

https://doi.org/10.22230/ijepl.2021v17n10a1139

Zee, M. & Koomen, H.M. (2016). Teacher self-efficacy and its effects on classroom processes,

student academic adjustment, and teacher well-being: A synthesis of 40 years of

research. *Review of Educational Research, 86*(4), 981-1015. doi:

10.3102/0034654315626801.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Participant Recruitment Email

Dear Sample Participant,

My name is Matt Togna and I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University. I am in the dissertation phase of my program and am working on identifying and selecting participants. I am writing to ask you to consider being a participant in my study that seeks to determine the future of the school principalship after the COVID-19 Pandemic has concluded.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you will not be compensated for your time. The study will take place in three rounds, each of which will take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete. Rounds will be completed roughly 7-10 days apart from one another. Each round consists of a questionnaire that asks for your opinions on matters pertaining to the school principalship pre-coronavirus, during the Coronavirus Pandemic, and your predictions for the future post-Coronavirus Pandemic. Between each round of questions, I will provide you with feedback that consists of trends determined after reviewing all participant responses. Your identity will be kept confidential and you will not interact with the other participants in any way.

To be eligible for this study you must be willing to participate fully and give approximately 2-3 hours of your time spaced out evenly over a month's time. You must be a practicing principal with at least three years of experience in your current role. You must also have a total of ten years experience in education, five of which must be in building-level administration.

If you would like to move forward and participate, please respond to this email in the affirmative. From there, I will confirm your participation within 24-48 hours.

Thank you for your consideration and please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Matthew J. Togna
Doctoral Candidate
Virginia Commonwealth University
tognamj@vcu.edu

Appendix B

Initial Contact of Participants

Dear Participant,

Apologies for the length of this email. I will be concise and limit my communications going forward.

I am very grateful for your willingness to be a part of my dissertation research. I understand that your agreement to participate in this study represents an additional commitment to what I am sure is an already very full schedule. I also understand that you might be wondering about my background and who I am. In brief, I am currently a chemistry teacher at Collegiate School in Richmond, VA. Prior to that, I served as a chemistry teacher and department chair at J.R. Tucker High School in Henrico County. I aspire to be a school principal one day. If you are interested in learning more about the research and/or me, I will hold optional drop-in office hours tomorrow (Wednesday, March 30) evening from 7:00PM-9:00PM. Follow THIS LINK to join the meeting. If you choose to join, please be patient as I can only see one of you at a time. That's because the study methodology does not permit participant interaction in any way. Attending this is completely optional. Below, find the details of the study.
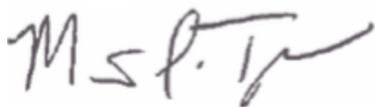
This research study seeks to understand how the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted the school principalship. Participants represent principals from all across the Commonwealth who work in Elementary, Middle, and High Schools in Urban, Rural, and Suburban divisions.

You have been assigned the following participant code: _____ . For each of the questionnaires, it is important that you enter this code when prompted. This is done to protect your anonymity and track your responses during the three rounds of questioning.

The link to the first questionnaire will be sent out on Friday, April 1, 2022 at 6:00AM. The questionnaire will take approximately 30-35 minutes to complete and must be done in one sitting. You will have 7 days (until Friday, April 8 at 11:59PM) to complete it and I will send out periodic reminders. Following this round of data collection, I will take a week to analyze all responses and look for trends and themes. These trends and themes will be summarized and provided to you via email along with the Round Two Questionnaire on Friday, April 15, 2022. You will again have 7 days to complete the Round Two Questionnaire after which time I will again take a week to review the data and summarize. On Friday, April 29, 2022, you'll receive a summary of the data from Round Two along with a link to the third and final questionnaire. You will again have 7 days to complete Round Three. Once you complete the Round Three Questionnaire, your involvement with the study will come to an end. Unless there are unforeseen circumstances, I expect the study to conclude on or around May 6, 2022.

Again, thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me or join the optional Zoom meeting tomorrow evening. I can also be reached via call or text at 804-399-1779.

