

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: THE DEMANDS, CONSTRAINTS, AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP CHOICES OF ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS IMPLEMENTING THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

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Doctorate of Philosophy
2013

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The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) placed unique demands and constraints on principals. Principals did not always make similar instructional leadership choices in how to spend their time, how to lead, and what to emphasize as a result of perceptions about their role, job demands, and the priorities for individual schools.

Rosemary Stewart's job demands, constraints and choices model (1982) was integrated with Hoy and Miskel's (2008) social systems of schools framework to describe and analyze principal perceptions and instructional leadership choices. Demands, constraints, and choices were used to categorize perceptions about what exists and paired with the four frames of open systems. Instructional leadership was examined through the use of the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework (MILF).

This research was designed as a qualitative case study to answer three research questions. 1) What are the current demands that elementary principals perceive in their work? 2) What are the constraints that impact implementation of the CCSS? 3) How does a principal make instructional leadership choices in implementing the CCSS?

The study used purposeful sampling and included six elementary principals within one district. Principals were with 3 to 30 years of experience and led medium sized

schools with low levels of poverty and second language learner populations. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, document, and memo review.

Findings indicated that principals experienced a range of expected demands including supporting school climate, meeting district expectations for adherence to policies, managing the school building, and navigating the power structures of the district and community. Constraints included time, attitude, the distribution of power, attending to community needs, and the organizational hierarchy of the district. Instructional leadership priorities centered on supporting school conditions to facilitate collaboration and directing the professional development of staff.

The results of this study provided a portrait of the challenges that principals faced, areas of possible influence, and how instructional leadership choices unfolded in a reform environment. In addition, the research served as an influential starting point for evaluating whether the instructional leadership practices utilized are sufficient to achieve the expected outcomes for CCSS implementation.

THE DEMANDS, CONSTRAINTS, AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP CHOICES
OF ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS IMPLEMENTING THE COMMON CORE STATE
STANDARDS

By

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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2013

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and friends who have always encouraged my dreams and inspired me with their own. To my daughter Deryn, who is still too young to understand this work, I hope you will one day have the fortune to be surrounded by individuals who push you to become more than you imagined. I hope that you are guided by teachers and principals that create the conditions for excellence throughout all of your schooling.

I extend endless gratitude to my husband, Jorge Sirgo, for his patience, encouragement, and care as I pursued this effort. Throughout my career he has graciously shared me with my students, staff, and community. Even when my days were long and my time for family short, he reminded me of the opportunities and gifts my role as a school leader provided. As I took on this endeavor, he never wavered in his support and without his partnership I could never have reached this milestone.

I also thank my lifelong friends and extended family for cheering me along every step of the way. I am indebted to my dear friend Carrie Sherreard, whose copywriting expertise assisted me in crafting a written argument that matched my vision.

The achievement of the Ph.D. was a dream that began with whisper from my father. I dedicate this dissertation in his honor and that of my mother who believed that you must give your children roots in order to give them wings. I thank them both for providing me with a love of family and of scholarship that sustains me today.

Acknowledgements

I extend my appreciation to Dr. Hanne Mawhinney for her leadership and guidance throughout my doctoral program. Her deep understanding of the field of leadership research and extensive feedback allowed me to expand my thinking and was critical to my growth.

To my dissertation committee, Dr. Parham, Dr. Davis, Dr. Cohen, and Dr. Fabian, I express my deepest respect and admiration for your intellectual guidance and insight as I pursued my goal.

I thank my mentor, Dr. Heath Morrison, for continuing to challenge me, inspire me, and encourage me to exceed my own expectations. I also want to recognize Dr. Bobbi Jasper, Dr. David Steinberg, and Dr. Myra Smith for their continued support from my first days as a principal through today.

I thank my critical friends and fellow doctoral students Jennifer Lynch, Vanessa Camilleri, Dawn Sherman, and Rebecca Wolf whom offered inspiration, levity, and counsel along the way.

I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge my school district for providing me with the professional latitude to explore my academic interests through the resources provided and flexibility afforded to me as a principal.

Last, I thank my principal colleagues. Your commitment to provide outstanding leadership in the face of a myriad of demands and constraints inspired me to be steadfast and fueled my passion for leadership.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The ability to effectively manage a building, ensure that students are enrolled in classes, order materials, staff positions, create safe and orderly classrooms, make certain that meals are served, and address day-to-day issues used to be the primary role of the principal. However, the role has changed, and even though all of those things must be accomplished, they are no longer sufficient. Principals must be instructional leaders, change agents, professional developers, and visionaries to create school cultures that support reform. Demands have increased, constraints exist, and the stakes have gotten higher with the emergence of national standards and federal accountability. Principals must now do more than they ever have before, and no initiative illustrates this more than the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

It has long been the case that policymakers pursued educational reforms to increase student learning. In the early 1990s, Heck (1992) observed that,

[policymakers] have focused on the design and delivery of curriculum and instruction, including course content, standards and expectations, and teaching techniques. Others have been directed at altering school organization, creating greater accountability, and enhancing school-based leadership. (p. 21)

More recently, standards-based reforms are consistent parts of the formula for school improvement and principals are viewed as key players in the implementation at the local school level (Heck & Hallinger, 2005; Marks & Nance, 2007). In this context, researchers noted that the ability of a school district and schools to implement comprehensive school policy and reform models appeared to be a significant factor that was associated with the way in which leadership was configured and the extent to which particular leadership functions were activated (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003). It

was not surprising that reform increased demands on principals, altered constraints, and shifted leadership choices. In May 2012, *Education Week* discussed the changes for principals leading Common Core as requiring potential modifications to practice, not only as instructional leaders, but as staff developers, accountability monitors, and facilitators of sustained collaboration in order to be stewards of change (Gerwetz, 2012).

School districts now expect principals to lead their buildings through an increasingly complex landscape of demands, while simultaneously navigating various constraints internal and external to the organization. In many districts, principals are judged on their ability to manage their staff and facilities, minimize discipline challenges, build positive community relationships, and increase student achievement (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010). As changes to standards, curriculum, and accountability measures continue to emerge, principals are asked to create positive working conditions for staff, monitor the implementation of policy, and address a myriad of managerial issues, at the same time raising outcomes for children.

There is a general belief that good school principals are the cornerstones of good schools and that without a principal's leadership, efforts to raise student achievement cannot succeed. Yet, some fear that the role may be expanding beyond what is reasonable in a single job description. (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003, p. 43)

In *Building a New Structure for School Leadership*, Elmore (2000) stated that schools in their present form are,

simply not led in ways that enable them to respond to the increasing demands they face under standards-based reform. Further, if schools, school systems, and their leaders respond to standards-based reforms the way they have responded to other attempts at broad scale reform of public education over the past century, they will fail massively and visibly, with an attendant loss of public confidence and serious consequences for public education. (p. 1)

The principal plays a direct and distinct role in implementing reform change as they continue to ensure that all students learn and the conditions for success are in place (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Marks and Nance (2007) described this changed role when they stated, “As states enact standards and accountability policies, they do so with the expectations that policies will rebound through the system” (p. 4).

Here, then, is the seeming conundrum: Schools are being asked by elected officials—policy leaders, if you will—to do things they are largely unequipped to do. School leaders are being asked to assume responsibilities they are largely unequipped to assume, and the risks and consequences of failure are high for everyone, but especially high for children. (Elmore, 2002, p. 1)

The demands placed upon principals, the influential nature of constraints, and the instructional leadership choices leaders make in their daily work directly relates to the current standards-based and accountability reform efforts to implement the CCSS at the state and national level.

Research Problem

At the time of this study, principals were faced with a unique reform, unlike any that had come before them: Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Reform and change were a consistent part of the leadership landscape, however CCSS were a massive change placing unique demands and constraints on principals. It required leaders to address the technical core of the school including professional development, instructional models, assessment, and an overall vision for teaching and learning.

Educational policy debates in the United States frequently included discussion around the use of standards as a tool for education reform. This debate consisted of perspectives from a variety of stakeholders, including business leaders, politicians, parents, and educators. Underlying the reform discussion was a desire to raise and unify

national standards while simultaneously positioning the U.S. education system as a global leader in economic and intellectual capital (U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Given that CCSS was a novel reform effort, there was a lack of empirical research on the impact of the initiative on principal instructional leadership choices. There was evidence that bore on the likely impact of a standards based system including an examination of other nations that have national standards. However, those comparative studies were beset with methodological and practical concerns about confounding variables. Selected reviews of states that adopted standards based education policies included efforts in the early 1990's by states to use the National Council on Teaching and Mathematics (NCTM) standards. These limited reviews were focused on implementation in aggregate and states were included only as supplementary references.

Evidence of the Common Core as a compelling reform initiative was noted in the field of practitioners and laymen. An examination of the social media, education publications, and websites for professional organizations included regular references to the Common Core for professional development and to support implementation challenges. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), and professional periodicals such as *Education Week* listed a plethora of professional development offerings for leaders to meet the demands of CCSS implementation. Over 20 different resources were provided for principals to review and understand on the NAESP website. This included a common core implementation checklist to determine the knowledge and skills required to lead implementation effectively (NAESP, 2012).

Just as each state and district experienced CCSS, so too did the school principal. The demands and constraints that principals confronted during CCSS implementation were processed and experienced differently. The degree to which principals felt these demands and constraints may have resulted in variable choices for instructional leadership priorities or actions. Hence, differences in how leaders choose to do the work could lead to variability of outcomes, something the CCSS aimed to eliminate.

The literature on the principalship was largely descriptive and focused on an examination of the role of the principal, styles of school leadership, or the relationship between the principal and school staff or student outcomes. Research concentrated on describing leadership, examining the relationship between leadership and student achievement, or investigating the influence of leadership on school climate and teacher experience (Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Heck, Larson, & Marcoulides, 1990). Less was known about the interaction between reform and school context on principal instructional leadership choices. It was unclear how principals, at the time of this study, transformed the contextual demands and constraints faced from CCSS into actions. According to Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2004):

While it is generally acknowledged that where there are good schools there are good leaders, it has been notoriously difficult to construct an account of school leadership, grounded in everyday practice that goes beyond some generic heuristics for suggested practices. We know relatively little about the *how* of school leadership, which is knowledge of the ways in which school leaders develop and sustain those conditions and processes believed necessary for innovation. While there is an expansive literature about *what* school structures, programmes, roles, and processes are necessary for instructional change, we know less about *how* these changes are undertaken or enacted by school leaders. (p. 4)

Improving school leadership ranked high on the list of priorities for school reform (Maryland State Department of Education, 2012b; Townsend, 2011). Maryland adopted

the CCSS by unanimous vote on June 22, 2010 and was one of the first states to do so (Maryland State Department of Education, 2012a). The CCSS served as the framework for a new state curriculum and full implementation was mandated by August 2013. Furthermore, the state established actions required in order for principals to demonstrate skills as instructional leaders. Identifying the responsibilities and roles that principals should play is difficult, given the changing context and expectation to operationalize and implement the standards within a few years.

Research Purpose

The aim of this study was to describe and interpret the conditions and relationships that existed, points of view or attitudes that were held, and trends that were in development for elementary principals in the context of CCSS implementation. Elementary school principals were selected because school level was one prominent, but poorly understood, contextual variable that had been postulated to influence the leadership choices of the principal considerably (Dwyer, Lee, Rowan, & Bossert, 1983; Marks & Nance, 2007).

Understanding principal leadership and the demands and constraints principals faced was important in order to explore how demand and constraint factors were converted into choices during CCSS implementation. Contextual factors could constrain and shape the principal's exercise of leadership (Hallinger & Murphy, 1986). This study did not focus on one particular leadership style or choice, but aimed to provide an opportunity to improve the understanding of principal leadership. The study was designed to explore particular systems and the influence or interaction between the individual principal and their environment. This purpose was framed by the assumption

that all principals facing similar demands and constraints did not always make equivalent choices in how to spend their time, how to lead, and what to emphasize.

Research Questions

Three research questions were addressed:

1. What are the current demands that elementary principals perceive in their work?
2. What are the constraints that impact implementation of the CCSS?
3. How does a principal make instructional leadership choices in implementing the CCSS?

Conceptual Framework

Organizational leadership theories provided the framework for exploring principal perceptions. Spillane, Halverson, and Diamond (2001) emphasized the importance of exploring principal leadership from within a conceptual and theoretical framework to understand the dynamics of leadership practice. Rosemary Stewart's (1982) job demands, constraints and choices model described leadership and managerial work as an interaction that occurred between the individual and the environment. This model was a useful tool to examine the conception of the principalship and supported reflections on leadership choices. Demands reflected the roles and responsibilities required in order to perform the job. Constraints were the internal and external factors that limited what individuals could do in their job. Choices were the actions and decisions individuals emphasized. While each of these components described the experience of principals, they were insufficient on their own.

In order to conceptualize the transformation of demands and constraints into choices in a school setting, it was important to describe the systems that existed and how

those systems interacted with the individual and the environment in schools. Hoy and Miskel's (2008) school as a social systems model further described how the resources in the environment were managed and utilized to meet job responsibilities. They categorized the systems that existed within a school as political, cultural, structural, or individual. Each system interacted with the other systems and resulted in a process that transformed the school and the individual. The grounding of research in this way emphasized the exploration of the thinking behind leadership choices versus merely a description of what existed. This viewpoint ultimately allowed opportunities to discover not only choices, but the transformation of demands and constraints into priorities and actions.

The utility of the Stewart (1982) and Hoy and Miskel (2008) models was based on the dissertations of Williams (2011) and Haas (2005). Williams (2011) applied the Stewart (1982) model to explore the demands and constraints of high school principals and the choices they made to focus on instructional leadership using the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework (MILF). Haas (2005) applied the Hoy and Miskel (2008) model to explore the interaction of the social systems on the individual during district efforts to develop professional learning communities. Williams' (2011) study was completed at the end of the NCLB regime and it was unclear if his findings would be replicated given the fact that NCLB no longer directly guided the work in schools at the time of this study. In addition, it was unclear if Williams' findings would be transferable to elementary principals. Hallinger and Murphy (1986) noted that findings from studies of elementary schools had rarely been validated at the secondary level. Given the clear contextual differences in school size, structure, organization, and curriculum that exist

between elementary and secondary schools, there may also be comparable differences in leadership choices. Haas' (2005) study was completed at the initial stages of NCLB implementation and focused on the district influence on school leadership teams. It is unclear if her findings for perceptions were in relationship to the novel emergence of the reform or how systems influenced perceptions.

The CCSS was a unique reform and created additional demands and constraints for schools. From a political, policy, and practical perspective the CCSS had the potential to create significant changes across the landscape of public schools. The ability to use the Stewart (1982) and Hoy and Miskel (2008) models in concert with the MILF created opportunities to understand the process of choice and instructional leadership while the implementation of CCSS unfolded.

Common Core State Standards

Historical perspective on standards based reform

Throughout the history of our nation, there were multiple examples of leaders seeking uniformity and control over what students should know and be able to do. Beginning in the latter half of the 20th century, politicians began to put education on the reform agenda due to concerns with the U.S.'s economic decline relative to other nations. This comparative decline was combined with a general feeling that the U.S. was no longer the economic power that it once was and resulted in national leaders calling for improvements in the schools (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Jennings, 2009). In a cross-national study of standards and textbooks, the intended curriculum of the U.S. was found not to measure up to the most common expectations for student learning found in other nations (Schmidt, McKnight, & Raizen, 1997). This

analysis, which compared the mathematics and science curricula of the U.S. to those of 46 nations, showed that standards in the U.S. lacked the coherence, the focus, and the level of demand that were prevalent across the world (Valverde & Schmidt, 2000). However, federal efforts to seek national education standards and tests repeatedly failed to find bipartisan support. In the early 1990s, the first President Bush sought national education standards and tests, but as part of that effort, his administration submitted legislation to the majority Democratic Congress to fund experimental schools. In return, Congress expanded the bill to include aid to teachers and other assistance. Ultimately, Republican conservatives filibustered the bill, and it died. In response, by executive action, Bush funded the creation of national standards, a move that led to great controversy over the reading and history components. Efforts at the federal level to agree on what students should know and be able to do across the nation were seen as controversial and politically charged; consequently, attempts at national standards did not evolve further at that point in history.

As a result of challenges the federal government experienced in designing and creating national standards, in the mid-1990s, President Clinton pushed through legislation encouraging states to develop their own academic standards. In 1997, President Clinton proposed a national test to measure the nation's progress. Congress, now controlled by Republicans, responded to President Clinton's proposal by placing restrictions on the use of federal funds for any national test. It was believed that much of the opposition was rooted in a fear of federal control of education. Thus, the idea of a national test and related standards was suppressed a second time. Given the history and

political response to the federal establishment of common standards, a movement emerged at the state level.

Purpose of the Common Core

The problems facing education were not new, yet the CCSS were the first large scale standards based reform movement in our nation. The CCSS were conceived as a response to three problems facing education; lack of alignment between states, global positioning of the U.S., and inequity for student learning outcomes.

The first problem was the lack of alignment between states and within states with regards to what students were expected to know and be able to do as an outcome of learning. Each state had its own process for developing, adopting, and implementing standards resulting in variability from state to state. Although the federal government required states to adopt standards in at least reading and mathematics, the government did not review or approve the content of those standards. Federal law prohibited agencies from mandating, directing, or controlling the specific instructional content, curriculum, programs of instruction, or academic achievement standards and assessments of states, districts, or schools (Furhman, 2004). Prior to the Common Core each state had its own set of academic standards creating inconsistency where students in similar grades across the nation might be expected to meet different learning outcomes. This lack of agreement on what students should know and be able to do between states resulted in significant differences in opportunities for students to learn subject areas by school size, location, and racial/ethnic composition (Cogan, Schmidt, & Wiley, 2001).

Second, the National Education Assessment Program (NAEP) and other measures showed that U.S. students were less prepared for college and careers. According to the

U.S. Department of Education, this lack of preparation was believed to have a direct relationship with national economic growth and productivity, particularly with respect to the U.S. position in a global society. In a global economy, students must be prepared to compete with not just U.S. peers, but students from around the world. The CCSS were created to help prepare students with the knowledge and skills that lead to success in college and their careers by providing goals for teachers and benchmarks for skills that students should acquire by the end of each academic year. The CCSS was said to offer a foundation by which students would increase their capacity, knowledge, and skills in order to achieve personal and national economic success.

Third, inequity, both racially and geographically, persisted across our nation for student performance outcomes. The inequity was evident in a disproportionality of achievement between groups of students by race/ethnicity and from one area of the nation to another. In order to raise the achievement of all students, prepare students for a global society, and reduce gaps in achievement, the CCSS were created (Cogan et al., 2001).

Development of the Common Core

The National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) led the development of CCSS. Founded in 1908, the NGA served as a public policy organization whose membership consisted of the governors of the 50 states, three territories, and two commonwealths. The CCSSO was a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who headed departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provided leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational

issues (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The process of developing the CCSS also involved the collaboration and support of educators across the country as well as prominent education, business, and state leaders' organizations, including Achieve, Inc., ACT, the College Board, the National Association of State Boards of Education, the Alliance for Excellent Education, the Hunt Institute, the National Parent Teacher Association, the State Higher Education Executive Officers, the American Association of School Administrators, and the Business Roundtable (Valverde & Schmidt, 2000).