With appreciation and thanks,

Matthew J. Togna
Doctoral Candidate, Virginia Commonwealth University

Appendix C

Round One Questionnaire

Questionnaire #1

A A A
⊞ ⊟

1) **Enter your assigned participant code (example: ES-3, MS-5, HS-8).**

Next Page >>

Questionnaire #1

A A A
⊞ ⊟

Background Information

2) **How many years have you worked in education, including this school year?**

3) **How many years have you worked in school administration (department chair, assistant principal, principal) including this school year?**

4) **How many years have you been a school principal, including this school year?**

5) **What level (Elementary, Middle, or High School) are you currently serving as a school principal?**

- ○ Elementary School
- ○ Middle School
- ○ High School

reset

6) **Which of the following best describes your school setting?**

- ○ Urban
- ○ Rural
- ○ Suburban

reset

7) **What is the size of your school**

- ○ 500 or fewer students
- ○ 501-1000 students
- ○ 1001-1500 students
- ○ 1501-2000 students
- ○ 2001 or more students

reset

<< Previous Page   **Next Page >>**

Questionnaire #1

A A A

PRE-Pandemic Roles and Responsibilities of the School Principal

This section of the questionnaire is aimed at learning about the roles and responsibilities of the school principal BEFORE the COVID-19 Pandemic began to impact school operations in March 2020.

For each item below, identify and describe your primary **PRE-PANDEMIC** day-to-day roles and responsibilities as a school principal.

You do not need to fill up all role and responsibilities unless you feel it necessary.

The order you list these roles and responsibilities need not be in priority order, however it would be helpful in your narrative to identify when certain roles/responsibilities take priority over another.

If you identify more than 10 primary roles and responsibilities, discuss roles/responsibilities #11 and beyond in the final space labeled "Role/Responsibility #11 and beyond."

8) **PRE-Pandemic Primary Day-To-Day Role/Responsibility #1**

Expand

9) **PRE-Pandemic Primary Day-To-Day Role/Responsibility #2**

Expand

10) **PRE-Pandemic Primary Day-To-Day Role/Responsibility #3**

Expand

11) PRE-Pandemic Primary Day-To-Day Role/Responsibility #4

Expand

12) PRE-Pandemic Primary Day-To-Day Role/Responsibility #5

Expand

13) PRE-Pandemic Primary Day-To-Day Role/Responsibility #6

Expand

14) PRE-Pandemic Primary Day-To-Day Role/Responsibility #7

Expand

15) PRE-Pandemic Primary Day-To-Day Role/Responsibility #8

Expand

16) PRE-Pandemic Primary Day-To-Day Role/Responsibility #9

17) **PRE-Pandemic Primary Day-To-Day Role/Responsibility #10**

Expand

18) **PRE-Pandemic Primary Day-To-Day Role/Responsibility #11 and beyond**

Expand

<< Previous Page

Next Page >>

Questionnaire #1

A A A

⊞ ⊟

Pandemic Roles and Responsibilities

This section of the questionnaire is designed to understand how your roles and responsibilities as school principal were impacted **DURING** the COVID-19 Pandemic. Think about the pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities you described in the previous section when answering the following questions. Read each question carefully to situate yourself in correct timeframe.

19) **How were your primary roles and responsibilities impacted <u>during the onset</u> of the COVID-19 Pandemic (ie: during the early weeks and months when schools shifted to remote instruction)? What, if anything, changed? What, if anything, stayed the same? Were there new roles and responsibilities? If so, what were they?**

Expand

20) **How were your primary roles and responsibilities impacted during the COVID-19 Pandemic while operating VIRTUALLY (ie: School year 2020-2021)? What, if anything, changed? What, if anything, stayed the same? Were there new roles and responsibilities? If so, what were they?**

Expand

21) **How were your primary roles and responsibilities impacted during the COVID-19 Pandemic when re-opening and/or operating in school year 2020-2021? What, if anything, changed? What, if anything, stayed the same? Were there new roles and responsibilities? If so, what were they?**

Expand

22) **How were your primary roles and responsibilities impacted during the COVID-19 Pandemic during this school year (the 2021-2022 school year)? What, if anything, changed? What, if anything, stayed the same? Were there NEW roles and responsibilities? If so, what were they?**

Expand

<< Previous Page   Next Page >>

Questionnaire #1

A A A

⊞ ⊟

Post Pandemic Forecast

The information you share here will be used to forecast future trends in building-level leadership. Please provide as much detail as possible.

23) **Think about the Pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities you described earlier. How do you see them changing (if at all) once the pandemic concludes (meaning it reaches an endemic state)?**

Expand

24) **Will the way school leaders respond to crises change as a result of the pandemic? If so, how? If not, why not?**

Expand

<< Previous Page   Next Page >>

Questionnaire #1

A A A

⊞ ⊟

Demographic Information

25) **What is your gender?**

26) **Which of the following best describes you?**

- ○ Asian or Pacific Islander
- ○ Black or African American
- ○ Hispanic or Latino
- ○ Native American or Alaskan Native
- ○ White or Caucasian
- ○ Multiracial or Biracial
- ○ A race/ethnicity not listed here
- ○ Prefer not to say

reset

<< Previous Page   Submit

Appendix D

Round One Feedback

In total, 26 principals (11 Elementary School, 7 Middle School, and 8 High School) responded to the First Round Questionnaire. On average, they had 25 years of experience in education, 14 years in administration at any level, and 9 years experience as a principal. The participating principals self-identified their school setting as either Urban (4), Rural (11), or Suburban (11).

Top 3 Most Frequently Cited Pre-Pandemic Roles and Responsibilities
1. Instructional Leadership and/or Instructional Supervision
2. Student Supervision and Discipline
3. Communication with all stakeholders, most notably parents

Other Pre-Pandemic Roles and Responsibilities (mentioned by at least 2 participants)
Personnel management to including hiring and general supervision, School safety, Monitoring student achievement, testing, and data, General planning for longer term goals (single school year and/or multi school year), Financial or budget management, General operations of the school, Facilities management, Special education, Central office expectations, Building relationships and/or creating positive school culture, Responding to phone calls and/or emails, Monitoring student attendance

Roles and Responsibilities throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic
Regardless of school level (elementary, middle, or high school) and setting (urban, rural, suburban), most principals reported many of the same experiences; however, how their school/school division was operating (100% remotely, hybrid, in-person) dictated when each participant identified having certain experiences. Below is a summary of the major experiences/responsibilities principals faced during the various stages of the Pandemic:

Onset of the Pandemic, March - June 2020
- An overwhelming majority noted "everything had changed" and that pre-Pandemic roles/responsibilities went on "pause."
- Development of virtual/remote learning options
- Technical support for both teachers and students
- Frequent meetings with multiple stakeholders including faculty/staff, central office, and parents
- The need for constant communication with all stakeholders including faculty/staff, students, and parents
- Delivery of meals to students
- Support of teacher and student emotional well-being
- It was frequently noted that there were no issues pertaining to student discipline

Virtual and/or Hybrid Operations (2020-2021 School Year)
- Frequent need to offer technical support and training to teachers and students
- Frequent meetings with multiple stakeholders and a need for constant communication with teachers, parents, and students
- The need to support teacher and student emotional well-being was noted frequently
- Many participants noted that there was no longer a focus on their pre-Pandemic roles/responsibilities, no instructional leadership, and no issues pertaining to student discipline

Reopening of schools for primarily in person instruction (2020-2021 School Year)
- Implementation and oversight of COVID-19 Mitigation Strategies. This included the need to enforce mask-wearing, development of classrooms conducive to social distancing, and contact tracing
- There was a frequent need to support both teacher and student wellbeing
- Managing staffing shortages
- Student discipline issues reenters the conversation
- Constant communication with all stakeholders including parents

Current School Year (2021-2022)
- Student discipline was noted frequently as a major challenge
- Staffing challenges (teacher shortages, lack of substitutes, etc).
- Continued focus on teacher wellbeing/morale
- Continued focus on student wellbeing and socioemotional wellness

Post-Pandemic Roles/Responsibilities
There were differences of opinion regarding the principalship post-Pandemic. Many participants felt that, for the most part, the principalship will return to "normal" and there will be a renewed focus on the pre-Pandemic roles and responsibilities. However, many participants noted that the job of principal will evolve and they predicted future responsibilities to include: a need to supervise virtual opportunities for instruction, manage/combat teacher shortages, an increased focus on student behavior/discipline, and an increased focus on student wellbeing.

Response to Crises
Most participants noted that, as a result of their experiences throughout the Pandemic, they are more prepared to respond to a crisis. Many noted greater flexibility and adaptability for circumstances that directly impact instruction. Others, however, noted that the circumstances of each crisis dictates the response and therefore experiences during COVID-19 can only do so much to prepare principals for future crises.

Appendix E

Round Two Questionnaire

Questionnaire #2

A A A

⊞ ⊟

Before completing this survey be sure you have read the summary of the data collected from Questionnaire #1. This summary was attached as a PDF to the email containing the survey link.

You have until **11:59PM on Friday, April 22, 2022** to complete this survey.