English and math were selected as starting points for the CCSS because of the belief that the skills developed in these subjects were the foundation for growth in other subject areas. In addition, reading and math continued to be the subject areas most frequently assessed for federal accountability purposes. According to the CCSS report in June 2010, the standards were created by work groups comprised of representatives from higher education, K-12 education, teachers, and researchers. There was consultation with educators, administrators, community and parent organizations, higher education representatives, the business community, researchers, civil rights groups, and states for feedback on each of the drafts. In English language arts, the authors used the NAEP frameworks in reading and writing, and in mathematics, they used conclusions from TIMSS and other studies of high-performing countries. After the standards were drafted, a 25-member Validation Committee was created to review the standard setting process. The committee was charged with ensuring that the standards were supported by evidence, written with clear specificity, and comparable with other nations (Jennings, 2009). The NGA Center and CCSSO received initial feedback on the draft standards from national organizations and made the standards available for public comment. Once the CCSS

were developed and adopted, the CCSSO and NGA Center, on behalf of the states, planned to develop a common core of standards in science and potentially additional subject areas.

The CCSS were grounded in the theoretical assumption that states are autonomous, but when they work together on matters such as education, the collective knowledge yields significant improvements. This was characterized by the idea that through a voluntary movement in the same direction, the ability to achieve national goals was enhanced (McCluskey, 2010). In addition to the power of collective action, uniformity, or consistency in identifying what students should know and be able to do was thought to provide ease of comparison over time by standard, assessment, and state by state to know how to transform the education system for the benefit of all students (Gerwetz, 2010). The belief that common expectations would lead to common outcomes was part of an overarching theory that consistent standards would provide appropriate benchmarks for all students, regardless of where they lived, hence reducing disparities in performance within and among groups of students.

Relevance of the Common Core

At the time of this study and depicted in figure 1, the Common Core State Standards were adopted in 45 states, the District of Columbia, and four territories.



Figure 1. Common Core adoption by state as of October 9, 2013.

The use of national standards in education was a topic of conversation that continued to develop. Proponents believed that the CCSS would provide teachers with a uniform sequence of targets to aim instruction. In addition, standards specified the knowledge and skills for students to demonstrate and permitted educators to identify the instructional practices to be utilized (Cohen, 1996). Standards were believed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of instruction by specifying common targets in order to assess the performance of students and teachers (Bouldard, 2010). Proponents also believed that the CCSS would increase rigor in schools and better prepare students for college and careers. At a fundamental level, the Common Core was designed to include

higher level thinking skills including synthesis, analysis, problem solving, and application. Paired with the new standards was a move from end of year annual assessments toward ongoing assessments including benchmark and summative exams. Opportunities to learn new content outcomes, curriculum, assessment, and instructional approaches were expected for all teachers. Proponents believed that the increased teacher collaboration and professional development required for Common Core could broaden the scope of teaching practices across the nation.

Critics believed that national standards in education would create an inflexible delivery system incapable of coping with differences between poor schools and rich schools, able students and weak students, skilled teachers and teachers teaching out of subject area. In addition, detractors thought that the timeline for transitioning students, staff, and school communities to Common Core was unrealistic and required more time than was expected. This included time needed to develop products and processes that matched the vision of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. There was also a concern that there would be a lack of follow-through for schools to meet the demands and provide professional development, instructional materials, and facilities for the standards to have their intended effect. Criticism included the absence of adjusted assessment formats for students with special education needs, resource limitations, and funding requirements for technology to support instruction. Further, participation in federal programs and funding, such as Race to the Top, was contingent on adoption of an internationally benchmarked curriculum, something that only the CCSS met. This suggested that the standards were not voluntary at all.

The CCSS was a novel reform that continued to evolve. Judgement has still not been rendered as to its impact or place in the permanent public education landscape.

Significance

At the theoretical level, this study could make a significant contribution to research by identifying the influence of the organization on perceptions of demands and constraints. If we are able to understand the relationship between demands, constraints, and choices in the social system of the elementary school, we could better understand the challenges that principals face, areas of possible influence, and how leadership choices unfolded in a reform environment.

With regard to policy, this study may serve as an influential starting point for evaluating whether or not the mandates established by CCSS and the MILF instructional leadership practices identified as necessary were, in fact, sufficient to achieve the desired outcomes. A clear understanding of how demands and constraints emerge in the school environment could assist policymakers in their effort to guide reform. In addition, an exploration of how principals conceptualized their instructional leadership role would allow policymakers to develop an understanding of how policies are operationalized and implemented in a variety of school contexts.

At the practical level, principals and school districts could benefit from research revealing what principals prioritize and how leaders make decisions about their work. This includes the influence of the organization on the individual, the role of supervisors, and training models to guide implementation. Understanding how demands and constraints are transformed into choices could provide school systems with a broad perspective on the experience of leadership during reform. This understanding could

assist practitioners and better align principal choices toward a common vision of instructional leadership.

Personal Statement

I began my doctoral studies when I served as an elementary school principal. In this role I was confronted each day with a myriad of tasks, responsibilities, and expectations that demanded my attention, functioned as barriers to elements of practice, and resulted in specific choices about how to spend my time. I trained to be an instructional leader focused on teaching and learning, however I was often faced with a number of competing priorities that made me feel unsuccessful in my efforts to lead instruction. Each day I would consider the expectations of my role, system initiatives, state-level policies, personal values, and school culture in order to prioritize my work. I remained unclear as to whether my choices made me a better leader or my school more effective.

During the final portion of my research, I assumed a new position as a consulting principal. In this role I was assigned as a leadership mentor and coach to novice principals. This afforded me the opportunity to broaden my perspective within the district and become familiar with a range of school contexts, leadership beliefs, and ultimately instructional leadership choices. As my spent time working alongside principals it became evident that although there was an established framework for understanding the outcomes principals were asked to meet, there were variable patterns of decision making about instructional leadership. This research was driven by a desire to examine whether or not the current understanding of principals and instructional

leadership would support the ability of schools to meet the requirements of Common Core implementation.

Definition of Terms

Structural system: Formal demands and obligations that are set by the organization and exercised by specific positions and offices. This includes expectations for behaviors and responsibilities of each position, either formally or flexibly, that are reasonably consistent with the goals of the organization. This includes descriptions of particular jobs, a hierarchy of positions, specialization, and authority relative to job power and status (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 25).

Cultural system: The outgrowth of the interactions between organizational members' beliefs, norms, and values. The shared orientations that develop provide individuals with a sense of identity to the group through a commitment to beliefs beyond themselves. This system reflects the part of the organization that is felt by members and influences cohesiveness, sense of belonging, all while allowing the member to keep their personality (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 28).

Environment: Includes everything outside an organization including larger social or policy trends, communities, constituencies, and other influences. The environment can also place demands and constraints on individuals in an organization and act as an external force that requires a reaction or response from schools (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 30).

Demand: Refers to the description of the roles and responsibilities of jobs. "What anyone in the job has to do. There are many things that managers ought to do, because they are in the job description or because their boss thinks they are important, but

demand is a narrower term. Demands are only what must be done” (p. 9). Demands refer either to the type of work or to meeting the established criteria of a job (Stewart, 1982, p. 9).

Constraint: “Constraints are the factors, internal or external to the organization, that limit what the jobholder can do” (p. 9). Intangible constraints to the organization include resources, trade unions, technology, and facilities. Intangible constraints include the extent of how the work is defined, attitudes of others people toward the organization or initiatives, changes to the organizational product or work outside of the organization (Stewart, 1982).

Choice: “Choices are the activities that the jobholder can do, but does not have to do. They are the opportunities for one jobholder to do different work from another and to do it in different ways” (p. 9). Choices are in relationship to how or what work is done. This includes decisions to emphasize certain aspects of a job, select certain tasks and ignore others, change the focus of work, share work, or take part in organizational activities (Stewart, 1982).

Common Core State Standards: State-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to provide a clear and consistent framework of learning standards for students in the United States. The standards are internationally benchmarked, aligned with college and career readiness expectations, and exist for reading language arts and math (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2009).

Individual system: Reflects the cognitive processes that allows an individual to “understand the job in terms of perception, knowledge, and expected behavior” (p. 26).

The needs, beliefs, goals, values, and previous experience of an individual serves as the framework for understanding and interpreting their work role. This process of perception is influenced by beliefs about themselves, the organization, motivation, and personal expectations (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 26).

Instructional leadership: A role enacted by school principals that is focused on three main dimensions of defining the schools mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate. These dimensions are demonstrated by ten functions including framing the school's goals, communicating goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining visibility, providing incentives for teachers, and providing incentives for learning (Hallinger, 2003).

Open system: Includes both structure and process with dynamic relationships. Emphasizes the reciprocity of the elements that surround and are included within the organization. "An open system is a set of interacting elements that acquires inputs from the outside, transforms them, and produces outputs for the environment" (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 21).

Political system: Guides the power relationships that exist in an organization to benefit the individual or group. This is often seen as an expected element of an organization, but it can work in contrast to organizational goals. Power relations are played out through bargaining, games, conflict resolution, and exercising skill to gain advantage (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 29).

Principal: Formally designated leaders with an assigned position and associated roles and responsibilities (Spillaine & Healy, 2010).

Social system: A term used to define a system of interaction where interacting personalities are tied together. Schools are social systems characterized by, “an interdependence of parts, a clearly defined population, differentiation from its environment, a complex network of social relationships, and its own unique culture” (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 23).

Chapter 2

To explore the demands, constraints, and instructional leadership choices of elementary principals leading Common Core implementation, I begin with an examination of Rosemary Stewart's (1982) demands, constraints, and choices model followed by Hoy and Miskel's (2008) social systems of schools construct. Finally, a review of the literature provides a portrait of demands, constraints, choices, and instructional leadership for school principals.

The Common Core required targeted leadership actions that were an extension and addition to present job expectations. Understanding the job demands of a principal, the factors that constrained principals, and the actions principals chose as instructional leaders, in the context of CCSS, could be explored through a conceptual framework grounded in leadership and management.

Stewart's Model of Demands, Constraints and Choices

The theories of organizational leadership provided the framework to explore the research. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) a framework serves three distinct purposes: 1) To identify who will and will not be included in the study; 2) To describe what relationships may be present based on logic, theory and/or experience; and 3) To provide the researcher with the opportunity to gather general constructs into intellectual bins (p. 18).

Using Stewart's (1982) job demands, constraints and choices model, the purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between job demands, constraints, and instructional leadership choices in the context of CCSS implementation. Researchers often examined leadership and managerial work as distinct categories, however a

comparison of Stewart's work with contemporary models demonstrated that the convergence of leadership with managerial work remained substantially neglected (Lowe, 2003). Stewart's model was a useful tool to examine the conception of the principalship and supported reflection on instructional leadership choices.

Rosemary Stewart devoted over 30 years to the study of managerial behavior using qualitative analysis to develop a body of thought and a framework for analyzing what managers actually do. She found that managers in similar jobs focused attention on very different aspects of the work (Kroek, 2003). As described by Stewart (1982):

The model described here started from a desire to describe jobs and to understand what a study of behavior could tell one about the nature of jobs. The model has subsequently been used also to help in understanding an individual's perception of the job. Demands are what anyone in the job has to do. There are many things that managers ought to do, because they are in the job description or because their boss thinks them important, but demands are a narrower term. Demands are only what must be done. Constraints are the factors, internal or external to the organization, that limit what the jobholder can do. Choices are the activities that the jobholder can do, but does not have to do. They are the opportunities for one jobholder to do different work from another and to do it in different ways. (p. 9)

Figure 2 depicts the model as consisting of an inner core of demands, an outer boundary of constraints, and an in-between area of choices.

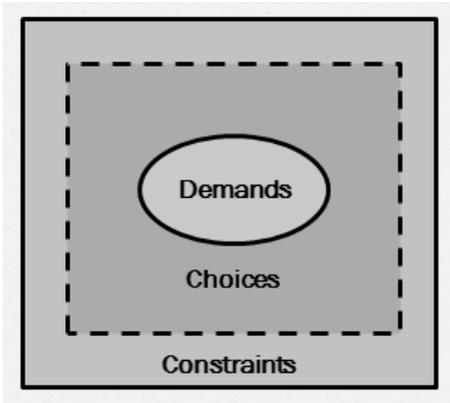


Figure 2. Stewart's (1982) demands, constraints, and choices model.

Each element, as termed by Rosemary Stewart (1982, p. 3) in *Choices for the Manager*, was described as:

- Demands: The core job requirements and any work that is required in order to perform the job.
 - Overall meeting minimum criteria of performance
 - Bureaucratic procedures that cannot be ignored or delegated
 - Meetings that must be attended
- Constraints: The tangible (money) and intangible (attitude) factors that limit what an individual can do in their job.
 - Resource, legal, and technological limitations
 - Organizational constraints in how the work is defined
 - Attitudes of other people to changes in the organization, goods or services, and work
- Choices: Opportunities in a job; aspects of the job the manager chooses to emphasize in terms of time, effort, and commitment of resources
 - How the work is done

- What work is done either to emphasize particular aspects of the job or select some tasks and ignore or delegate others

Stewart's (1976) research sought to classify the differences in the demands that jobs made on the jobholder's behavior. She believed that "most jobs pose some conflicting demands, either upon one's time or resources, or for alternative forms of action. Hence conflicting demands are assessed only when they are exceptional" (p. 26). Constraints were viewed as having an internal and external origin that may limit what the jobholder could accomplish. According to Stewart, "choice refers to the opportunities that jobs provide for the incumbent to work on the task of his choosing at the time of his choosing" (p. 27). It was inferred, therefore, that similar demands and constraints may lead to varied choices as the environment and the individual interact.

Stewart (1982) proposed that the person in the job was able to change some demands and constraints through the choices they did or did not make in action. As a dynamic model, it takes into account how human beings actually behave in their work and how choices influence interpretations of demands and constraints. Stewart noted that when individuals that have similar jobs are observed, differences in what holds their attention and priorities lead to measurable differences in how the work is done.

While the model was conceived to look at managers, there was a natural connection to the work of elementary principals. Stewart stated, "...leadership tends to be a value-laden construct and is often narrowly studied. Hence, we need to study manager behavior generally to capture aspects of leadership more specifically" (1982, p. 100). Further, Stewart (1989) recommended concentrating on the interaction between individual and job, studying how managers think about their work and job or studying the

thoughts and actions of managers over time. She recommended focusing on the cyclical nature of managerial work, how managers dealt with problems, and studying how managers decided on the timing of their actions. All of these aspects of the demands, constraints, and choices model made it an ideal fit for examining elementary principal leadership. This model supported the exploration of the perceptions of leaders on the nature of the things they faced in their work and how they made decisions to direct their actions.

Stewart suggested that the demands, constraints, and choices model could be used to understand any kind of job because it was a way of thinking about how individuals did their jobs and analyzed the experience of the job in a particular environment. In the model, choices are limited by demands and constraints in a dynamic relationship where change occurs over time and in varied contexts. The model is flexible and can shift based on the perceptions of the individual and the job being explored. Jobs differ to the degree to which they have demands, particularly in the time and effort required to meet expectations for the work. Additionally, the nature of constraints and scope of choices could be divergent. As Stewart (1982) described:

Changes in either demands or constraints will affect the area of choice. Such changes may arise from the actions of others within the organization, from changes in environmental conditions, or because of what the jobholder does. Individuals may create new demands because of the expectations that they establish by their behavior... The actions of the jobholder can also affect constraints, as one of the choices in most jobs is to try and find a way around the constraints, or to change their nature. ..Individuals in similar jobs may have somewhat different demands, constraints, and choices, both in fact and in their perceptions of them. They will differ in fact, because other peoples' expectations of what they will do may differ, as will their power to enforce their expectations. (p. 7)

The model emphasizes the importance of looking at the individual and the way they view their work. This suggests that demands may seem overwhelming to some, but viewed as opportunities for choice to others. Furthermore, constraints could be variable due to the extent an individual is influenced by the attitudes or policies established by their organization. The model proposes that individual interpretations of demands and constraints could affect the number and type of instructional leadership choices principals see in their work.

The job demands, constraints, and choices model was also an ideal fit for a qualitative study. Den Hartog (2003), in describing the importance of using the demands, constraints, and choices model stated:

One dilemma in the observational research on managerial jobs and what managers do is the constant interpretation required to translate very concrete observed activities to a more abstract conceptual and interpretative level to understand why managers would engage in a specific activity. One activity can have different meanings or effects and different activities can lead to the same effect. Thus, it is important to go beyond a purely descriptive approach to avoid losing the ability to explain why managers do what they do and whether what they do is effective or not. (p. 222)

In examining research that looked at the pattern of choices in managerial work, Kroek (2003) stated:

Qualitative research is a more valuable analytical tool in this stage than quantitative analysis as it avoids the researcher's preconceived notion of what managers do and what should be measured. Stewart seems to recognize that quantitative analysis can also move the field forward in some areas such as by focusing on the interaction between individuals and jobs and the study of dyadic job relationships (cf. Stewart, 1987, 1991) within and across managerial groupings. Nevertheless, she has always held that the variation in the managerial job cannot be described simply by function and level. (p. 208)

Wahlgren (2003) stated that this model was,

best used in qualitative approaches which aim to increase our understanding of

managerial work, since the flexibility inherent in managerial work speaks against overgeneralizing. In studying how managers see their work, the researcher deals with subjective realities, perceptions, and sensemaking. (p. 231)

The need to have a conceptual framework that was well-matched to the research questions was critical as a component of the study's qualitative design.

The demands, constraints, and choices model provided a strong foundation to ground the concepts explored in this study. However, as a conceptual model it did not fully explore the relationships or interactions, but rather described what existed. In order to use the conceptual model to allow potential propositions to be confirmed or emerge, it was paired with an organizational theory. Hoy and Miskel's (2008) social systems model of school described how the interactions and transformation process occurs and provided a framework for analyzing the implementation of the CCSS, and how demands, constraints, choices, and instructional leadership unfolded.

School as a Social System

Organizational theory, according to Hoy and Miskel (2008), is a set of interrelated concepts, assumptions, and generalizations used to describe or explain patterns of behavior in organizations. The school as a social system is an aspect of organizational theory with the following key assumptions: they are open systems, consisting of interdependent parts, which interact with each other and the environment. Further, social systems are goal oriented, have people, structure, culture, norms, and are political, conceptual, and relative. Hoy and Miskel pointed out that all of these assumptions "suggest that a school consists of a number of important elements or subsystems that affect organizational behavior" (p. 23). All schools are open systems, although the degree of interaction with the environment may vary. Schools consist of people, are goal

oriented, work through forms of coordinated effort, and interact with the external environment. Schools use four kinds of inputs from the environment: human resources, financial resources, physical resources, and information resources. According to Lunenberg (2010):

Human resources include administrative and staff talent, labor, and the like. Financial resources are the capital the school/school district uses to finance both ongoing and long-term operations. Physical resources include supplies, materials, facilities, and equipment. Information resources are knowledge, curricula, data, and other kinds of information utilized by the school/school district. (p. 2)

It becomes the role of the principal to manage, coordinate, and utilize these resources to meet the demands of their work. The resources may function as a constraint given the degree to which a leader has control over resource existence and allocation. The process by which principals make choices is considered the throughput, or transformation. This transformation ultimately leads to output as evidenced by the performance, product, or services that are actualized. In the school setting, outputs are the attainment of goals or objectives, such as successful implementation of the CCSS. In this way, outputs may be the growth and achievement levels of students, teacher capacity and performance to implement the standards, or job satisfaction.

Through the open-systems perspective, the environment and the organization affect and are influenced by one another. According to open-systems theory, schools interact with the environment, but need structure deal with the inputs they receive (Lunenburg, 2010). The structure is created by the organizational processes that exist. Figure 3 depicts the feedback loop between the outputs and the transformational process.

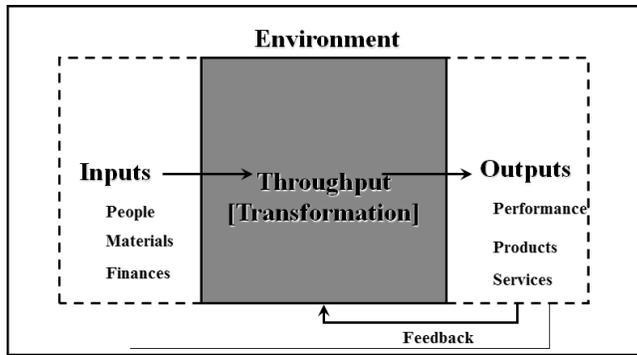


Figure 3. Open systems with feedback loop (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 18).

Two key features of the open-systems model relevant for exploring the CCSS are feedback and environment. Feedback can be positive or negative and is used to influence how the inputs are perceived and the transformation process unfolds. For example, negative feedback about resource allocation may affect the ability to implement particular standards of the Common Core in a classroom. The link between the open-systems model and demands, constraints, and choices comes from the environment. According to Lunenberg (2010):

The environment in the open systems model takes on added significance today in a climate of policy accountability. The social, political, and economic contexts in which school administrators work are marked by pressures at the local, state, and federal levels. Thus, school administrators today find it necessary to manage and develop —internal operations while concurrently monitoring the environment and anticipating and responding to —external demands. (p. 3)

This description of the environment of schools as an open system clarifies and extends the argument that demands and constraints are significant influences on instructional leadership choices. Each system has its own demands and constraints, which simultaneously interact with other systems in the school. In highlighting this interaction, Lunenberg went on to state:

School administrators often face mandated programs that do not meet the changing demographics of their student population. Teachers are often bound by

union contracts that conflict with the norms of their particular school or school district. Superintendents are expected to respond to federal mandates even though resources are scarce. Zero-tolerance policies may require expelling a student, even though it may not be in the best interest of the student to miss school for an extended period of time. And educational leaders are faced with ongoing pressures to show good results on standardized achievement tests, while at the same time dealing with a growing number of management duties, such as budgeting, hiring personnel, labor relations, and site committees resulting from school-based management initiatives. (p. 3)

Figure 4 depicts the open systems for the social systems of schools model.

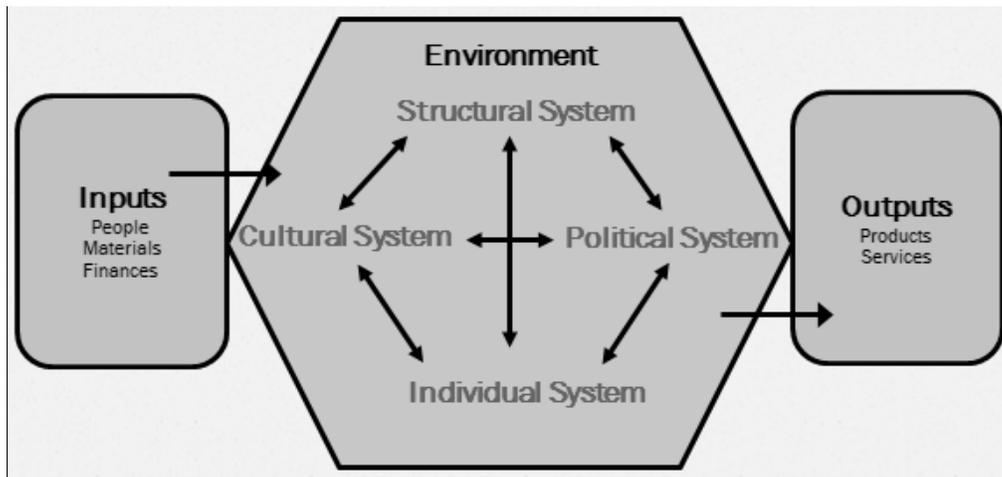


Figure 4. Social systems of schools (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 32).

In order to understand the application of the open-systems model to the study of principal leadership choices, an explanation of the four key systems within the model is required.

Structural system

Schools are structured by bureaucratic expectations as well as the hierarchy of roles and responsibilities. The expectations and goals of the school district determine the positions, offices, and tasks that exist. At the school level, the principal has clear roles and responsibilities to govern their work as established by organizational rules.

According to Hoy and Miskel (2008) “rules and regulations are provided to guide

decision making” (p. 26). The structural system may have constraining effect in dictating how the work is performed and the resources available to meet job requirements.

The demands experienced by the principal are on a continuum within the bureaucratic system. There are times where demands are inflexible or mandatory and must be enacted as an employee. In other circumstances principals have flexibility in how to execute their role. As Hoy and Miskel (2008) pointed out, this continuum can be seen in the way that teachers on a grade level team all have the same curriculum, yet implement it with their own style. At the level of the principal, the structural system frames how leaders manage the variety of expectations assigned. The structural system does not exist in isolation and interacts with the other systems. For example, the culture of a school and the individual motivations of a principal would likely influence how the leadership role is manifested within the district structure.

Individual system

The roles and responsibilities identified by the structural system are important, but do not wholly remove the influence of individual beliefs, values, and expectations. Hoy and Miskel stated that “behavior is a function of the interaction of bureaucratic role expectations and the relevant work orientations of the organizational member” (p. 26). Each principal may examine the demands and constraints that exist and make instructional leadership choices as a result of individual preferences.

Organizations are comprised of members, each with personal ideologies and principles about themselves, the job they are asked to perform, and the organization. In the context of the structural system, individual interactions and reactions do not always conform to the structures that exist in the district. Hoy and Miskel (2008) described this

cognitive process as “the individual’s use of mental representations to understand the job in terms of perception, knowledge, and expected behavior” (p. 26). This suggests that the way individuals think about their work informs the way they experience the organization; the perceptions of the individual are their reality.

The interaction between the individual and the organization can be seen in the behaviors that occur. This suggests that individuals work within the parameters of the organization, but conduct the application of the assigned tasks with different levels of implementation. Hoy and Miskel (2008) described the process of teacher evaluations as evidence of this interactional effect. For example, the way a principal chose to implement Common Core may be influenced by the district policies on resource distribution and how each principal chose to allocate funds for professional development. Each principal may differ in the type of training, scope of materials ordered, and those differences could be influenced by individual motivation. Hoy and Miskel suggested that the qualitative differences in behavior are the result of individual needs and how those needs are either met or unsatisfied by the work environment. This interaction between the individual, the workplace, and other employees is synergistic and either reinforces or challenges the beliefs, values, and ideals of the individual. Ideally, individuals in an organization are aligned in their understanding of the work and commitment to the expectations of the jobs they possess as seen through the culture of the work place.

Cultural system

Each school has a distinct culture that emerges from the interactions that occur between and among the principal, teachers, staff, students, and families. Hoy and Miskel stated, “In a school, shared beliefs and informal norms [among members] have a

significant impact on behavior. Culture provides members with a commitment to beliefs and values that are beyond themselves” (p. 28). The choices of principals may be influenced by the values and orientations of the school.

Culture, or the way in which an organization feels, is influenced by a number of variables. These variables include the practices surrounding communication, feedback structures, formal and informal processes, and a sense of belonging. Hoy and Miskel described culture as subset of identity that “when the culture is strong, so is [individual] identification with the group and the influence of the group” (p. 28). The impact of these variables and the power they create from within the organization is tied to the messages members receive about their behavior. For example, while there may be structural expectations for resource allocation and individual beliefs about how funds should be spent, informal conversations or school practices may reveal shared orientations around a modified approach that principals then adopt. This effect demonstrates the powerful force that organizational culture can have on behavior. In addition, the culture of an organization often provides norms, or a ways in which employees approach change. This includes attitudes toward collaboration, a collective responsibility for success, and opportunities for learning and reflection. While structure is the framework of the social system, individuals are the personal aspect, and culture is the collective component, politics represent the underlying power dynamics that exist.

Political system

Hoy and Miskel (2008) stated “structure provides formal authority, culture generates informal authority; and the individual brings the authority of expertise to the organization” (p. 28). However, politics are a contrasting element that is often informal

and not focused on overarching organizational gains. In the structure of schools, principals may seek power among peers, aspire to greater leadership, respond to students or community stakeholders, or desire recognition for themselves or their schools. These political motivations are designed to benefit the individual or group, and can often be at the expense of the organization.

Political motivation is an expected element of any organizational system and must be understood as a factor that can influence individual behavior, policies, and culture. The influence of politics may be viewed as divisive and guided by the desire to accrue or contain power and obtain personal gain. Hoy and Miskel (2008) described this subsystem in an organization as “a mass of competing power groups, each seeking to influence policy in terms of its own interest, or, in terms of its own distorted image of the [organization’s] interest” (p. 29). This suggests that the choices principals make to act may be influenced in ways that conflict with the organization or benefit the individual at a personal or school level. This includes a desire to keep stakeholder groups satisfied so that supervisors do not view principal leadership unfavorably. It may also include attempts to respond to community demands in order to lessen the constraints on time needed to address the concerns of students and families.

Each of the four elements of social systems are aspects within the organization that interact with one another. This means that isolating demands, constraints, or choices as a reflection of only one system is unlikely as a principal’s perception can reflect multiple systems at once. The systems interact with one another and the individual, however organizations do not exist in a vacuum. Therefore an additional level of interaction between the individual and the surrounding environment is present.

Understanding the influence of environment is helpful in order to consider how demands and constraints are transformed into instructional leadership choices.

Environment

Hoy and Miskel (2008) describe the environment as “the systems source of energy. It provides resources, values, technology, demands, and history---all of which place constraints and opportunities on organizational action” (p. 30). Behavior in organizations is a function of the dynamic interaction each system element has within the constraints of the environment. The quality of the interaction between the systems, the individual, and the environment created by CCSS implementation may help to identify the influence of contextual forces on choice outcomes. The interactions between the systems, the individual, and the environment are dynamic, however there are predicted ways the systems correspond to one other.

Hoy and Miskel (2008) posited that, to understand and predict the behavior in schools, an exploration of the congruence postulate is required. Congruence refers to the way that each system corresponds and links with one another. This postulate states that “other things being equal, the greater the degree of congruence among the elements of the system, the more effective the system” (p. 31). Figure 5 depicts the relationship between each system and outcomes for congruence.

Congruence Relationship		Interaction Assumptions	
Individual	↔	Structural	The needs of the individual will either meet or be in conflict with the bureaucratic expectations of the organization
Individual	↔	Cultural	The individual needs will either align or be in conflict with the organizational values
Individual	↔	Political	The individual needs will either be supported by or in conflict with the power relations that exist in the organization
Structural	↔	Cultural	The bureaucratic expectations will either reinforce or degrade the organizational values
Structural	↔	Political	The bureaucratic expectations will either undermine or support the development of power relationships
Political	↔	Cultural	The power relationships will either conflict with or support the shared orientation of the organization

Figure 5. [Modified] congruence of key elements, Hoy & Miskel (2008, p. 31).

Hoy and Miskel's (2008) social systems model suggests that, as principals experience Common Core implementation, they will interact with each system, receive feedback, and subsequently make instructional leadership choices. As a result, the school as a social system provides a foundation from which the perceptions of demands, constraints, and choices of principals could be effectively explored.

Integrated Model: Demands, Constraints, and Choices in an Open System

The model depicted in figure 6 captures an integrated framework of Rosemary Stewart's (1982) demands, constraints, and choices model with Hoy and Miskel's (2008) social systems. In the model, the Common Core functions as the environmental context framing the organization. The structural, cultural, individual, and political systems are lenses to capture the perceptions of demands, constraints, and choices. The way each of the systems interacts with other systems and the individual functions as the process that transforms perceptions into instructional leadership choices.

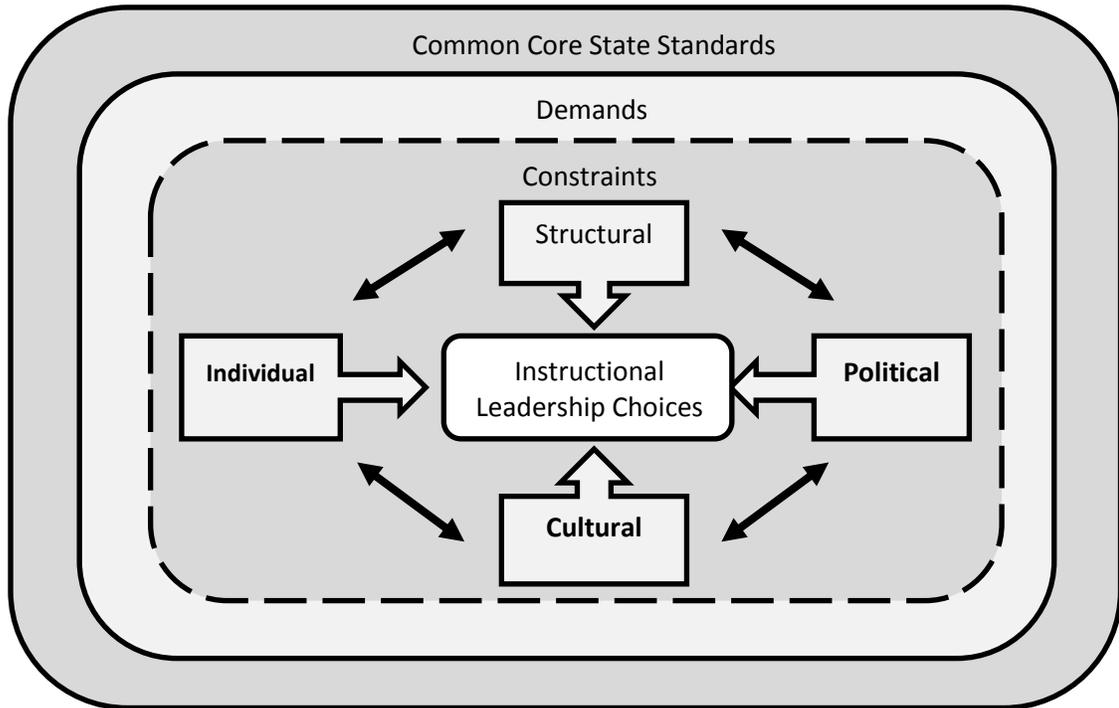


Figure 6. Demands, constraints, and instructional leadership choices in an open system.

This integrated model has the following three key assumptions:

- All principals facing similar demands do not always perceive the same demands or constraints, nor do they make equivalent choices in how to spend their time, how to lead, and what to emphasize.
- Each school leader feels differently about their role and the priorities they feel are important given demands and constraints at the local school level.
- The influence of each system and the interaction with other systems and the individual is variable and may create different instructional leadership choices.

The fluid and shifting nature of the open system suggests that perception is an influential factor that contributes to unpredictable outcomes. Hoy and Miskel (2008)

emphasized this point when they noted that infinite variations could occur “as bureaucracy, subgroups, and individuals modify goals, express values, and exert power through leadership, decision making, and communication” (p. 33). The ability to understand the meaning of an event, such as Common Core implementation, could be understood through exploring the individual choices in relationship to the system elements, the transformational influence of the environment, and the district context. In the integrated model [Figure 6], demands and constraints are constant factors in the background of each of the systems of schools.

An examination of the literature revealed that demands and constraints had established categories of influence. Furthermore, choices included professional knowledge and skills aligned with particular instructional leadership actions.

Demands

The expanding role of the principal demands extensive time, commitment and, some might argue unrealistic expectations. Principals serve in a variety of roles, including building manager and instructional leader (Walker, 2009). The proportion of time that each role demands is influenced by the contextual factors of the school. In addition, the CCSS presents an overarching variable that guides the scope and degree of each role in practice. As Walker stated, “Clearly, the role of the principal continues to expand and new responsibilities are added; however few are deleted” (p. 222). A number of researchers have devoted their careers to an exploration of principal leadership in order to discover the way in which these roles are translated into leadership practice (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood & Jantzi,

1991; Heck & Hallinger, 2005), but none examined those same choices through the experience of a reform environment.

Researchers continued to study the work of principals in an attempt to examine not only effectiveness, but the scope of job demands. In their book, *School Leadership that Works*, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) identified 21 categories of behaviors that are responsibilities of school leaders. In their analysis, 69 studies that investigated the relationship between the principal and student outcomes were explored. The data on the relationship was mixed, but there was overwhelming evidence that the work of the principal included a myriad of demands. These included operating as a change agent, fostering shared beliefs, focusing on goals, knowledge of curriculum and instruction, relationships, resources, and discipline, to name a few.

Schools have changed over the past 30 years and with those changes came expanding needs for the skill set of principals. As Townsend (2011) stated:

Through all of this change, increasing responsibilities have been placed on school leaders, head teachers and principals, to now not only manage the school by implementing decisions made outside the school, but to lead the school to higher or better levels of performance as well. Forms of leadership originally used to identify what happened in business crossed over into the educational framework and we started to hear about leadership that was visionary, passionate, adaptive, invitational, servant, transactional or transformational. These were joined in more recent years by terms that were directed at what was happening, or supposed to happen, in schools. In the USA, the catchword was ‘instructional leadership’ and more recently in the UK the term ‘leadership for learning’ has been used. In many places, the pressure on the idea of the head teacher or principal as the single leader of the school has led to new terms such as distributed leadership, shared leadership, democratic leadership team leadership or teacher leadership. (p. 91)

As this quote suggests, the changes in schools require complex understandings of the nature of the work and how to use skillful leadership to meet school needs.

A number of key roles and functions have been attributed to effective leadership. These include working with staff and students to focus on goals, promoting high expectations, curriculum monitoring, involving stakeholders in the operation of the school and the supervision and evaluation of staff (Blase & Blase, 2000; Hallinger, 2003). The role acknowledges the demands on principals, however the way in which each principal plays out these roles may be influenced by their perception of the constraints they face in their work. One principal may find that they can easily monitor the curriculum, whereas another may find the CCSS daunting and, due to other work responsibilities, pull away from monitoring as a result of a lack of confidence in knowing what to expect from staff. There were three key areas of the research that focused on the primary demands for the role of principal: 1) building manager and instructional leader; 2) professional developer, and 3) vision and culture shaper.