Important tips for completing:

- The first question asks for your participant code which was included in the survey distribution email. Please be sure to enter this code correctly.
- Navigate through the survey using the "Next Page" button at the bottom of each page. Note that you cannot go back to a previous question in this survey so be sure you've finished a page before clicking "Next Page."
- Once you have completed all sections, make sure you press the "Submit" button.

1) **Enter your assigned participant code (example: ES-3, MS-5, HS-8).**

Next Page >>

Questionnaire #2

A A A
⊞ ⊟

2) Select the three (3) most important PRE-PANDEMIC roles and responsibilities of a school principal.

- ☐ Building relationships and/or creating positive school culture
- ☐ Communication with all stakeholders (parents, students, teachers, etc)
- ☐ Facilities management
- ☐ Financial or budget management
- ☐ General planning for longer term goals (single school year and/or multi school year)
- ☐ Instructional Leadership and/or Instructional Supervision
- ☐ Meeting Central Office expectations
- ☐ Monitoring student achievement, testing, and data
- ☐ Personnel management to including hiring and general supervision
- ☐ School safety
- ☐ Special education
- ☐ Student Supervision and discipline
- ☐ Responding to phone calls and/or emails

3) Please comment on your answer(s) to the question above.

```


```
Expand

Next Page >>

Questionnaire #2

4) Participants in this study identified the following 3 PRE-PANDEMIC roles and responsibilities most <u>frequently</u>:

    * Instructional Leadership and/or Instructional/Supervision

    * Student Supervision and Discipline

    * Communication with all stakeholders, most notably parents.

To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the top 3 most <u>important</u> roles and responsibilities of a school principal?

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Somewhat Agree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Somewhat Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

reset

5) Please comment on your answer to the question above.

Expand

Next Page >>

Questionnaire #2

A A A

6) As your school reopened to in person instruction, which of the following challenges did you face?

(select all that apply)

- [ ] Decreased Student Achievement and/or Lower Test Scores
- [ ] Increased Demands from Central Office
- [ ] Increased Student Disciplinary Infractions
- [ ] Increased Teacher Absenteeism and/or Lack of Substitute Teachers
- [ ] Low Staff Morale and/or Teacher Burnout
- [ ] Student Social-Emotional Challenges
- [ ] Teacher Shortages/Vacant Instructional Positions

7) Please comment on your answer to the question above.

Expand

Next Page >>

Questionnaire #2

8) After the COVID-19 Pandemic concludes (reaches an endemic state), which of the following do you predict will continue to be a long-term (more than 5 years) challenge for principals?

(select all that apply)

- ☐ Decreased Student Achievement and/or Lower Test Scores
- ☐ Increased Demands from Central Office
- ☐ Increased Student Disciplinary Infractions
- ☐ Increased Teacher Absenteeism and/or Lack of Substitute Teachers
- ☐ Low Staff Morale and/or Teacher Burnout
- ☐ Student Social-Emotional Challenges
- ☐ Teacher Shortages/Vacant Instructional Positions

9) Please comment on your answer to the question above.

Expand

Next Page >>

Questionnaire #2

A A A

10) **To what extent do you agree with the following statement:** The COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted the future of the school principalship.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Somewhat Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Somewhat Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

reset

11) **To what extent do you agree with the following statement:** After the COVID-19 Pandemic concludes (or is declared endemic) , the roles and responsibilities of the school principal will return to "normal," with few or no changes in roles and responsibilities from prior to the Pandemic.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Somewhat Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Somewhat Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

reset

12) **To what extent do you agree with the following statement:** The school principalship will evolve and include the following future responsibilities: a need to supervise virtual opportunities for instruction, a need to manage/combat teacher shortages, a need to increase the focus on student behavior/discipline, and a need to increase the focus on student wellbeing.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Somewhat Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Somewhat Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

reset

13) Please comment on your answers to the questions above.

Expand

Next Page >>

Questionnaire #2

A A A
⊞ ⊟

14) **To what extent do you agree with the following statement:** I am better prepared to handle various crisis scenarios given my experiences as a school principal during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Somewhat Agree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Somewhat Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

reset

15) Please comment on your answer to the question above.

Expand

Next Page >>

Questionnaire #2

A A A
⊞ ⊟

16) What do you wish that you had known going into the COVID-19 Pandemic? In other words, how could you have been better prepared to navigate the challenges you faced throughout the Pandemic?

Expand

Next Page >>

Questionnaire #2

17) What lessons (if any) were learned during the COVID-19 Pandemic that will inform future practices of future school principals during both normal and crisis operations?

Expand

Next Page >>

Questionnaire #2

A A A
⊞ ⊟

18) How (if at all) has the COVID-19 Pandemic impacted the future of the school principalship?

Expand

Submit

Appendix F

Round Two Feedback

100% of those participants (26 total) who submitted the Round One Questionnaire completed the Round Two Questionnaire.

Top 3 Pre-Pandemic Roles and Responsibilities
1. Building Relationships and/or creating positive school culture (24 of 26)
2. Instructional Leadership and/or Instructional Supervision (24 of 26)
3. School Safety (11 of 26)

Principals mostly agreed that their top 3 roles and responsibilities pre-Pandemic were instructional leadership and/or instructional supervision, student supervision and/or discipline, and communication with all stakeholders, mainly parents. However, many noted school safety as including student supervision and discipline. Comments included a need to hire good teachers, building relationships, and ensuring safety. Several participants noted that doing so created a safe, welcoming school culture and allowed for effective instructional supervision.

The COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on the Principalship
A majority (over 50%) of participating principals faced each of the following challenges upon reopening to in person instruction:
- Student Social-Emotional Challenges (92%)
- Decreased student achievement and/or lower test scores (96%)
- Increased Teacher Absenteeism and/or Lack of Substitute Teachers (85%)
- Low Staff Morale and/or Teacher Burnout (85%)
- Teacher Shortages/Vacant Instructional Positions (73%)
- Increased Student Disciplinary Infractions (69%)
- Increased demands from Central Office (54%)

While there was a decrease in the number of participants who felt each of the above challenges will be a long-term (more than 5 years) challenge, each of the above was selected over 33% of the time. The following were predicted as being a long-term challenge by more than 60% of the participants:
- Decreased student achievement and/or lower test scores (69%)
- Low Staff Morale and/or Teacher Burnout (65%)
- Student Social-Emotional Challenges (62%)
- Teacher Shortages/Vacant Instructional Positions (85%)

While several participants noted their optimism that school will return to "normal" once the pandemic reaches an endemic state, many believe that the COVID-19 Pandemic has impacted

the future of the school principalship. Participants generally agree that the principalship will evolve post-Pandemic and will include the following future responsibilities: a need to supervise virtual opportunities for instruction, a need to manage/combat teacher shortages, a need to increase the focus on student behavior/discipline, and a need to increase student wellbeing.

Participants also believe that they are more prepared to handle various crisis scenarios given their experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic. It was noted that you can never prepare for novel crisis situations; however, being able to draw on past experiences makes one more prepared for whatever situations arise.

Lastly, many participants believe that there may be a principal shortage in the near future from both individuals leaving the job and few teachers wishing to enter school administration.

Lessons Learned from the COVID-19 Pandemic
Participants noted the need to be flexible and less rigid in the decision making process. Participants suggested that principals should embrace creativity in decision making.

Many participants noted that they learned how important clear and consistent communication with all stakeholders was throughout the pandemic and that it can greatly assist with building relationships. Those relationships mattered when attempting to reach goals throughout the Pandemic. Participants noted how communication and relationships will matter in the future as well. Building those relationships will ensure total school success.

Many also noted how students were negatively impacted by the Pandemic and that managing their social-emotional challenges is very important and will continue to be well beyond the Pandemic.

Appendix G

Round Three Questionnaire

Questionnaire #3

A A A

⊞ ⊟

Directions
Before completing this survey, be sure you have read the summary of the data collected from Questionnaire #2. This summary was attached as a PDF to the email containing the survey link. You have until 11:59PM on Friday, May 6, 2022 to complete this survey.

Important tips for completing:

- The first question (below) asks for your participant code which was included in the survey distribution email. Please be sure to enter this code correctly.
- Navigate through the survey using the "Next Page" button at the bottom of each page.
- Many questions are followed by a "comment box." Please use this space to explain your selection to the question. These responses are very helpful and are important when conducting data analysis.
- Once you have completed all sections, make sure you press the "Submit" button. |

1) Enter your assigned participant code (Example: ES-3, MS-5, HS-8).

Next Page >>

Questionnaire #3

A A A

2) Which of the following will remain roles and responsibilities of the school principal once the COVID-19 Pandemic concludes (reaches an endemic state).