Demand: Building manager and instructional leader. Through the mid-1980s, research on school leadership focused on the role and activities of a single member of the school community—the school principal (Bridges, 1982). The principal’s role historically had been that of a generalist who, through collaboration, distributed and coordinated leadership opportunities that focused on curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Corderio, 1994). This generalist approach balanced leadership with management responsibilities and presented ongoing challenges for school administrators due to the fact that that management tasks were more explicit and procedural compliance was typically a high priority for district-level administrators (Heck & Hallinger, 2005; Marks & Nance, 2007). In describing the managerial considerations that principals face, Sergiovanni (1991) stated:

Schools must be run effectively and efficiently if they are to survive. Policies must be in place. Budgets must be set. Teachers must be assigned. Classes must be scheduled. Reports must be completed. Standardized tests must be given. Supplies must be purchased. The school must be kept clean. Students must be protected from violence. Classrooms must be orderly. These are essential tasks that guarantee the survival of the school as an organization. (pp. 329-330)

In addition to the management demands of their work, principals also faced challenges from the multiple accountability contexts, factors of the school, and the organization (Marks & Nance, 2007). Traditional responsibilities of principals, such as ensuring a safe environment, managing the budget, and maintaining discipline are likely to remain as demands of the job (Walker, 2009). Programming has increased and principals must now hire and supervise more people, enforce new policies, create new procedures, and provide support for the programs and associated activities, without the reduction of other responsibilities (Wahlgren, 2003, p. 44). Non-instructional responsibilities, including greater professional accountability and increased expectations regarding home-school communication, contribute to the complexity of the principalship (Drake & Roe, 1999). The principal served in many distinct roles over time, moving from building manager toward instructional leader. Although it was widely recognized that each shift was accompanied by the changing landscape of principal expectations, there was little research to offer insight into the impact of current demands on the work of principals and the choices they made.

The emphasis and belief in instructional leadership as the overarching demand and priority was seen in the training, credentialing, evaluation, and research base of information about school leadership (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011). Researchers consistently focused on the nature of instructional leadership demands (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Instructional leadership focused

predominantly on the role of the school principal in “coordinating, controlling, supervising, and developing curriculum and instruction in the school (Hallinger, 2003, p. 331).

The relationship between instructional leadership and building management was seen as a conflicting demand. The Maryland State Department of Education Taskforce on the Principalship (2000) emphasized this point and stated:

Historically, the principal has been expected to be both a manager and an instructional leader. For too many years, however, principals have been overwhelmed with the managerial aspects of the job. With the advent of increased accountability and the need to focus on raising student achievement, the principal’s primary role has shifted much more to that of instructional leader. At the same time, additional support has not been provided to principals to meet these expanded expectations. (p. 9)

Building managers are typically responsible for performing the purely administrative tasks necessary to maintain school function and stability, including planning, gathering and dispersing information, budgeting, hiring, scheduling, and maintaining the building (Cuban, 1988). Hallinger (1992) argued that since the 1980s, not much had changed in the principal’s role, despite rhetoric touting the importance of instructional leadership. Regardless, school administrators could and did engage in instructional leadership, although at different proportions (Blase & Blase, 2002; Heck et al., 1990).

Instructional leadership was clearly noted as a demand and expectation for principals and a characteristic of effective schools (Blase & Blase, 2000; Marzano et al., 2005). Walker (2009) noted that tasks associated with instructional leadership were focused on “curriculum, instruction, and assessment: student work and supervision; employee supervision; observation and walk-throughs; feedback; parent conversations;

decision-making committee work; teaching/modeling; professional development; planning, curriculum, and assessment; and celebrations” (p. 217). However, what was not clear was how each school and each leader transformed these demands in to choices given the unique systems within their school and the constraints they perceived in their work.

Demand: Professional developer. One of the key features of principal capacity was a demand to lead extensive professional development. In addition to knowing pedagogy, principals must be current in contemporary theories of learning and be able to use their knowledge to promote approaches to teaching and learning matched to current needs (Botha, 2004). The principal as a director of professional development was a relatively new role constrained by individual experience or capacity to move from building manager to instructional leader. According to Botha, principals must model themselves as a teacher of teachers where conceptual and theoretical knowledge are as important as experiential knowledge. Botha identified the important areas a principal must be well-versed in order to create a culture of professional development. These included:

1. Detailed knowledge about the individual and collective progress made by learners;
2. Detailed understanding of the local context and background characteristics of learners;
3. Detailed understanding of the preferred learning styles of learners; and
4. Knowledge about different kinds of interventions and their effects on learner learning (p. 240).

Transitioning to the CCSS requires leadership that is well versed in the learning and teaching demands of the standards and how to effectively monitor implementation (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2012). Implementing the CCSS demanded fundamental shifts in how schools prepare students to be college and career ready. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) noted that the Common Core initiative called for a significant lifting of learning expectations focused on deeper understanding of content and higher levels of thinking and application. As a result, ASCD developed a professional development institute in order to directly address the questions being asked by school and district leaders about how to meet the demands of CCSS implementation.

During implementation of curriculum reform, principals are not only required to lead and oversee professional development, but monitor execution. Research indicated that effective principals monitor staff, however many principals are learning as they lead. The term instructional leader no longer means the principal knows the most, but in order to learn alongside teachers, principals must be engaged more directly in teacher planning and instruction. It is unclear if the demands of the principalship provided time to engage deeply with staff, if principals that chose to engage deeply shift other roles, or if the culture of the school supported the ability to lead in this way. Given the understanding of the varied expectations for school leaders, establishing a culture and vision are significant overarching demands placed on school principals.

Demand: Vision and cultural shaper. The establishment of a common vision was identified as a critical factor for effective schools (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Visionary leadership becomes even more critical in a climate of reform and

change. In her two-year study focused on principals' experiences of leading change in their schools, Fennell (2005) found that principals working in a reform environment were required to reflect critically on their practice and to develop new ways of accomplishing the work demanded by their role. All the principals in Fennell's study reported that having a common vision with staff was essential in order to develop the professional learning community required to support the change. Furthermore, according to Carylton and Fisher (2012), leaders that created a culture of trust allowed an environment to emerge that supported the type of risk-taking necessary to make changes to practice. In order to focus a school on the conditions necessary for teaching and learning to occur, principals must spend time establishing the kind of environment that supports excellence across content areas.

Principal leadership has a strong and significant relationship with school conditions, the experience of members in the school, and overall school culture (Leithwood & Janzi, 2000). Heck et al. (1996) indicated that positive culture was a variable that enhanced school effectiveness. Engels, Hotton, Devos, Bouckennooghe, and Aelterman (2008) studied primary school principals to investigate the relationship between school leadership and culture. Engels et al. (2008) stated:

An important number of today's principals feel they lack the competences to live up to the performance standards that have been set; that they have too many different tasks to complete their jobs; and/or that there is little support from the environment in which the school and its principal have to function. (p. 159)

Facing the overwhelming demands of the principalship, a focus on school culture may yield the greatest benefit. Fullan (2001) argued that principals should focus on transforming the culture of the school in order to ensure that teaching and learning functions effectively. Yet, understanding the culture that a principal wants to create and

the actions associated with realizing that vision are, unto themselves, an additional demand.

Leadership actions designed to support the emotional state of staff members are directly tied to the cultural system of a school. Principals must establish a culture of trust that supports a sense of self-efficacy and a belief that the work can be done because the leader will support staff along the way. This may mean that principals have to shift their expectations of staff or adjust common practices in order to provide the intellectual space for risk-taking and learning. Effectively managing the change process requires skills in planning deliberate and strategic actions. However, this must be paired with strong and supportive leadership that can alleviate feelings of uncertainty or fear among staff. Understanding which of the structural demands of the work can be shifted requires additional consideration by a leader to identify how to meet the expectations of the principalship, while choosing some practices to keep and others to pause or discontinue.

Some of the requirements of CCSS implementation may have been within the scope of current demands, however the existence of the CCSS created new demands due to the requirements it placed on schools. Effective leadership for CCSS implementation required a continued focus on vision, but asked leaders to shift the vision toward a new outcome of college and career readiness. Leaders that had yet to develop a shared orientation with teachers toward this goal might struggle because implementation of the CCSS cannot be done alone (Holiday & Smith, NAESP, 2012). The CCSS changed expectations for student performance and subsequently required large scale reform of staff beliefs, practices, and expectations. The ability to reform a school in the way required by the CCSS demanded that leaders create collaborative teams in a targeted and

relatively rapid fashion, given the timeline required for full implementation. Teamwork must become a non-negotiable because the changes wrought by the standards are of such magnitude that school leaders need to build the collective capacity of the entire staff through defined, school wide instructional practices (Carmichael, Martino, Porte-Magee, & Wilson, 2010). This is likely to only be accomplished by creating a culture that supports and values collaboration.

The demand on a principal to direct the culture of the school around specific outcomes is influenced by a range of constraint variables. A number of studies over the past 20 years have focused on examining the effects of school leadership practices and variables (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Heck et al., 1990; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Marks & Printy, 2003) and results indicated that the effects of leadership were often indirect, if not difficult to measure (Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000). Research supported the belief that principals' leadership, as mediated through the development of school-level conditions and processes, had an effect on student learning (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

Leithwood and Jantzi (1991) conceptualized the role of transformational leadership as the actions a principal took to shape the culture in a way that supported change and reform. According to their work, one of the main tasks of school principals was to "help create a working environment in which teachers collaborate and identify with the school's mission and goals (Witzier, Bosker, & Kruger, 2003, p. 403). The research tended to focus on culture as an outgrowth or a target of principal actions, but did not necessarily address how they intersected and influenced leadership choices. The demands of the principalship are centered on increasing student achievement. Although

research highlighted an indirect effect between principals and student outcomes, this effect was directly influenced by the interactions leaders had with staff and students and the school setting (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000; Witziers et al., 2003).

There was a direct relationship between the CCSS as a demand on principal leadership and the interaction with the cultural system of schools. As the conversation on student outcomes shifts toward college and career readiness, school culture must support the ability to attain that vision. This requires principals to intentionally work toward changing school culture. Although leading schools and supporting culture was an existing demand, the large scale cultural reform demanded by the CCSS effectively restructured the role of the principal. Instead of being adult-focused, top-down, and hierarchical, schools must become student-focused, more collaborative, and less hierarchical to move ahead.

Constraints

Schools and school systems are confronted with a myriad of constraints, both internal and external, that make reform difficult. In addition to human and capital resources, there are union contracts, materials, equipment, facilities, district policy, and attitudes toward change that could simultaneously constrain the work of leaders.

According to Starr (2011):

The enormous complexity of schools, their numerous stakeholders with competing interests and conflicting ideologies, constant policy change and political intervention, unfavourable media and political commentary, an increasingly diverse student population, and their busy, messy quotidian of expected and unexpected events, makes major change difficult and sometimes impossible to implement. These difficulties are exacerbated in the context of ongoing educational restructuring and reform. (p. 646)

The constraining forces that principals face do not change the fact that the work of CCSS implementation must be completed. Spillane et al. (2001) defined leadership as one that “involves the identification, acquisition, allocation, coordination, and use of the social, material, and cultural resources necessary to establish the conditions for the possibility of teaching and learning” (p. 24). The way that a principal considers the resources frames their thinking about the constraints and influences the way they do the work required. The primary constraints that influence principal leaders are time, resources, and attitude.

Constraint: Time. Time is an intangible factor that influences the work of the principal. Time may be considered from the perspective of policy demands for implementation, day-to-day operational needs, or intellectual development toward understanding and supporting change initiatives. Previous research on a principal’s time was either ethnographic or self-reporting from a small sample, making generalizations difficult. In addition, no research on time was completed in relationship to the implementation of reform.

Hornig, Klasik, and Loeb (2010) examined the relationship between time spent on work activities and school outcomes for high school principals in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Using survey methodology and time-use observational data collected during one week of the school year, principals’ actions were coded based on list of 43 tasks that covered administration, organization management, day-to-day instruction, instructional program, internal relations, and external relations. The observational data was compared against climate survey data from students, staff, and families in order to examine the relationship between principal actions and school outcomes. Results

indicated that the majority of a principal's time was spent on administration (27.5%), organization management (21%), other tasks (19%), and internal relations (15%). Over 54% of the day was spent in the school office and 40% in locations around the school building. The aim of this analysis was to examine the relationship between the time principals spent on varied activities and outcomes, however it also suggests that time is a constraining force that has the potential to help or hinder the ability to implement the CCSS.

In a review of the school principal's workday, Spillane, Camburn, and Pareja (2007) found that 63.4% of time was spent on administrative tasks, 22.2% on curriculum and instruction, 5.8% on professional development activities, and 8.7% on fostering relationships. Understanding time as a constraint frames how it may influence the subsequent choices that principals make in their leadership practice. Bourdieu (1981) terms this "the urgency of practice" (p. 310) as a reflection of the interaction between the individual and the situation. Each principal may weigh the possible choices and ultimately make a determination about what is possible given the time available.

The growing and varied aspects of the job create the frustration and tension caused by a limited amount of time (DiPaola et al., 2003). One of the primary time constraints in Maryland at the time of this study was the requirement that CCSS be implemented by August 2013. The CCSS required a rapid shift in the transforming the culture of schools around the how and what students should know and be able to do, as well as the role of the teacher, collaborative teams, and the principal.

Constraint: Attitude. Rosemary Stewart (1982) highlighted attitude and perception as constraining variables in the work of a manager. Principals may shift their

roles based on the attitudes held about the demands and constraints of their work.

Additionally, attitudes of subordinates that are in conflict with particular demands may influence the ability to create change.

Trider and Leithwood (1988) designed a framework for guiding research on the principal's role. In their work they looked not only at influences on principal practices, but also at the dominant patterns of behavior and how classroom and school variables influenced outcomes. Trider and Leithwood found four dominant patterns among principals: systematic problem solving, school curriculum management, nurturing interpersonal relations, and monitoring administrative procedures and policies. Each pattern was influenced by the individual, the system, and the school context. The researchers described the differences in behaviors as a manifestation of the orientation of each principal based on the needs of the school and their own values and beliefs, referred to as personal context factors. Principals were likely to make choices in alignment with policy expectations if they felt the policy was valuable for students, they had experienced past success with similar policies, and the policy was easily integrated into current work.

Coldren and Spillane (2007) investigated principal instructional leadership activities through the lens of understanding how particular facets of context defined leadership practice. They found that the influence of school context interacted in such a way as to define leadership practice. In their single case study they identified the influence of personal beliefs, goals, and values on the tools and practices utilized to lead. The particular areas emphasized by the principal were understood by teachers and influenced the subsequent teaching focus teachers chose in their classrooms. This

suggests that there is a trickle-down effect of principal leadership, whereby the attitude of the principal drives the priorities of the staff.

As a leader, principals must develop the commitment of teachers toward embracing and engaging with the CCSS. Teacher attitude toward CCSS may be variable, as many have seen standards adoption and implementation in their work. The CCSS is rigorous and aligned to higher expectations, however educators may be struggling to internalize it. Bolman and Deal (1991) further described how attitude can constrain the way leaders think about situations and transform the choices around completing the work required. This transformational process emphasizes the interaction between internal and external constraints and the individual. As stated by Hunter, Bedell, and Mumford (2007), “Although leaders may at times be characterized by singular events, leadership is rarely, if ever, the result of a sole action or behavior. Rather, leadership is a process, a series of activities and exchanges engaged in over time and under varied circumstances” (p. 440). Yukl (2006) agreed with this assessment and criticized the literature for ignoring or omitting the cognitive and behavioral activities that occurred as leadership took place. In addition, the studies appeared to emphasize the exploration of specific tasks at a set point in time, creating missed opportunities to understand the relationship between the principal and constraints over time.

According to the Wallace Foundation (2010) in their report *The Three Essentials: Improving Schools* there was a need for districts to recognize how conditions are connected to the work of principals. Their investigation involved 35 interviews with a variety of school leaders, including superintendents and school board members. They concluded that, “Plainly put, the problem is this: Districts and states are failing to create

the conditions that make it possible for principals to lead school improvement effectively” (p. ii). In this way, principals may have limited capacity to transform the constraints they face into choices or actions that can positively impact school success.

Constraint: Resources. Resources are considered the staffing and financial supports provided to school principals. The budget challenges present at the state and local level added additional constraints on principals. The priority for funding continued to be on maintaining the instructional program for students, leaving little discretionary funding for technology or other resources that may support CCSS implementation (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2012). Further, the funding sources that supported robust professional development programs, substitute release time, and staffing to provide collaborative planning were reduced or eliminated.

There were three basic areas of cost to successfully implement the CCSS according to the Fordham Institute (Murphy, Regenstein, & McNamara, 2012):

1. Instructional materials (e.g., textbooks, teacher guides, digital content) that are needed to help teachers to teach and students to learn the new material;
2. Student assessments (including the administration, scoring and reporting of results, but *not* test development), which should help teachers understand how well their students are learning the standards, as well as serve various summative purposes such as accountability for students and schools;
3. Professional development to help teachers understand what is expected of them (as well as of their students) (p. 16).

According to Murphy, et. al. funding models for each state must account for implementation costs to carry out the CCSS. There are three possible approaches to funding schools during the CCSS reform:

1. Business as Usual. This “traditional” approach to implementation is defined here as buying hard-copy textbooks, administering annual student assessments on paper, and delivering in-person professional development to all teachers. It is not a cheap approach, though the price tags associated with it are quite familiar.
2. Bare Bones. This is the lowest-cost alternative, employing open-source materials, annual computer-administered assessments, and online professional development via webinars and modules.
3. Balanced Implementation. This is a blend of approaches, some of which may be more effective than others while also reducing costs. It uses a mix of instructional materials (e.g., teacher self-published texts and/or district-produced materials), both interim and summative assessments, and a hybrid system of professional development (e.g., train-the-trainers) (p. 2).

National estimates ranged from \$3.0 to \$12.1 billion respectively for CCSS implementation. In Maryland, expenditures on instructional materials, assessment, and professional development approached \$80 million at the time of this study (Murphy, et. al). The minimum cost of implementation would be \$61.2 (bare bones), \$104.5 (balanced implementation), or \$252.0 (business as usual) million. According to the Fordham Institute, given the current economic challenges at a federal, state, and local level, funding resources would continue to be limited. The inability to have the resources

necessary to implement the CCSS with fidelity could be significant constraint on principals. In addition to financial resources, human resources must be considered.

Flexible use of staffing resources had the potential to impact CCSS implementation. Contractual agreements with teachers unions often constrain principal choices in who may be hired, how teachers are assigned, and the scope of associated job expectations (Donaldson, 2011). According to Horng and Loeb (2010), “Organizational management for instructional improvement means staffing a school with high-quality teachers and providing them the appropriate supports and resources to be successful in the classroom” (p. 67). Principals are expected to recognize effective teachers, understand the needs of their student community, and be able to design an instructional program that aligns with achieving state and local goals. The ability to hire, utilize, and manage staffing flexibly could be a significant constraint that can impact principal choices.

Constraint: Organizational hierarchy. Organizations and the system they exist within contain structure and order. The model of schools as an open system highlights the complex order of forces that comprise the hierarchy of school units. Figure 7 depicts the levels of hierarchy that exist within the organization.