(select all that apply)

- ☐ Building relationships and/or creating positive school culture
- ☐ Communication with all stakeholders (parents, students, teachers, etc)
- ☐ Facilities management
- ☐ Financial or budget management
- ☐ General planning for longer term goals (single school year and/or multi school year)
- ☐ Instructional Leadership and/or Instructional Supervision
- ☐ Meeting Central Office expectations
- ☐ Monitoring student achievement, testing, and data
- ☐ Personnel management to including hiring and general supervision
- ☐ School safety
- ☐ Special education
- ☐ Student Supervision and discipline
- ☐ Responding to phone calls and/or emails

3) Will any of these roles and responsibilities evolve in any way POST-PANDEMIC? If so, how? If not, why not?

Expand

4) The top-3 PRE_PANDEMIC Roles and Responsibilities (as identified by participants in this study and as listed below) will remain the top-3 POST-PANDEMIC Roles and Responsibilities of the School Principal.

1. Building Relationships and/or creating positive school culture

2. Instructional Leadership and/or Instructional Supervision

3. School Safety

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Somewhat Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Somewhat Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

reset

5) Please explain your answer to the previous question.

Expand

<< Previous Page   Next Page >>

Questionnaire #3

Future Challenges

To what extent do you agree or disagree that each of the following will remain a long-term (more than 5 years) challenge for school principals POST-PANDEMIC.

6) Decreased student achievement and/or lower test scores

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Somewhat Agree
- ◯ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ◯ Somewhat Disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

reset

7) Increased demands from Central Office

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Somewhat Agree
- ◯ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ◯ Somewhat Disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

reset

8) Increased Student Disciplinary Infractions

- ◯ Strongly Agree
- ◯ Agree
- ◯ Somewhat Agree
- ◯ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ◯ Somewhat Disagree
- ◯ Disagree
- ◯ Strongly Disagree

reset

9) Increased Teacher Absenteeism and/or Lack of Substitute Teachers

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Somewhat Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Somewhat Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

reset

10) Low Staff Morale and/or Teacher Burnout

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Somewhat Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Somewhat Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

reset

11) Student Social-Emotional Challenges

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Somewhat Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Somewhat Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

reset

12) Teacher Shortages/Vacant Instructional Positions

- ○ Strongly Agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Somewhat Agree
- ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ○ Somewhat Disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly Disagree

reset

13) Please comment on your responses to the previous questions. Specifically, how should principals and other school leaders address any of these longterm challenges?

Expand

<< Previous Page   Next Page >>

Questionnaire #3

A A A

14) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Being a school principal was more challenging and/or more demanding throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic than before the Pandemic.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Somewhat Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Somewhat Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

reset

15) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Being a school principal after the COVID-19 Pandemic concludes will be more challenging and/or more demanding than it was prior to the Pandemic.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Somewhat Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Somewhat Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

reset

16) Please comment on your answers to the previous two questions.

Expand

<< Previous Page   Next Page >>

Questionnaire #3

A A A

17) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

   Going forward, POST-Pandemic, the decision-making process will require flexibilty and a willingness to change course at a moment's notice.

   ○ Strongly Agree
   ○ Agree
   ○ Somewhat Agree
   ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   ○ Somewhat Disagree
   ○ Disagree
   ○ Strongly Disagree

   reset

18) Explain your answer to the previous question.

   Expand

   << Previous Page   **Next Page >>**

Questionnaire #3

A A A

19) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Going forward, POST-Pandemic, communication with all stakeholders (teachers, students, parents, etc) will be important to ensuring overall school success.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Somewhat Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Somewhat Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

reset

20) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Building relationships with stakeholders (students, parents, teachers, etc.) matters more now than it did PRE-PANDEMIC.

○ Strongly Agree
○ Agree
○ Somewhat Agree
○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
○ Somewhat Disagree
○ Disagree
○ Strongly Disagree

reset

21) How, if at all, will school-community relations change POST-PANDEMIC?

Expand

22) Why are school-community relations important for school success?

Expand

<< Previous Page   Next Page >>

Questionnaire #3

A A A

23) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Given my experiences as a principal throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic, I am now better equipped to handle various crisis situations.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Somewhat Agree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Somewhat Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

reset

24) Why did you answer the way that you did for the previous question?

Expand

<< Previous Page   Next Page >>

Questionnaire #3

25) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

There will be a principal shortage POST-PANDEMIC.

○ Strongly Agree

○ Agree

○ Somewhat Agree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Somewhat Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Strongly Disagree

reset

26) Explain your answer to the previous question.