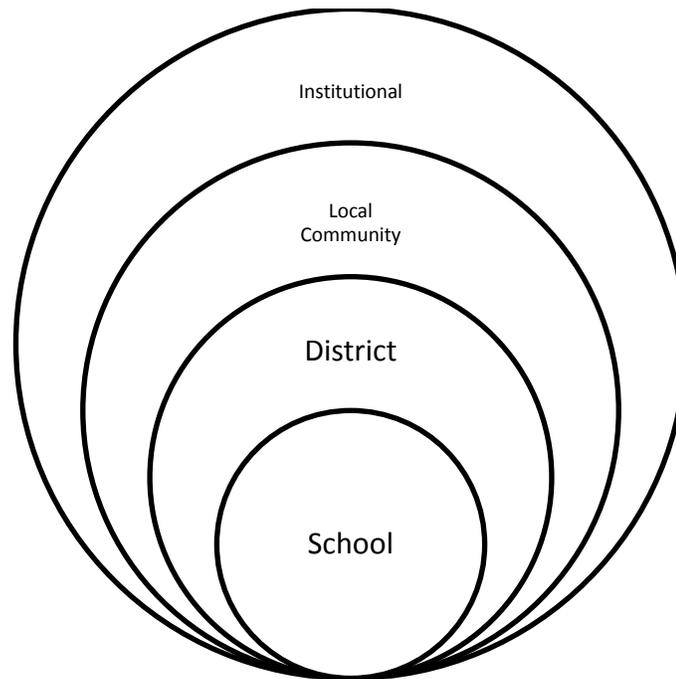


Figure 7. Level of open systems hierarchy (Adapted from Bowen, 2006).

Bowen (2006) described these subsystems as:

1. District Level: The administrative cadres of the chief administrator or school superintendent, curriculum offices, and central office departments charged with providing services and support through human and financial resources to local schools.
2. Local Community Level: The setting in which schools are located, including the physical infrastructure, community resources, demographics, community norms, and other constituencies of the school.
3. Institutional Level: The larger, non-local context that influence policies and practices at the local and school levels, including federal and state policies, labor unions, national standards, training programs, and marketplace dynamics (p. 65).

The existence of a school within a larger district, community, and institutional context provides inevitable constraints. At the district level school principals are required to meet the demands of the superintendent, their direct supervisors, and navigate the various departments directed with supporting the work of schools. Therefore leaders may be constrained by the political landscape that dictates how systems are activated. At the local community level, principals must consider the immediate needs and values of stakeholders and how to blend those with overarching demands. At an institutional level, the policies of CCSS implementation have compelled schools to focus on a particular topics regardless of other demands that exist. The importance of understanding these various constraints is helpful in differentiating how each constraint is experienced and influences the choices that principals make in their work.

Choices

Choice may be viewed as the flexibility an individual has in the content and style of their work (Stewart, 1989). One of the characteristics of leaders is the ability to identify choice in situations where others perceive little or none (Lowe, 2003, p. 194). Organizational bureaucracy, organizational values, school reform initiatives, leaders' proactivity, and formal training experiences influence the choices that principals make (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). In addition, the characteristics of the leaders themselves and organizational structures and processes hinder or moderate the impact of school leadership. As Leithwood and Jantzi stated, "a great deal of the educational leadership literature claims that the context in which leaders work is of enormous importance in determining what they do" (p. 184). This suggests that the CCSS will be implemented through a range of choices that exist and shift over time based on environmental context.

One way of considering how demands and constraints lead to choices is to think about the emergence of distributed leadership as a tool that principal's use. Distributed leadership requires a focus on not only the principal, but all members of the staff that have choices to act. The term has been used interchangeably to describe any form of shared, collaborative, or participatory leadership, however Spillane et al. (2001) viewed it as leadership that incorporated the activities of multiple groups of individuals to mobilize staff through the instructional change process. Spillane and Healy (2010) described leadership actions as "a product of the interactions among leaders, followers, and aspects of their situation" (p. 256). According to Harris and Spillane (2008), "the term 'distributed leadership' also has representational power. It represents the alternative approaches to leadership that have arisen because of increased external demands and pressures on schools" (p. 31). It is possible that principals may choose distributed leadership not because they believed it worked, but because it was the only way to meet the demands they faced.

In his synthesis of the literature on leadership, Spillane et al. (2004) indicated that tasks and functions were related to the managerial and instructional responsibilities of principals. However, Spillane et al. (2004) cautioned analyzing leadership merely through a review of the daily actions of leaders. He stated: "To gain insight on practice, we need to understand a task *as it unfolds* from the perspective and through the 'theories-in-use' of the practitioner" (p. 15). This suggests a need to look not just at the visible actions, but how principals arrive at choices by understanding the transformation of demands and constraints into actions. Hallinger and Heck (1996), in reviewing the empirical literature base in the field of principal leadership, identified the gap when they

stated, “researchers [in this domain] should forego the focus on school achievement as the outcome. Instead they should focus on the larger model of exogenous variables, principal leadership, and school-level variables” (p. 36). This research supports the existence of a relationship between demands, constraints, and choices that is influenced by the reform environment and systems that exist in schools.

Leadership choices can be varied and directly connected to the unique variables of the principal and school environment. Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010) examined the influence of four conceptual paths that schools used to affect outcomes (rational, emotions, organizational, family). Each path was comprised of variables that were demonstrated to have effects on student learning. Leithwood et al. (2010) theorized that leaders could increase student achievement by improving the conditions of the variables on each path. The rational path included classroom and school variables that were related to curriculum, teaching, and learning, such as professional development, feedback, and discipline. The emotions path included the human resource elements of feelings, effect of the individuals and the organization including collective efficacy and trust among staff and families. The organizational path included the structures, cultures, and policies that framed the relationship and interactions of school staff, such as working conditions, instructional time, and the presence of a professional learning community. Last, the family path included the variables that could and could not be influenced by schools such as parental education and support for the school at home. The results suggests that, as principals make choices in what tasks to focus on in their work, there are a range of practices that lead schools to improve student outcomes not centered on instruction.

Principal choices are influenced by the interaction leaders have with the school environment. Hallinger and Heck (1998) examined the empirical literature on principal effects between 1980 and 1995. In the 40 studies reviewed, they identified different models used to explore the relationship between principal leadership and student achievement. One of the models they uncovered, the reciprocal effect model, hypothesized that the relationship between the principal and the school environment was interactive. This suggests that principals adapt to their school and each interaction influences thinking and behavior over time. As a result, the CCSS could function as an influential background factor that changes what choices a principal makes in their work.

Given the demands to have principals function as instructional leaders, it is no surprise the research emphasized the distinct choices that principals must play in directing teaching and learning. Principals in more effective schools spend more time in the direct classroom supervision and support of teachers and working with teachers to coordinate the school's instructional program, solving instructional problems collaboratively, helping teachers secure resources, and providing staff development activities (Engels et al., 2008; Goldring & Pasternack, 1994; Marks & Printy, 2003). However, many principals may choose non-instructional leadership tasks or feel that the internal or external constraints of the environment prevent them from exercising this important role. It is unclear why, when given the same set of demands and constraints, some principals choose to focus on particular tasks and others do not. The idea that actions in support of instructional leadership should be a primary choice of principals is connected with the research on teacher effectiveness.

Teddlie, Kirby, and Stringfield (1989) examined the relationship between school and teacher effectiveness. In addition to identifying specific teacher behaviors at the classroom level that increased student achievement, they found school level factors, including the principal, influential variables on outcomes. Teddlie et al. (1989) found that effective schools were characterized by leaders that made choices to stay engaged with the classroom, focused on professional growth, protected instructional time, and emphasized curriculum expertise among staff. In the ineffective schools, the principal did not regularly visit classrooms except for evaluations and did not insist on a structure that focused the staff and students on academics.

Ylimaki (2012) conducted a critical ethnographic study of principals' curriculum leadership in four elementary schools in the wake of NCLB. The data revealed principals made specific choices to emphasize curriculum leadership and professional development over instructional leadership, based on their perceptions of the bureaucratic requirements of their work. The connection that Ylimaki made between NCLB and principal choices in some ways mirrored earlier results on working conditions found by Demerouti, Baaker, Nachreiner, and Schaufeli (2001). They examined the jobs demands resources model of burnout and concluded that "specific working conditions of a specific position merge, come into effect, and produce [these] reactions in its incumbents— independent of individual differences" (p. 510). Demerouti et al. (2001) found a direct path between the demands of the work environment, the experiential context, and choices made by each individual. They concluded that, to reduce exhaustion and disengagement, one should first provide for adequate job demands and job resources in the working environment by adequate job design and not try to change people's perceptions and

interpretations of their working conditions. This emphasizes the influence of the individual system on how leaders perceive the demands they face and make choices in how they focus their time. This research further suggests that the personal interpretations of the CCSS as a reform effort, the principals own perception of the demands or constraints, and individual school context factors could lead to highly unpredictable and variable outcomes in how the work of leading schools will occur.

Spillane (2007) emphasized the importance of the relationship between the individual and the environment when he stated:

In order to understand leadership practice, leaders' thinking and behaviour and their situation need to be considered *together*, in an integrated framework. leaders' practice (both as thinking and activity) is distributed across the *situation of leadership*, that is, it emerges through interaction with other people and the environment. (p. 8)

Spillane (2007) highlighted the importance of the relationship between leadership activities as interdependent and interactional. For example, the decision to focus on specific instructional skills in the classroom likely arose from an analysis of student achievement data. The decision to review student achievement data likely arose from the expectation of principals to report on student learning. The decision to report on student learning likely arose from state and local accountability mandates. This vignette demonstrates how visible actions must be unpacked and dissected in order to see how demands and constraints interact with the environment and ultimately influence principal choices to lead.

The research suggests that choices are the result of the interaction of the individual and the systems of the school. Understanding which system presents the

largest influence on choices offers an opportunity understand how principals make decisions to lead.

Instructional Leadership

Throughout the literature on demands, constraints, and choices was a portrait of the principal as instructional leader. Instructional leadership is not only a job role, but a set of skills. The expectation that principals understand content, pedagogy, process, and product as they activate their thinking are central to the ability to lead a school through curricular reform.

The importance of instructional leadership skills was well defined in the research (Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Rowe, 2004). Building management is no longer sufficient for principals to lead effectively. As Brazer (2013) stated:

[Instructional leadership] requires leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions that move schools to an inquiry footing and a path of continuous improvement with respect to teaching and learning. Instruction should be at the heart of leadership behavior that involve establishing vision, mission and goals; building a positive culture; and creating positive relationships with parents and the community. (p. 647)

Instructional leadership includes a depth of understanding about pedagogy and content that is broad, robust, and responsive to the changing demands and constraints principals face.

Leithwood et al. (2004) and Hallinger (2011) identified a number of practices that described instructional leadership. This included defining the mission and vision, designing professional development aligned with achieving school goals, supporting the school culture, managing the instructional program, and engaging stakeholders in school improvement efforts. Brazer and Bauer (2013) proposed a model where instructional leadership was the focus of principal preparation programs. In their research they

provided a summary definition of instructional leadership that stated, “Instructional leadership is the effort to improve teaching and learning for Pk-12 students by managing effectively, addressing the challenge of diversity, guiding teacher learning, and fostering organizational learning” (p. 650). The ability to manage the demands that instructional leadership requires is integrated with an understanding of the influence that central office and district leaders have on the experience of the school principal.

Principals engaged in reform movements craft school cultures that establish the conditions to support change (Deal & Peterson, 1998). This included demonstrating instructional leadership that is responsive to the school context, supports teacher growth and practice, and minimizes barriers to implementation (Datnow & Castellano, 2001). Instructional leaders must not only paint a portrait of a new vision for teaching and learning, but know when to push forward or pull back. Principals must navigate the demands and constraints in order to ensure actions match priorities. “Even when principals are supportive of reform, their ability to provide effective leadership may be hampered by their own experience, training, or beliefs” (p. 222).

Instructional leadership interacts and is influenced by the context of the school setting. Neumerski (2013) examined instructional leadership literature, including information regarding the role of the principal, teachers, and instructional coaches. The relationship between context, with the connection between teaching, learning, and instructional leadership was examined. Neumerski provided a historical overview of principal instructional leadership and argued that “our current focus on principal behaviors without attending to the process of leadership may be one reason why we are without a strong sense of how principals improve instruction” (p. 317). This was paired

with Hallinger's (1990) Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) that assessed three dimensions of instructional leadership: a) Defining the school's mission; b) Managing the instructional program; and c) Promoting a positive school learning climate. Each of these dimensions requires the ability communicate vision, supervise curriculum, instruction, and assessment, leading professional development, navigating constraints, and ensuring a positive school environment. The Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLCC) further developed instructional leadership components and echoed the need to focus on vision, culture, management, collaboration, and community engagement (CCSS0, 2011). While there was general agreement as to what constitutes instructional leadership, there was less information describing how these practices are influenced by context or individual beliefs, values, and ideals about the principalship.

Neumerski (2012) pointed out, "Principal instructional research concentrates on leadership behaviors that create conditions for teacher or student learning, but does not always acknowledge that those conditions alone may be insufficient for instructional change" (p. 333). The Common Core demands changes to planning, instruction, and assessment that require a range of instructional leadership practices versus isolating particular behaviors for a specific outcome. Thus, a focus on professional development, vision, or collaboration alone may not give rise to successful implementation of Common Core. Further understanding what actions principals take may not explain the characteristics or experiences that occurred during those events. As an example, a principal that creates time for teachers to receive professional development tells us only

that a choice was made to focus on teacher support, not how or what teachers received and the impact on classroom instruction.

Printy (2008) examined communities of practice as an influence on shifting instructional skills. The perceptions of teachers and the influence of peer and principal leadership on engagement were explored. The research was grounded in the idea that principals, teachers, and leaders have influence on managing changes to instructional practice. Printy found that while colleagues are the strongest influence, the culture of a school can also influence teachers. Principals make the largest difference in establishing expectations for how and when the work occurs in the school. Printy noted, “When teachers perceive they can accomplish a task, they are willing to put forth more effort and to persist through stressful or difficult situations” (p. 197). This suggests that navigating Common Core implementation is likely to create constraining attitudes by how staff experience the change. Principals must be prepared to make choices in order to address, motivate, and inspire their teachers to overcome barriers to implementation. Printy suggested a number of high leverage practices including a need for leaders to “establish a rationale for learning required by non-routine activities related to instruction” and “create conditions for rich interactions and broad-based learning opportunities” (p. 216). Communicating the vision for instruction, filtering the tasks required of staff, and supporting opportunities for teams to work together by content area as well as cross discipline would be instructional leadership priorities enacted by the school culture.

Support for the school culture is a critical instructional leadership task, however principals must have acceptable levels of content knowledge. Printy (2008) found that principals who did not actively engage in the instructional program had low levels of

influence on teacher practice. Similarly, Goddard et al. (2010) noted that when teachers perceived principals as instructional leaders, they were more likely to make changes to teaching practice. Stein and Nelson (2003) examined content knowledge as a way of describing the influence of subject specific understanding on instructional leadership choices whereby principals had beliefs about lesson design, instruction, and assessment that were expected in classrooms. Stein and Nelson proposed that leadership choices were often not centered on an understanding of pedagogical expertise, but on addressing the demands established from a policy perspective. This included attending to the influences of the district expectations for student achievement outcomes versus research on meaningful instruction. This suggests that while principals may have personal beliefs, values, and ideals about teaching, they would shift the things they emphasized based on whatever the district demanded. The nuances of how the Common Core, school context, and the principal interact may require varied elements of instructional leadership at different points in time.

Elmore (2002) concluded that strong instructional leadership was in short supply in most schools, largely because the typical principal's working day was consumed by managerial tasks having little or no direct bearing on the improvement of curriculum and instruction. If the demands and constraints placed upon principals leads away from the instructional leadership viewed as necessary to implement the Common Core with fidelity, it is unclear whether the expected outcomes for schools can be met.

Chapter Summary

Every job is comprised of demands and constraints. The way in which demands and constraints of the Common Core are transformed into principal instructional

leadership choices is unclear. To some degree, the way that principals feel about themselves, their schools, and the CCSS may ultimately guide their work, however these factors are contextual and shifting as the CCSS unfolds.

Effective schools are characterized by a specific set of teacher and leader behaviors that include a focus on instruction, collaboration, professional growth, and a collective sense of responsibility for student learning (Rosenholz, 1985). Research clearly indicated that principal leadership matters; however, there was less agreement on which variables yielded the strongest effects. This initial review of the literature indicated that while principals had an effect on schools and students, there are a myriad of options available for choice. In order to explore how elementary principals experienced the demands of CCSS implementation, constraints of their work, and transformed those experiences into instructional leadership choices, a qualitative research study was designed.

Chapter 3

In this chapter I present the design and methodology of this study, beginning with an explanation of the purpose and rationale for selecting the qualitative case study approach. This is followed by information on data collection, analysis, and standards of quality.

Rationale for Case Study and Qualitative Research Methods

A qualitative case study design was selected for this inquiry because it provided a unique mechanism for exploring how elementary principals transformed demands and constraints into leadership choices. According to Yin (2009), case study should be used when, “Your questions seek to explain some present circumstance (e.g. how or why some social phenomenon works). . . . [or if] questions require an extensive and ‘in depth’ description of some social phenomenon” (p. 4). Stake (1995) offered additional considerations for the case study method that suggested this particular research may be instrumental to provide awareness into issues in the field. According to Baxter (2008), case study design can be used for a variety of purposes, including one that is instrumental in nature. In this way, the purpose is “to accomplish something other than understanding a particular situation. It provides insight into an issue or helps to refine a theory. The case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else” (p. 549).

Qualitative case study methods were selected over purely quantitative methods in order to move beyond the level of relationships in examining the data. Hallinger and Heck (2011) described the limits of current research as one that viewed leadership as an independent variable in relationship to school and student outcomes. They suggested that

a quantitative approach provided an incomplete picture of the processes that influence leadership choices.

Given the complex nature of leadership, neither a correlational analysis nor description of leadership behaviors was sufficient. Leadership is made up of the visible actions that are the result of sophisticated interactions and experiences from the environment of a principal's work. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) spent time looking at the leadership of principals and concluded that an examination of management should incorporate qualitative methods. They noted that qualitative data could generate rich information about how principals managed their work and allowed for attention to be focused on exploring "the contextual factors that influence principal behavior" (p. 238). Understanding this nuanced interaction was ideally uncovered through a qualitative design model.

Qualitative Considerations

The study was conducted in the live environment of a typical elementary school. Schools are flexible and evolving settings that are influenced by the individuals in the building. The ebb and flow of the school year means that different times of the year feel differently. In addition, the political climate and communities that surround schools are ever changing and interact with the individuals within the environment. The nature of the school environment allows participants lives to be explained, in their context, and through their experience.

Data collection emphasized semi-structured interviews in order to have an interactive and humanistic quality. Interviews were completed at two points over a six month period and provided opportunities for emergent changes as the study proceeded.

The nature of the study included a high degree of interaction with the data involving repeated readings and analysis of transcripts, interpretation, and validation of findings. As the researcher, I was directly involved with each participant and these interactions influenced how meaning was constructed from the data. This interpretation required continued awareness of my role as researcher and was filtered through my view of the environment and situation.

Social systems research was used to investigate the perceptions of demands, constraints, and instructional leadership choices of principals. This required subscription to particular theories or models about society; in particular, organizational and individual theories of human behavior. Consideration of the varied actions, perceptions, and decisions that influence organizations and individuals was viewed broadly and not narrowly defined.

I began the study as an elementary principal and transitioned to the role of consulting principal during the time of this study. My positions provided an informed perspective that allowed me to find quick comfort in the study setting as well as familiarity with participants who viewed me as a colleague. While I was required to build rapport and communicate with transparency about the purpose of my inquiry, the frequent opportunities to spend time and schools allowed me to gain access to individual conversations with and among principals and resulted in rich descriptions of principal perceptions. My personal biography as an educator and principal influenced the study. This bias was evaluated and reviewed in relationship to the subjectivity and objectivity continuum. This required reflections about beliefs about what was true, evidence to support claims, influence of current and past reality on present views, and appropriate

application of theory in making interpretations. The use of critical friends supported my ability to find strength in my findings and clarify interpretations.

Bounding

Bounding is the ability to set limits in the research. According to Creswell (2007), case study involved “the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system” (p. 73). Creswell noted that a bounded system was when “the case selected for study has boundaries, often bounded by time and place. It also has interrelated parts that form a whole. Hence, the proper case to be studied is both ‘bounded’ and a ‘system’” (p. 244). Maxwell (2005) supported this perspective and highlighted the important distinction between organizational and theoretical bounding. In this way, the data was analyzed through the lens of leadership in relationship to reform and the categories identified in the literature. This led me, as a researcher, to examine ways of connecting the data and analysis as guided by the conceptual framework.

Propositions

Yin (2009) identified the use of theoretical propositions as a tool to guide data analysis. Baxter (2008) emphasized the potential for case study methods to make use of propositions.

When a case study proposal includes specific propositions it increases the likelihood that the researcher will be able to place limits on the scope of the study and increase the feasibility of completing the project. The more a study contains specific propositions, the more it will stay within feasible limits. So where do the propositions come from? Propositions may come from the literature, personal/professional experience, theories, and/or generalizations based on empirical data. (p. 551)

Specific propositions did not exist for this study, however there was a general belief by this researcher that principal instructional leadership choices were directly and indirectly

transformed from demands and constraints through influential interactions with the social systems of school. Even in the absence of preconceived propositions, this study has the potential to push the theories of principal leadership further and facilitate the ability to generate new propositions and generalizations about instructional leadership in schools.

Site Selection

The school district selected was the Eastland School District (name changed), a suburban school system in Maryland selected by Williams (2011) as the site for his study of the demands, constraints, and choices of four high school principals.

At the start of the 2012-2013 school year Eastland student enrollment for kindergarten through 12th grade was over 140,000; 66,000 were students in kindergarten through fifth grade at the elementary level. Eastland demographics noted the student population was approximately 21% African American, 14% Asian American, 27% Hispanic, and 33% White. At the end of the 2011-2012 school year students receiving free and reduced-price meals (FARMS; a measure of poverty) were 33%, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) was 13%, and students receiving special education services were 12%. Eastland School District governed over 130 elementary schools, each with their own principal.

Eastland was selected for this study because of access to the researcher and the timeline established for Common Core implementation. Prior to formal adoption of the Common Core in 2010, Eastland began implementation of curriculum matched to the math, reading, and writing standards of the CCSS. Figure 8 depicts the timeline for implementation of Common Core in Eastland [see Appendix A for the data collection timeline for this study].

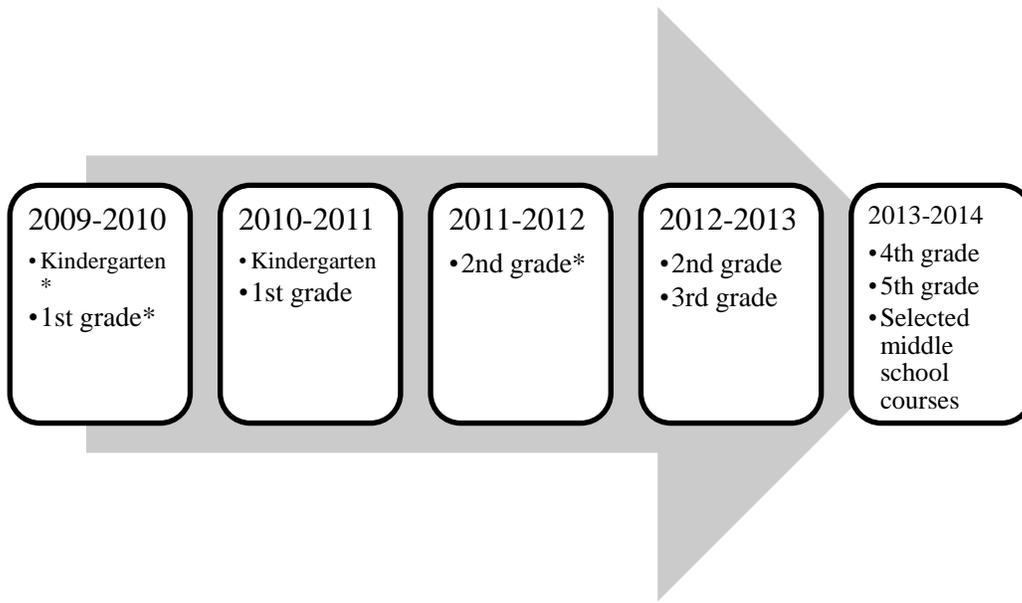


Figure 8. Eastland School District timeline of CCSS implementation for elementary schools.

**Elements of the timeline included years with optional pilots.*

Beginning in 2009, with kindergarten, CCSS curriculum was delivered to elementary students. The study began during the 2012-2013 school year when Common Core was in the third year of implementation in kindergarten and 1st grade, but in the first or second year of implementation for 2nd and 3rd grades. During the final phase of the study, 4th and 5th grades had begun their first year of implementation and all elementary grades were engaged in CCSS curriculum. This timeline confirmed the appropriateness of examining the impact of CCSS on elementary leaders given the focused implementation to elementary schools in the district.

Sample Selection

The importance of selecting elementary principals from the same district provided a baseline of common job expectations. Purposeful sampling was appropriate since the goal was to achieve representativeness of the school district, principals, and leadership experiences. The advantages of deliberating selecting individuals were increased

confidence in the conclusions, diversified portraits of the principalship and of instructional leadership choices. The challenge was that the data may not be perceived as representative of the entire range of perceptions, but only typical members of the group. In addition, it may be viewed that the small nature of the sample selected was not powerful enough to make explicit comparison and limited the ability to draw firm conclusions. I address these concerns in relationship to ensuring the validity of results.

For the sample selection, all elementary schools in Eastland were listed and categorized based on student enrollment and FARMs rate, a measure of students in poverty. Principal sex and years of experience or number of years at the school was also collected. Based on this initial population set, schools were further disaggregated by enrollment and FARMs percentages [Appendix B]. Research on principal leadership suggested differences in perceptions by years of experience and school variables for poverty or special education populations. As a result, schools that had principals within their first two years were excluded from the population and data on special populations was identified. Next, schools that were not comprehensive elementary schools (K-2 or 3-5 only) were removed due to variable exposure to Common Core implementation. In addition, principals that were in acting roles were excluded from the possible sample due to the non-permanent nature of their positions. To further focus the sample, schools that were large or small [Appendix E] and mid to high poverty were removed from the sample. These sample reduction techniques were designed to further reduce the potential for additional demands and constraints associated with large student populations and poverty, including differential staffing and financial resources. Additionally, schools that did not meet the state accountability targets for adequate yearly progress (AYP) were

excluded due to the potential impact of specific school improvement efforts.

Principals from the remaining population reflected a homogenous sample of medium sized schools with poverty rates at or below 29%. Of the 25 remaining principals 23 were female and two were male. To further support homogeneity, the two male principals were also excluded.

An email was sent to all 23 potential participants to describe the nature of the research study and request participation [Appendices C & D1]. Of those contacted, 11 principals indicated interest in participation. There was more interest than expected and participants responded with “great topic” and “very relevant” when contacted about the study. All 11 potential participations were provided with a letter of consent, which included the nature of the study, assurance of confidentiality, right to withdraw from the study at any time, request to audiotape, opportunity to review the transcript, and offer to provide a summary of findings was provided to all interested participants [Appendix E]. Of the 11, seven returned the consent to participate form.

The first participant was an outlier and the only participant with 30 years of experience as a principal. It was initially thought that the first interview would serve as a test pilot to evaluate the utility of the interview protocol; however, it was decided to include the participant since she represented a unique perspective as the only potential member of the sample with extensive experience as a principal. There was one participant in her third year as a principal and the remaining four principals all had between six to 10 years of experience. Therefore, it was decided to expand the case study to include six participants so that outliers for years of experience could be included and

provide a robust portrait. The seventh participant that expressed interest was excluded due the time delay in returning the consent form.

Data Collection

Once sampling was completed and the invited principals consented to participate, data was collected. Data collection was extracted from four primary sources: (a) public reports about each elementary school, (b) pre-interview questionnaires administered to each principal, (c) semi-structured interviews with each participant, and (d) document review. The data collection required was matched to the research questions as noted in below.

Table 1

Research Questions and Data Collection

Research Question	Necessary Data	Method of Data Collection
1. What are the current demands that elementary principals perceive in their work?	Description of the current demands, as defined by the district and the school principal; reflection on specific demands identified in the research.	Interview; document review.
2. What are the constraints that impact implementation of the CCSS?	Description of constraints including attitude toward implementation, financial resources, staffing flexibility, and organizational hierarchy.	Interview; document review.
3. How does a principal make instructional leadership choices in implementing the CCSS?	Description of the difference systems (structural, individual, cultural, political) and how they influence the leader; understanding of how choices emerge and where opportunities exist to make decisions	Interview

Questionnaire

Prior to conducting interviews, each principal completed a pre-interview questionnaire to provide biographical and contextual information about their school site

and professional profile [Appendix D2]. The responses served as a starting point to set up the interview process and supported the eventual development of the within case analysis. The use of a questionnaire suggested a quantitative analysis approach, however the proposed data was aimed at yielding qualitatively descriptive information that served as contextual background for each participant.

Semi-structured interviews

The data collection involved interviews with the selected participants [Appendices J and K]. The goal was to design an interview protocol that was consistent, but possessed a balance of open-ended and cloze question formats. This meant that in addition to the guided protocol, the interview allowed for informal or conversational aspects as clarification or prompting. The interviews were scheduled to include questions asked in a specific sequence with the goal of uncovering the participant's perceptions and answer the research questions.

Interview process

Upon receipt of the signed letter of consent, an email contact was made to set up the interview and answer any additional questions about the study. All interviews were recorded with permission of the participants. Interviews were double recorded to account for possible technology challenges. A handheld digital microphone as well as a recording device through the researchers tablet was utilized. All participants were given a copy of the interview questions and while participants responded, brief terms and key words were recorded by the researcher. Detailed notes were not taken by either party in order to ensure the focus could be on the conversation. Immediately following the interview a memo was created by the researcher, to capture themes, body language, site

characteristics, and a sense of the interview. Digital audio files of each initial interview were sent to a transcription service (Rev.com) and returned as a document file. Audio files and transcripts were uploaded into unique participant folders in QSR NVivo 10 computerized qualitative software. The written transcription document was reviewed against the audio file to ensure accuracy of the transcript prior to coding.

One interview per week was scheduled in order to provide sufficient time for transcription and analysis. Initial interviews were completed between February and April of one school year (2012-2013). Follow-up interviews were completed in September and October at the start of a new school year (2013-2014). This overlap of school years proved to be a critical aspect of findings verification given the evolution of participant perceptions of instructional leadership priorities as CCSS implementation continued. Table 2 notes the details for participant interviews.

Table 2

Interview Venues, Dates, and Format

Participant Pseudonym	Interview #1 Date, Location, Length	Interview #2
Georgina	February 28, 2013 Location: Researchers office Setting: School 1 hour, 10 minutes	October 2, 2013 Format: Email**
Vivian	March 8, 2013 Location: Principal's office* Setting: School 1 hour, 14 minutes	October 4, 2013 Format: Email**
Shirin	March 19, 2013 Location: Principal's office* Setting: School 1 hour, 41 minutes	October 8, 2013 Format: Phone 20 minutes
Jenna	March 27, 2013 Location: Principal's office* Setting: School 1 hour, 27 minutes	October 4, 2013 Format: Email**
Barbara	April 4, 2013 Location: Principal's office* Setting: School 1 hour, 27 minutes	October 3, 2013 Format: Email**
Roberta	April 16, 2013 Location: Principal's office* Setting: School 1 hour, 3 minutes	October 7, 2013 Format: Email**

* All participants except Georgina requested to have the initial interview at their schools during the work day

** All participants, except Shirin requested to have the second interview via email due to their busy schedules.

Interview protocols

The interview protocol was modified during the data collection process. While the questions remained relatively unchanged, opportunities to improve the flow of questioning required questions to be reordered. In addition, questions that appeared to be duplicative or were worded poorly were edited. This revision process occurred between the first and second, and second and third interviews.

Interview #1. The first interview protocol [Appendix J] included 21 questions, each with a number of sub questions contained within. These questions were considered in light of the analytic framework [Appendix L].

Table 3

Number of Questions in Interview Protocol #1 Per Research Question

Research Question	Number of interview questions
1. What are the current demands that elementary principals perceive in their work?	7
2. What are the constraints that impact implementation of the CCSS?	7
3. How does a principal make instructional leadership choices in implementing the CCSS?	7

Interview questions were based on Stewart's (1982) framework regarding demands and constraints on managers restated in the context of the elementary principal's role as well as Hoy and Miskel's (2008) social system of schools. The questions were related to the primary research questions of this study as well as the literature on demands, constraints, opportunities for choice, instructional leadership, and systems influence. As you will see in chapters 4 and 5, the inclusion of questions directly connected to research on the conceptual and theoretical frameworks supported the ability to generalize and capture findings.

Interview #2. As part of a verification check and to capture additional data, a second interview was completed. This interview was to ensure the accuracy of findings and be sure the differences noted were not an artifact of participant fatigue or interest. Due to participant preferences and straightforwardness of data collection, second interviews were completed via email and/or by telephone. The second interview

focused on an examination of instructional leadership and how the choice process unfolds in order to gather robust data and inform the development of conclusions.

Document and memo review

The documents collected and analyzed in this study were limited. However, document analysis can provide information on the knowledge and context in specific settings (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). As a secondary data collection method, document and memo reviews were used to triangulate the data and responses from the principals. Documents were also used to develop follow-up questions intended to enhance the clarity of understanding participant perceptions.

Information on each school was publicly available through the Eastland School District website. The school reports provided information that included enrollment, staff certification, special programs, mobility, student performance on state assessments, student and staff demographics, and facilities. Additional information, including role-specific memoranda as well as policies and procedures regarding the school district, were available from the Eastland School District webpage or from participants. School websites, central office memorandums, principal newsletters, and other artifacts helped to illuminate and illustrate examples of demands, constraints, and instructional leadership choices. These documents were not coded in NVivo, but served as an additional tool for examining the district, each school, and the principal. Table 4 identifies the documents reviewed throughout the data collection and analysis process to explore and develop an understanding of each participant and their school context.

Table 4

Document Type, Source, and Purpose

Document Type	Provided by	Purpose
Budget and personnel compliment	Eastland School District (publically available)	To identify resource allocations and school contextual factors
Central office reorganization	Eastland School District (publically available)	To examine the supervisory structures for principals
School data and performance overviews	Eastland School District (publically available)	To collect information on school and student characteristics
School staffing ratio	Eastland School District (publically available)	To identify human resource allocations for schools in the district
Employee and student engagement data for the district and each school	Eastland School District (publically available)	To examine additional background information on school context and characteristics of organizational culture
Curriculum rollout letter to families from district Superintendent	Eastland School District (publically available)	To understand the district message and vision for Common Core implementation
Memorandums to principals	Internal documents shared by participants and available to the researcher as a result of employment in the district	To track the number of action or information related memorandums; to gather information on the district level expectations for principals

Data Analysis

According to Creswell’s (2007, p. 156) data analysis consists of how data are managed, organized, classified, and interpreted. The following analysis tools were utilized.

- Data managing: Create and organize files for data. Each participant's transcripts were placed in an electronic file within the NVivo program. Reading, memoing: Read through text, make notes, form initial codes. The coding was constructed based on an established set of parameters, or features that exist about principal leadership. As themes emerged, coding was developed to capture common evidence through the data.
- Describing: Describe the case and its context. This included a detailed view of the facts of the case and included school site, location, demographics, and profile of participants. This included sketching ideas, summarizing observations from the field, and highlighting important information from the participants.
- Classifying: Use categorical aggregation to establish themes or patterns. This involved direct interpretation and the exploration of patterns between participants or categories. Interpreting: Use direct interpretation, develop naturalistic generalizations. As the data analysis was completed, I drew conclusions or generalizations from participants that could be applied to a larger population of schools and leaders. This included a comparison to existing studies of leadership in the field and recommendations for additional research.
- Representing, visualizing: Present in-depth picture of the case using narrative, tables, and figures. Summative data from information on participants and a profile of the case study were captured in order to paint a picture in the mind of the reader about the individuals, their

experiences and perceptions as they relate to the topic of social systems, demands, constraints, and choices.

Memos

The use of memoing was a foundational aspect of the analytic process. Memos for participant interviews, analytic framework, sampling, data collection, analysis, and each of the coding queries, nodes, and matrices were completed. Memos connected to methods provided insights about the way the data was collected. In addition, “see also links” were used to link from one place in a document to a memo or from a memo to a record, such as a journal article. Findings memos were created and uploaded to NVivo to explain what each query was about, impressions of the findings including claims, quotes, and interpretation.

Coding tools

Annotations, concept mapping, coding, queries, and matrices were utilized to analyze and identify findings. This included processes for constructing meaning from the data using an analytic framework.

Meaning units, concept mapping, and annotations

Once the transcript was verified, meaning units were highlighted. This included highlighting the interview question and associated response. This helped to determine if the questions worked for content and flow. The transcript was reviewed by highlighting the questions from the researcher as well as the participant for possible interruptions or missed opportunities for prompting. Following the identification of meaning units, analytic coding for annotations was completed. Annotations focused on initial impressions and interpretations of participant responses. This included researcher

reflections on the meaning of passages, what the passage reflected, and possible representation of a phenomenon of interest.

As a novel analytic tool, a side by side analysis of the transcript for annotations and concept mapping was utilized. This included simultaneous line by line annotations of participant commentary paired with concept mapping or cmap [Appendix G]. The annotations and cmap were connected to the theoretical and conceptual framework for examining demands, constraints, choices and instructional leadership. Key terms were highlighted visually within the cmap to further examine relationships of concepts to one another. Pairing the cmap tool with the transcript analysis was done at a basic level, but revealed possible opportunities for further identification of subtleties and complexities in the perceptions of principals.