Expand

27) If you answered that you believe a principal shortage may occur post-Pandemic, how do you think it can be combatted against?

Expand

<< Previous Page   **Next Page >>**

Questionnaire #3

28) The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. How has the COVID-19 Pandemic affected the school principalship?

2. What lessons were learned during the COVID-19 Pandemic that will inform future practices of school principals during both normal and crisis operations?

3. How will each role and responsibility of the school principal change once the COVID-19 Pandemic concludes? Will there be new roles and responsibilities and if so, what are they?

Do you have any final comments that may help inform the answering of these questions?

Expand

<< Previous Page   **Submit**

Appendix H

Qualitative Data Codebook

The following codebook was used to code all qualitative data. The table shows codes and definitions for four major categories used for coding throughout the study. Following the codebook is a reproduction of Table 13 with highlights that correspond to the relevant codes in the codebook.

Pre-Pandemic Roles and Responsibilities	
Code	**Definition**
Instructional Leader/Instructional Supervision/Professional Development	Participants described their role in overall supervision of teachers which might include observations and feedback, formal evaluation, and/or developing or recommending various professional development activities.
Student Supervision and Discipline	Any description pertaining to the overall conduct of students (eg. lunch duty, meetings with students about conduct, enforcing school rules, etc.). This code was applied when discipline was described as routine rather than as increased or decreased because of the Pandemic (see other code on discipline below).
Community Relations Manager/Communication with Stakeholders	This code was applied when participants discussed an interaction with a person or group in the greater school community (excluded parents, students, and teachers).
Interactions with Parents	This code was applied when a participant mentioned any type of parent interaction (email, face to face, virtual, phone, etc.).
Personnel Manager/Hiring/Staff Supervision/Staff Absences	Any mention of issues pertaining to personnel (as noted in the code itself) or issues related to human resources management was assigned to this code.

Ensuring School Safety	Any mention of school safety, safety drills, crisis management, etc. was assigned this code.
Monitoring Student Academic Performance/Testing/Data	This code was used when participants explicitly discussed their role in monitoring student achievement.
Strategic Planner/Visionary	This code was applied when a participant discussed their role in planning for the school year, their mission and/or vision for the school, and/or strategic objectives they had for their school's overall performance either in the short term or long term.
Financial Manager	Participants described their role in the handling of school and/or school division funds and/or their role in the school budget process.
Overall Operations of School	This code was used and applied because participants used the language "overall operations." In most cases, this choice of language was generic and "catch all" for the day to day running of a school.
Building Operations Manager/Facilities Management	This was a generic code applied when participants used the phrasing of "building operations" or something that suggested operations such as maintenance, grounds keeping, etc.
Special Education	Any mention of students with special needs, exceptional education, special education, Individualized Education Plans, or 504 plans was assigned this code.
Meeting central office expectations	Participant responses that involved meeting job responsibilities required by their school system's central office administration.
Build Relationships/Positive Culture	Any response that explicitly stated building

	relationships or fostering a positive school culture/climate was assigned this code.
Checking/Responding to Email	Self explanatory.
Monitoring student attendance	Self explanatory.
Roles and Responsibilities Throughout the Pandemic	
Code	**Definition**
All of the above codes	The codes in the previous section were also applied when participants described them during their experiences throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic.
Virtual Instruction	Any participant response that involved planning and/or implementing synchronous or asynchronous learning (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Online Learning Platforms such as Schoology or Canvas, Google Apps, etc.).
Technical support	This code was applied when participants discussed assisting teachers or students with technology required for virtual learning.
Student Meals	Participants discussed maintaining meal services even when shut down to in person instruction. This code was applied in those instances.
COVID-19 Mitigation Strategies	Any participant response that involved actions such as masking (and enforcement of the wearing of them), contact tracing, flow of traffic, quarantining procedures, vaccination records, etc.
Student Support	Any participant response that involved supporting student academic needs or student wellness (excludes technical support).
Teacher Support	Any participant response that involved supporting teacher professional needs or

	wellness (excludes technical support).
Logistics specifically related to COVID-19 Operations	This code was used when a participant discussed in broad terms school operations throughout the Pandemic. Examples might have included the daily bell schedule while operating virtually, ensuring students and teachers had what they needed to work from home, general comments that included phrasing such as "logistics management" or "general operations."
Managing Less/More Disciplinary infractions	This code was applied (and is different from student discipline) when a participant explicitly talked about the reduction or increase in student disciplinary cases.