To further support initial analysis, a propositions dataset was extracted from the cmap tool as a way of highlighting the frequency of ideas noted and to examine trends or patterns in participant perceptions [Appendix H]. This analytic process resulted in three distinct analysis tools; the annotated transcript, the cmap, and cmap propositions. This quality audit continued through the analytic process and was done to be sure the portrait was rich and full with respect to the experience of instructional leadership for principals.

Coding

Coding was detailed and proceeded individually through each of the aspects of the Stewart (1982) and Hoy and Miskel (2008) models. Simultaneous coding was avoided so that sustained engagement and consideration of the concept could be applied to the coding analysis. This included frequently returning to the analytic framework to focus on deep understanding and interpretation of the theoretical and conceptual ideas.

First cycle coding included source and node classifications. Source classifications referred to the type of reference such as article, memo, transcript, or recording. Node classifications referred to categories of meaning such as sex, age, and years of experience. Second cycle coding classified and conceptualized the data. This included examination of patterns for similarity and differences, frequency of references, and relationship between concepts. Once coding was completed, similarly coded data was placed into categories or “families” of nodes (parent and child). For example, demands could be the parent in a category that included job responsibilities. Once the categories were organized, thematic, conceptual and theoretical insights emerged. Conceptual codes were based on definitions of concepts from the initial literature review. Participants responded to one question, but in the question response, they often referred to multiple phenomena that related to other interview questions.

Queries

Following coding to demands, constraints, choices, and systems, queries were run for all aspects of the model and consisted of the following general structure. Figure 8 represents the structure of query nodes within NVivo.

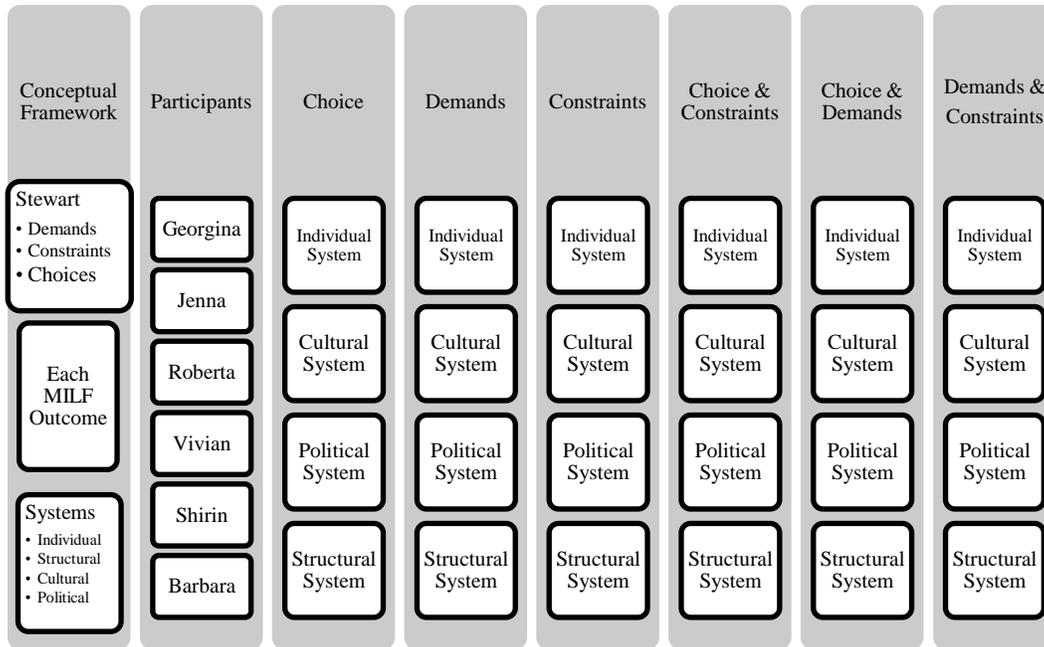


Figure 8. NVivo categories for node queries.

Each query was saved to results and then opened to view all coding stripes. The transcripts were reviewed again to ensure accuracy of the coding. At the conclusion of the query review, a new node was created for the results. This was then linked to a memo with interpretive narration about the results. Information on the properties of the query was written in the query description as the decision rule. Coding was spread to a broad context in order to include as much data as possible, while ensuring a clean sample of adequate strength. All nodes were aggregated to the parent node in order to identify overall trends for each query.

As multiple variable coding was run, evidence of single case coding was revealed. In the cases where only one participant was evident in the query, a reexamination of all transcripts was completed to verify the initial coding. To clean up the data set, all sources and references were checked and verified within the coding structure. This set up the data in order to proceed to matrix queries.

Matrix queries

Matrix queries to support cross case analysis were completed and each reference in the matrix was examined for patterns and trends. Themes were identified that could be supported by claims and evidence from the findings. Within case coding ran demands, constraints, and choices for each individual participant within the four systems. The findings were used to guide the development of Chapter 4. The strength of data was in the unique system query results (choice, demand, or constraint) for each dimension of the system. Weak, duplicative, or little narrative data was revealed for the combined query results (e.g. demand + constraint). The following matrices were developed.

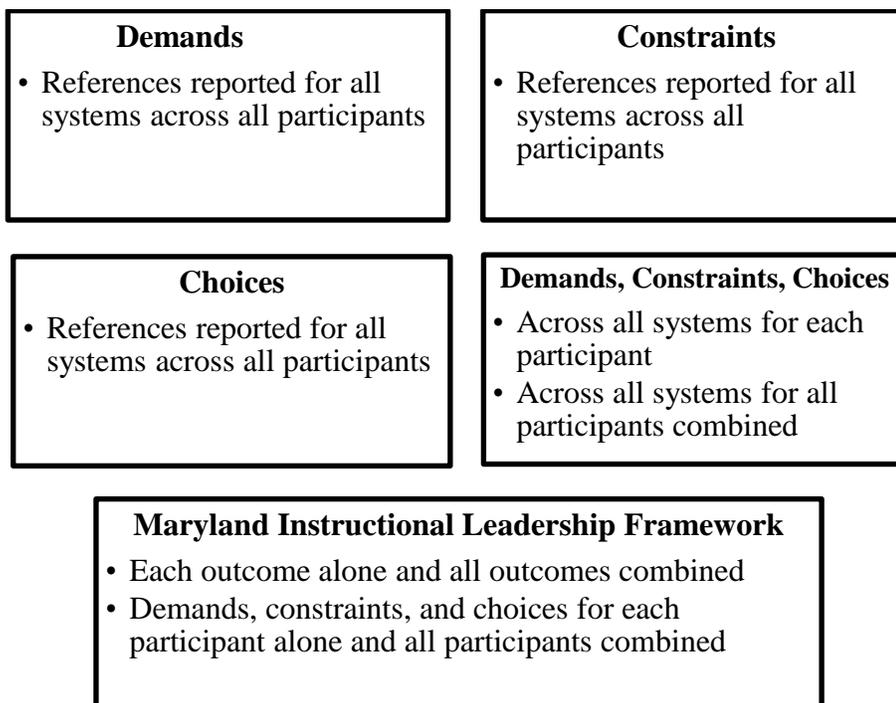


Figure 9. List of matrix queries to facilitate within and cross case analysis.

Matrices data were reviewed for the number of references coded and examined for patterns. Rows reflected participants to show differences among them and columns were the node (demands, constraints, choices, system, or MILF). In addition, compound

queries were utilized where more than one concept could be further explored. For example examining choice (subquery 1) with demands (subquery 2) and the individual system. This process was helpful to look for overlaps using compound, group or matrix queries and sets.

At the conclusion of coding and analysis for demands, constraints, choices, and systems, MILF data was run for each outcome individually for all participants. MILF was coded from the aggregate parent nodes for demands, constraints, and choices. Then all of the queries were run again to verify the data and begin examining more nuanced findings about instructional leadership. In addition to queries, a text search with the key term for each MILF outcome was run to extract information from the transcripts that may not have been in the conceptual framework nodes. Information was then added to the respective MILF outcome node in order to attempt to capture any references to primary MILF descriptors in a broad context. Figure 10 depicts the node levels utilized in NVivo for instructional leadership.

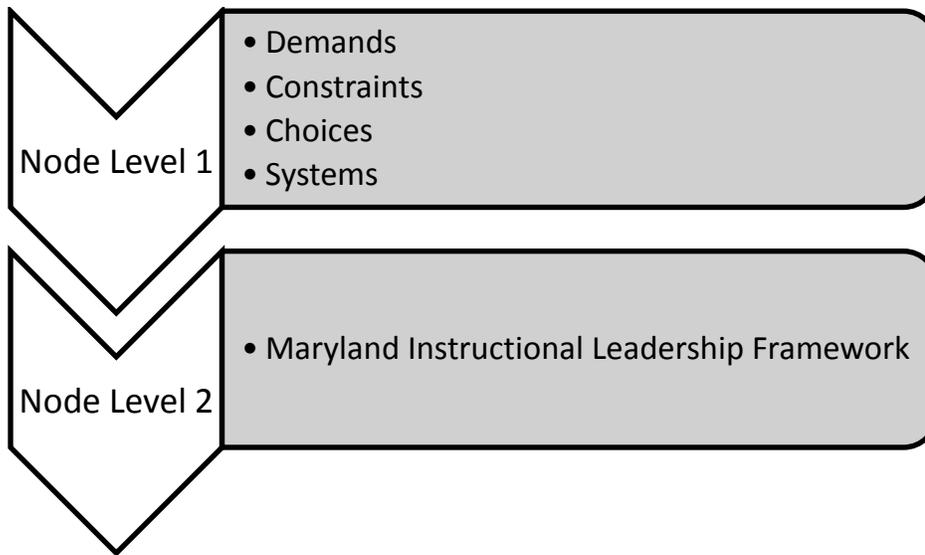


Figure 10. Visual representation of node coding from model to instructional leadership.

Sources

There were nine sources for each participant NVivo file; pre-interview questionnaire, audio file of interview, interview #1 transcript, interview #2 transcript, cmap, cmap propositions, school survey, school demographics, and participant memo. The only source coded beyond the participant was the transcript of interviews. A review of source coding was of a verification check to see that all items were correctly coded and included the full meaning unit. This process was done to be sure that the node the query was based only on participant transcripts. Any errors or incomplete references were either expanded through spread coding or removed from the node.

Within and cross case analysis

Creswell (2007) pointed to Straus and Corbin (1998) as a model for case analysis. He noted that when “the investigator seeks to systematically develop a theory that explains process, action, or interaction on a topic,” they can begin by categorizing events and move toward the development of a conditional matrix (p. 65). Whereas a robust

conditional matrix may be outside of the capacities of this analysis, making connections between ideas was important.

Transcripts of the interviews were entered into the NVivo software program with coding relative to the demands, constraints, and choices of leaders in the social system of schools. Coding was summative and reflexive. In this way, initial coding was used to form categories of information about demands, constraints, and choices. This was followed by secondary coding to explore the influence of the social systems that interacted with each participant for those same demands, constraints, and choices.

The aim of coding analysis was to uncover the transformation of demands and constraints through the interactions with the school environment. Creswell (2007) emphasized the importance of coding both the context and description of the case. Principal perceptions of the specific demands and constraints highlighted in the research were coded, including an examination of how choices reflect influence from one or more of the systems within schools.

At the conclusion of examining the biographical and perceptual data, patterns and trends were extracted from the cases and considered in light of the findings. This was obtained through a review of the classification and coding system on demands, constraints, and choices. A cross-case analysis was used to provide an overview, comparisons, and to draw conclusions for the findings of the study.

Delimitations

Data collection and data analysis in case study methodology presents limitations. With respect to data collection, the information on principal practices and conditions came from self-report data, which may have been affected by social desirability and other

factors that could lead to biased results. Interviews were useful for uncovering participant perspectives and facilitated follow-up for clarification, however they may have been too dependent on participant openness and honesty. In addition, document review could be used to guide reflective memos or piece together artifacts with observations, but may not have been comprehensive.

Analysis of field notes is useful to generate unusual insights, however it requires sustained engagement in the research, can be interrupted by distractions, and is time dependent. The ability to categorize required a heightened awareness of the data to find themes, recurring ideas, and was intellectually challenging. It necessitated persistence and sustained engagement that was occasionally impacted by the personal and professional obligations of the researcher. Recognizing these limitations was important as the analysis proceeded.

Standards of Quality and Ethical Issues

Successful completion of the human subjects training was an added tool to support the ethical and practical elements completed during the study. To that end, the following indicators were important considerations.

Credibility

Credibility is defined as the ability to demonstrate that the results of qualitative research are believable (Trochim, 2006). There are four ways credibility was addressed: engagement with the participants, peer debriefing, member checks, and triangulation. The duration of this study occurred over a ten month period across two school years (Spring 2012 and Fall 2013). The duration of the study was concise, however the contact time with participants provided a robust data set. In addition, peer debriefing was used in

an effort to engage in extended discussions with disinterested peers regarding the findings, conclusion, and analysis. Member checking provided an opportunity for each participant to provide feedback on the interview experience. Further, credibility was supported through the identification of a critical friend to the study. This individual, Dr. Hanne Mawhinney, was an experienced researcher that verified and challenged my interpretation of the data.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability of the results to be generalized to other settings or contexts (Trochim, 2006). Given the limited nature of case study design, it is often criticized for a weakness in this area. Yin (2009) addressed the criticism of case study generalizations and stated, “case studies are generalizable to a theoretical proposition and not to populations or universes” (p. 15). This understanding of transferability suggests that a rich description could be useful to develop thinking about principal choices. Thus, it was important to gather data that allowed consideration from multiple viewpoints.

The study included thick description and multiple cases as a tool to support the transferability of results. Thick description included a vignette of each participant, school and community background through description of the principal perceptions. Multiple cases of principal leaders were used to develop the ability to generalize the results across elementary principal experiences.

Dependability

Dependability is used to describe the ability to obtain similar results if the study were to be replicated (Trochim, 2006). The methods employed in the study should be viewed as reliable in order to be repeated, ideally yielding similar results. To ensure

dependability, detailed and established protocols for data collection and analysis were used. This included data storage through NVivo and the use of established conceptual and theoretical frameworks, including Rosemary Stewart's (1982) demands, constraints, and choices model as well as Hoy and Miskel's (2008) social systems model for schools.

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the assumption that the research aims to be unique and honest in the collection and interpretation of data (Trochim, 2006). This was achieved by providing full access to data for peers and critical friends to check the results and interpretations. Audit trails, including documentation of notes, memos, and transcripts, supports confirmability.

Overall trustworthiness

The goal of the study was to provide information about instructional leadership choices in order to understand how choices were influenced by the interaction of the individual with the social systems of schools and perceptions of demands and constraints experienced by elementary principals. As a country, we have a significant investment in primary and public education. This is not to suggest the purpose was at a cost of the process, but the goal was just, seeks truth, and benefits both the participants and the institution of education at large.

As a result, it was essential that all participants volunteered. Any suggestion of coercion, either by the researcher or the school system, would have compromised the integrity of the study and the interpretations' trustworthiness. It was critical to be sensitive to how the study was shared and promoted, including attention to self-selection bias, whereby participants who had a particular experience were more likely to

participate leading to shared perceptions or outcomes. It did not appear that coercion of participation was an issue due to the varied nature of the principals whom volunteered. To address the possibility of manipulation the use of informed consent, confidentiality, and balance in both participant selection and data reporting were used.

Ethical issues

Confidentiality, anonymity, and securing the data are key areas to attend to the ethical issues of research. To address confidentiality each subject was given a coding pseudonym. The general characteristics of the school and where it was situated were included, but used broad descriptors. In addition to aspects of narrative confidentiality, statement of confidentiality documents were provided so that participants understood the methods used to protect the information obtained through the study. Data was secured on a password-locked computer, only accessible to me as the researcher.

Complete anonymity was difficult due to the face-to-face interactions with participants. Protection of anonymity was important for the school, the principal, and the district that participated. It was important for participants to understand that information was not to be used as part of a supervisory or evaluation process at the district level. In addition, it was critical that principals felt they could share without concern for retribution either professionally, personally, or within the community.

Chapter Summary

Schools leaders will likely continue to face a myriad of demands, constraints, and instructional leadership choices. The literature suggested that in order to develop a robust portrait of principal leadership we must view actions not simply as an outcome, but as a function of how the systems interact with one and influence the individual.

The study participants were selected from a sample of schools with relatively similar characteristics. All schools had students in need, however the study design was intended to minimize the influence of poverty, second language acquisition or special education needs on principal perceptions. This was deliberate and grounded in the idea that if principals with relatively low levels of student needs faced challenges with Common Core implementation, it was likely that schools with greater impacts would have confounding variables making implementation even more difficult (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

Chapter 4

Introduction

This chapter is the first of two that answers the research questions:

1. What are the current demands that elementary principals perceive in their work?
2. What are the constraints that impact implementation of the CCSS?
3. How does a principal make instructional leadership choices in implementing the CCSS?

To answer the research questions fully, the findings must first be framed within an understanding of the contextual variables that surrounded the principals. This includes initiatives at the state and district level for professional development, evaluation, assessment, technology, and grading revisions. This is followed by individual portraits of each principal and their perception of demands, constraints, and choices and how they perceived the systems influence. This overview helps set the stage for a more complete explanation to answer the research questions in Chapter 5.

The State Context: Accountability and Assessment

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) had been engaged in continuous reform efforts over the past 30 years. Before the CCSS, beginning with Maryland's Project Basic Program in 1977, followed by the Maryland School Performance Program in 1989, and Achievement Matters Most in 2002, the state continually focused on increasing student outcomes as the federal government identified regulations and policy (Maryland State Department of Education, 2001a).

Efforts by MSDE, self-described as the “Third Wave of Education Reform,” focused on four areas: higher standards for curriculum and assessment, robust data, effective educators, and strategic help for struggling schools (Maryland State Department of Education, 2012c). In order to achieve reform goals in these four areas, MSDE completed a number of actions even before formally adopting the CCSS. A statewide data system and redesigned model to prepare, develop, retain, and evaluate teachers and principals was in development prior to CCSS adoption. This included the creation of the “Breakthrough Center”; established to provide support and coordination of state services to schools in need of improvement (Maryland State Department of Education, 2012c). The expectation by the state was to meet the goals of the CCSS reform effort at the local and national level, while maintaining Maryland’s status as the #1 public school system in the nation (Maryland State Department of Education, 2012a).

The CCSS were in various stages of grade level implementation in the district at a time when assessment programs aligned to the standards were absent. The state was a member of and the fiscal agent for PARCC, a consortium of 20 states, including Washington, D.C., that united to develop a common set of K-12 assessments in English and Math. PARCC was funded not by the states, but through a \$186 million dollar grant associated with the Race to the Top assessment competition. As a result of inclusion in the PARCC consortium, states committed to participate in item research with field testing to begin in spring 2014. It was expected that the PARCC would include performance-based and end of year assessment formats with full implementation during the 2014-2015 school year.