Challenges as a Principal	
Code	**Definition**
Teacher Shortages	Applied when a participant discussed the lack of teachers to fill vacant positions.
Teacher Absenteeism	This code was applied when a participant discussed current teacher employees calling out more frequently than usual.
Student Achievement/Test Scores	Any mention by a participant about standardized testing, graduation rates, student academic progress, etc. was coded under this code.
Student Social-Emotional Needs	This code was applied when participants discussed student wellness, mental health, or their social-emotional needs.
Increasing Central Office Demands	Any mention of expectations from a principal's central office was assigned this code.
Teacher Morale/Teacher Burnout	This code was typically assigned when the

	terms used in the code itself were explicitly stated by participants
Student Discipline - Long Term	This code was applied when participants forecasted an increase in student discipline infractions would last long term (more than five years).
Principal Shortages	Several participants, unprompted, predicted a principal shortage post-Pandemic. This code was used when such a shortage was mentioned.

Miscellaneous Codes	
Code	**Definition**
Flexibility (as it relates to operations and decision making)	Many times in the study, participants alluded to or explicitly stated a need for greater flexibility in the decision-making process or as it applied to their daily schedule. This code was used in those instances.
Return to Normalcy	Anytime a participant mentioned a desire or prediction to return to normalcy (meaning as things were pre-Pandemic), this code was applied.
Politics - A	This code was applied when a participant described navigating the politics of local school boards as well as the state or federal government.
Politics - B	This code was applied when a participant explained how they navigated the political landscape that came with the 2020 Presidential Election, Racial tensions in the United States, or the overall political "mood" of the country.

Table 13 - Reproduced for Appendix H

Representative Quotations for Future Challenges

Challenge	Example Quotation
● Decreased student achievement and/or lower test scores	Participant 23 (Urban HS): Students missed so much when they were out and did not have the structures needed. Participant 13 (Rural MS): State and local governments will continue to pressure educators for high [test] results, even with the learning gaps that exist.
● Increased student disciplinary infractions	Participant 3 (Suburban ES): Increasing student discipline takes time from the rest of the roles. It can be exhausting as the students' behavior gets more violent toward teachers and admins. I had a PreK kid actually bite me on the buttocks yesterday in an emotional breakdown. The physical attacks on staff are more frequent and demoralizing. We are spending time this summer in professional development around student discipline to try to be proactive. I see this approach as long term and developing over the years.
● Student Social-Emotional Challenges	Participant 24 (Suburban HS): Students' mental health (social/emotional well-being) must be prioritized by the country or we will continue to have long term issues. Students' struggles in this area are not all because of the pandemic, but it certainly has complicated the matter. I find that leaders (politicians, superintendents, School Board members) can all talk about its importance, but no one is doing anything or no one knows what to do. It is a serious, serious issue that is complicated. As usual, those in charge (as named above) want to simplify the issue.
● Challenges related to teachers	Participant 12 (Suburban MS): I have spent every week this year interviewing and have maintained two vacancies all year in science classroom, which have been filled by subs. Even these subs have not remained, so, there is little consistency in instruction and the rigor is missing.

VITA

Matthew Togna is a native of Richmond, Virginia and attended Henrico County Public Schools from Kindergarten through the 12th grade. He graduated from Hermitage High School and attended the University of Virginia earning both his Bachelor's of Science degree in Chemistry with a concentration in Chemical Education as well his Master's of Teaching degree with a concentration in Secondary Science Education. Mr. Togna also holds an Education Specialist degree in School Administration and Supervision from the University of Virginia. He taught chemistry at J.R. Tucker High School in Henrico, Virginia from 2009 to 2019 and also served as the Science Department Chair, a class sponsor, and the Head Swim Team Coach. Currently, Mr. Togna is a chemistry teacher at Collegiate School in Richmond, Virginia and also coaches the swim team and sponsors the school's SCA. During his doctoral studies at Virginia Commonwealth University, Mr. Togna was a Research Assistant on the Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium's (MERC) Teacher Retention Study. He also pursued projects that examined teacher self-efficacy, teacher retention, the funding of capital improvements in public schools, and tracking's impact on student achievement. In his spare time, Mr. Togna enjoys spending time with his family, playing golf, volunteering as a Healing Circle Leader at Comfort Zone Camp, and traveling to Charlottesville, Virginia to cheer on the UVA Basketball and Football teams. Wahoowa!