In addition, accountability provisions that accompanied the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) also shifted. In May 2012, Maryland received flexibility on some of the provisions for accountability that had previously accompanied NCLB. These changes did not modify the assessment program for students in grades 3-8, but did replace the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) system with a School Performance Progress Index (SPI). The SPI was developed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) as,

...a new accountability system that helps educators gauge how well a school is progressing in its quest to improve performance for all students. The yardstick for every school is set against its own ability to reduce in half in six years the portion of students not achieving proficiency, with annual improvement targets set for every school and every subgroup individually (MSDE, 2012d).

The index contained three targets, student proficiency, reduction of gaps between the highest and lowest groups of students, and overall growth. Achievement targets remained for schools, including the expectation to reduce by 50% the number of students who scored basic on assessments by 2017 (MSDE, 2012a). Some perceived the shift away from NCLB as a lessening of constraints, however there continued to be an expectation that “principals show they can successfully improve student learning in order to be effective” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011, p. 3).

The District Context: Implementation and Professional Development

The district began curriculum revision prior to Common Core adoption by the state of Maryland. Once the state adopted the CCSS in June 2010, the district incorporated the standards into ongoing efforts to develop an integrated curriculum. The development of curriculum aligned to the CCSS began under one superintendent and continued as a new superintendent was hired to lead the district. During the time of this

study, the district was in in the third year of implementation at the elementary level. Teams of instructional and curriculum specialists were on either three or five year rotating assignments to the district and wrote curriculum for all schools matched to the CCSS. The curriculum was delivered through an internet based site where associated resources, lessons, and selected professional development were available. District implementation focused on elementary schools and followed a rollout plan that began with kindergarten and moved through fifth grade in four years. As a result, all of the schools and principals in this study were engaged in a similar place along the implementation continuum.

The CCSS implementation model used in the district included a two-pronged approach. First, principals were provided overview information at a series of district-led trainings. During the first year of CCSS implementation, a trainer-of-trainers model was utilized where principals were asked to bring members of their instructional team, often the staff development teacher (SDT) and reading specialist (RS), to curriculum overview sessions. Following each training session, principals were directed to return to their school and provide the same training to teachers.

The district attempted to leverage resources available in a multi-pronged approach. The district had significant budget issues when implementation to Common Core began that resulted in limited professional development overall. Initially, teachers received direct training on Common Core; however, funding for substitute release time for teachers was reduced as a result of economic shortfalls at the state and county levels. Feedback from principals, teachers, and parents on the depth of knowledge required to effectively implement the Common Core increased the advocacy around prioritizing time

for professional development during the budget development process. During the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years the district offered online, trainer-of-trainer, and face-to-face preparation, as well as funding for collaborative planning substitute release time for teachers as the budget outlook improved. As a result, the 2013-2014 school year included face-to-face training in mathematics for grade four and five teachers, something that was not available to previous grade levels that had been through initial implementation.

The second component of the implementation plan included embedding CCSS information into existing professional development structures. The district provided monthly curriculum trainings from October through May to all elementary principals. These trainings were planned by a representative committee of staff from the district curriculum office, selected elementary principals, and other district leaders. Topics for curriculum trainings were selected based on current initiatives and district priorities. As a change from prior years, the curriculum meetings included opportunities for principals to bring one to three members of their school-based team to receive additional information on the vision of CCSS, implementation models, and content-specific outcomes. The state of Maryland also designed summer statewide training for Educator Effectiveness Academies (EEA) that all principals and school teams were required to attend. These academies were held at regional sites across the state and included opportunities for principals, staff development teachers, reading specialists, and selected teachers to learn about the CCSS and develop transition plans for implementation.

Paired with curriculum revision, the district developed a technology modernization plan for all elementary schools including installation of Promethean

interactive white boards, document cameras, and wireless Internet. In October 2012, the district published a technology priorities document describing a desire to transform classrooms with digital curricula, instructional resources, and interactive whiteboard technologies. Eastland described the changes as necessary to shift practices for teaching and learning to allow for more differentiated and personalized instruction. This additional technology initiative was an important contextual variable, as the CCSS and the district curriculum relied on significant use of program formats designed for interactive whiteboards.

At the time of this study, the district also completed simultaneous rollout of digital standards-based grading and reporting tools. The standards-based grading and reporting required use of an online grade book and digital documentation structures linked to each of the CCSS learning outcomes. In the standards-based format, traditional letter grades, often based on percent mastery, were replaced with measurement topics within each subject. Teachers were expected to evaluate students on the quality of their proficiency using a range of tools. These contextual factors surrounded the principals at the time of this study and framed the environment in which they worked.

The Principals

An overview of each elementary principal's perceptions of demands, constraints, and choices through the lens of social systems are presented. Specific descriptive and demographic information for principals and school variables may be found in appendices M through R.

Georgina: The unconstrained leader

Georgina, a White female in her 70s, had been principal at Ace Elementary for 26 years at the time of the study. Located in an upper middle class community in the district, Ace Elementary was the largest of the schools in this study with over 700 students. Demographically, Ace Elementary had a predominantly White student population, with low levels of poverty.

Georgina earned her M.Ed. and her B.S. both from Midwestern universities. She began her education career in the early 1970s and spent the first 15 years primarily in East Asia, as a teacher, staff developer, and instructional specialist. These early experiences working for American schools abroad informed and shaped her approach to the principalship.

I believe that my skills and expertise were achieved prior to [the district], because when you are overseas, you are much more on your own, so to speak, and as a result, you seek and find.....as well as most people who go overseas are 'risk takers,' which is not representative of our profession in general. (Georgina, Interview 1)

Within the district, Georgina was known for her opinions and advocacy. She served on district level policies and curriculum design committees and was nominated for a range of leadership awards, starting in the early 1980s through the present. She trained numerous aspiring principals and taught graduate courses in the school administration certification program at a local university. Georgina also presented at local and state conferences on effective leadership practices. While she had numerous opportunities to rise to senior leadership positions, Georgina maintained a desire to stay close to the classroom and remain in a school building.

Georgina could be described as possessing a confidence that consisted of professional irreverence. She engaged actively in discussing the principalship and voiced her opinion about district initiatives as she shared the experiences that informed her thinking about school leadership. She exuded confidence in her leadership practices with a matter-of-fact style of contribution and reflection. Georgina was the quintessential veteran principal and mentioned working through four superintendents and numerous curriculum revisions. She reported that she did not feel a sense of urgency or concern about the Common Core. While she had an assistant principal, staff development teacher, and reading specialist to support her work, she did not mention them as she described instructional leadership. When asked about the key components of instructional leadership, Georgina remarked:

Walking around, being in it. I try to be in every classroom every day but I really can't, it depends on the day; but I walk through. I know what are objectives or outcomes that are being used, whether kids are engaged, whether it's pretty much on target with the curriculum, although I'm not a militant on that, in any way. I want to see the students are learning and I want to hear from teachers.

The day after the interview, Georgina emailed additional things that she wanted to share about her work and the way she spends her time.

As I drank my wine and thought about the interview, the following things came to mind that I do on a regular basis or rather reinforce them as an instructional leader:

- Establish, implement and foster academic standards (share vision and mission).
- Provide instructional information and set expectations for what I want to see in classrooms etc. (a la Michael Fullan).
- Foster a school culture and climate that ensures the “our school is the most inviting place to learn.”

- Empower teacher leadership and student leadership.
- Maintain positive relationships with students, staff and parents.

Walk the walk, and am present for all professional and staff development to support everyone. See you soon. (Georgina, Email communication, February 28, 2013)

Georgina's values and ideals were influential on her decision making. She was in an affluent and vocal school community that trusted her leadership. Parent involvement was a key feature of her school and the written vision reflected a desire to create a community of respect with families as critical components of the school.

Georgina didn't cater to the community, but discussed the way of the school and her support to teachers as they implemented CCSS. She had clear feelings about the work of leadership, but was not as irreverent to ignore the CCSS and honored the expectations of the district for her role and responsibility.

Georgina perceived very few demands in her work and was primarily driven by the expectation that she maintain the positive climate and culture created at the school. She believed that teachers needed to be empowered, her role was to "take the temperature" of the building, and facilitate teachers' work. Emphasis on school culture was a result of feeling teachers were being pushed to their limit due to Common Core implementation. Georgina described her staff as "exhausted" with less "feeling relaxed and laughter." As she thought about the expectation to shape culture she stated, "I know from taking teachers through change before that you don't beat them to death. You cheer them on and applaud their successes and let them moan a little bit, and it will come."

Georgina communicated an understanding of district requirements and a connection to her beliefs about "how the work is done" as demands. She stated, "I'm

expected to make sure every child reaches their ultimate goal educationally, socially, emotionally and academically.” Her perceptions of the principalship were to “increase the will so teachers can teach,” “make sure they have all the materials,” and to “get out of their way. Georgina’s vision included respect for individuals and the district expectations.

I became a principal because I wanted to have a building in which teachers could teach the way I wanted to teach....I expect you to create and do what you want to in the classroom. The only thing I expect - and I really revere Madeline Hunter - is I expect kids to know what they’re supposed to be able do at the end of a lesson. I expect you to be collecting data that way. I also let you do [it] the way you want to do. (Georgina, Interview 1)

The expectation to set the vision for the school was connected to her beliefs about her role, the school, and the work of teachers. This included a regard for students as a power source that must be considered. Georgina indicated she felt a demand from students to hire a male teacher for every grade level and made choices about substitute teachers based on student feedback. While her perceptions of the demands from the school district were low, she described using policies as a guide to inform her work. She had no parking spot labeled “Principal” and believed that everyone was in the school to do the job they have been hired to do and work together with respect.

Georgina had a clear sense of what she was expected to do as a principal. Resource, time, bureaucratic, or attitude constraints were not reported by Georgina as barriers to CCSS implementation or instructional leadership. She stated, “Nothing constrains me. I’ve never been constrained. Since I went out on my own, I never had them. Marriage did it for a while, but that was all.”

Georgina was heavily influenced by her own beliefs as well as the political environment surrounding her work. Georgina did not indicate district expectations as prominent.

I think the system and the meetings we've been going to have shown me that I've dug deeper, I'm staying closer to the school, day in and day out. Because if a teacher says 'I really I need to go ahead and enrich him,' I'll let him. I don't have any faith in the school system right now, in listening to schools. I see a complete disconnect. (Georgina, Interview 1)

She believed in the intentions of the Common Core, but had reservations about the curriculum the district created to meet the standards. She did not feel the district had experts writing the curriculum and had particular concerns with the opportunities for rigor provided in the math standards. She expressed uncertainty as to whether "we're taking them where they should be" and chose to allow teachers to make individual decisions about math curriculum implementation, regardless of the district view. She referenced the degree to which she would "reinforce and guide" and "push implementation," but continued to make choices to sustain the climate in her building. "I can cheer and celebrate and appreciate what they're doing. I'll be around. I try to be omnipotent all the time, then model what I want and so forth. I listen. I do an awful lot of listening."

Georgina's choices connected to her study of effective leadership practices. She talked about attending "more workshops known to mankind" to emulate the actions of successful organizations. She had interest in taking on the role of professional developer, but pulled back on meetings and staff development for teachers.

I only know that I can't get blood out of a turnip. I just can't. I just can't say we're going to have another meeting because one, when you look at them, they're dead. It gets to be too much really, you can't. (Georgina, Interview 1)

Georgina was also influenced by the political environment of the larger school community, how power was structured, and leadership was delegated in the building. She identified choices for CCSS implementation through work with the teacher leadership team to establish priorities and expectations for planning.

I go to the meetings, but I'm not leading them. I'm letting the staff development teacher and the reading teacher do that. I may be in on the construction of the agenda, but I'm just in the background. I'm going to let them lead it. (Georgina, Interview 1)

Georgina's choice to be in the background was characterized by a desire to seek feedback, collect data, and make informed decisions. In many cases she allowed kids or teachers have the final say. "I don't make decisions unless it's the fire drill."

Georgina's use of participatory leadership was also informed by the community at large. Students and families influenced what Georgina chose to do, not only with respect to hiring, but also with committees, clubs, and recess. Georgina regularly met with the student council and community and described herself as a "hands on principal." She met weekly with the PTA President to share what was happening in the school and blocked out six days at the end of every school year to meet with families.

I ask that they share how they think the school's being run from their point. If they were doing business, I ask for their input. I ask if there is anything I should know about their child's placement and you will be surprised what I learn. (Georgina, Interview 1)

Georgina's choice to spend time listening to and soliciting the input of her community was in deference to her understanding of their role as a power source. Ace Elementary was modernized for the first time in the mid-1990's and underwent an additional classroom addition last year that included funding for school-wide technology modernization.

We would not have that building addition were it not for the power of the parents. I went to them and said, "I really think we need to have this addition sooner than we are on [the district's] plan." Those lobbyists and all those architects came out, they got school board, they got accounting execs and everybody else in to meet and guess what happens? (Georgina, Interview 1)

Her understanding of the politics of her community influenced her choices and gave her control over the outcomes she achieved with the school.

In her reference to "using their power" for Common Core implementation, Georgina went to the PTA and asked for their trust. She stated, "I have faith in the teachers that if your child needs to be accelerated, they will do so. I've told them to come to me if you have any questions." As a result, the concerns from parents with respect to opportunities for rigor in math had been minimal. When Georgina ran into areas of conflict, she chose to do what she felt made sense for the students. She asked a district specialist for insight into how to use the math standards to regroup students in order to meet the children's needs and when the response advised she couldn't send students to other grade levels for instruction Georgina replied:

I told [the district] I intend to do it; and of course I was right... You have to do what you think is right for that situation, so I try to use the power if I need it, but I am very straight with parents. (Georgina, Interview 1)

Outside of the immediate school community, Georgina was not influenced by other power sources in the district. When asked about the union, she stated, "Never, in 26 years, has it ever reared its head" and "[Teachers] expect the union to work for their salaries and benefits and to stay out of their professional growth." Similarly, Georgina felt she was not pressured by any federal or state level influences.

Table 5 is a matrix representing the presence or absence of reported demands, constraints, and choices reported by Georgina for each of the four systems.

Table 5

Georgina: Matrix of Demands, Constraints, and Choices for Each System

	Cultural System	Individual System	Political System	Structural System
Demands	X	X	X	X
Constraints				
Choices	X	X	X	

The beliefs Georgina had for her own work and the way she viewed her position interacted with the demands perceived. She saw no constraining influences from any aspect of the school, but noted particular choices to focus on supporting the culture, community, and her own philosophies about her role as a leader.

Jenna: Finding her way

Jenna, a White female in her mid-40s, was completing her third year as principal of Birchtree Elementary at the time of the study. Birchtree Elementary was located in an upper middle class community population that was majority White and Asian. The levels of poverty and second language acquisition were relatively low as compared to other schools in the district.

Jenna earned her B.A. in Education and Human Development in the mid-1980s and her M.A. in Administration in the mid-1990s from Mid-Atlantic universities. She spent her 16 year career in the district, first as an upper elementary and middle school teacher and then a technology specialist. She continued at central office for Title I schools before becoming an assistant principal. After completing her principal internship, Jenna served one additional year as an assistant principal before being appointed as principal of Birchtree Elementary.

Jenna was understated, quiet, and self-described as someone who “doesn’t like conflict,” liked to delegate, and reflected on the principalship. She desired to connect with colleagues and represented her cluster colleagues in a district level principals group. She tried to engage nearby elementary principals, but did not find a shared interest in developing a dialogue around Common Core. As a result, Jenna often worked alone.

As the least experienced principal in the study, Jenna only served as a principal during CCSS implementation. Many of her responses did not highlight changes in practice and required prompting for reflection on choices. This was different than the other principals who described more clearly the implications of CCSS on their work. Jenna struggled with the perceived ambiguity of the current superintendent, and felt that perhaps she was doing what she thought she should do without knowing if those were the right things. She had difficulty identifying how she spent her time in a specific sense, although she spoke about navigating the paperwork and politics of accessing resources for her school. The priorities for her day were being visible, accessible, and observing instruction, but she never went to teacher planning, although she was considering it for next year. Jenna stated the key components of instructional leadership were,

...to monitor that instructional program, to be in the classrooms, not that I’m there nearly as often as I should. To actually monitor what gets taught and then to monitor what gets learned. As we know, what’s taught and what’s learned are different things. What is it that the kids are really walking away with every day? (Jenna, Interview 1)

Jenna’s comments centered on navigating issues that a newer principal had to consider, such as addressing people, personalities, changing procedures, clarifying processes, and moving school culture. She didn’t like to delegate, but identified her staff development teacher and counselor as the “real leaders” in the school. She reported a

weak assistant principal and a few teachers of concern, suggesting that relationship building, monitoring, and process clarification were continued areas of focus.

Jenna indicated she thought about CCSS implementation, but had not figured out the priorities for her work in order to shift teacher instruction. She knew what needed to be done, but focused primarily on managing community issues and addressing student or staff needs. She felt that the CCSS was a tool that allowed her to do what she felt needed to be done and referenced staff as, "...talented people, but their vision of teaching and learning was not aligned with my vision. I [am] able to use the Common Core to change that."

As the least experienced principal in the sample, Jenna perceived a number of demands, with the greatest from the school district. "The demand from the [school] system is probably to implement curriculum, policy, regulations with fidelity while enabling students and teachers to do their best on a regular basis." She went on to say that this demand had not changed because "there's always been a [district] curriculum to implement. This is just a different curriculum to implement." Throughout her responses, Jenna did not view demands as markedly different due to CCSS implementation.

The primary demand referenced was the expectation to set a vision through the school improvement plan process. The written stated vision of Birchtree Elementary included references to collaboration among students, staff, and families with an emphasis on community engagement. This was not a vision Jenna developed, but inherited from the prior principal.

As an individual, Jenna drew upon the values and beliefs she developed during her time working with high poverty schools on equity.

I spent a lot of time trying to create an awareness and a drive to look at that [equity], to realize that that was something important. That was one of the key pieces to my vision that I felt I had to communicate early on. (Jenna, Interview 1)

She connected the role of vision setting to a demand to manage the power structures of her school community. “It has taken a great deal of finesse and persuasion and patience to try to persuade this community that the Common Core math curriculum really was in their child’s best interest.” Jenna utilized her experience teaching middle school math and said:

I’ve really been able to use that. I’ve drawn onto that to try to persuade families that we’re not doing our kids any favors [with the former model of acceleration]. I think the fact that I had some of that middle school experience has helped. (Jenna, Interview 1)

In addition to setting the vision, Jenna sensed a need to engage in the role of professional developer. She referenced the expectation that she establish collaborative planning because [the district], was “so clear about it upfront” as a necessary practice for Common Core implementation. She described the need to address this demand through shifting the culture of the school and provided “more training on how to be a team leader,” “clear expectations for planning,” and other components of collaboration she felt “probably needed to be done before, but maybe I just wasn’t as aware of it.” She described her continued work to establish an environment that was consistent with what the district expected. This included collaboration, respect, and excellence through the expectation that she was a teacher of teachers.

I’m there to help them improve their artistic technique and their technical technique. I’m also there, to certain extent, as counselor and parent, social worker, just the way you are for the kids, not many but for some of the staff, I had to take on that role as well. (Jenna, Interview 1)

Jenna found that she was able to better meet the demands of her role by using the Common Core as a change tool. She described the CCSS as a support to shape the culture around planning and collaboration and, “It absolutely would’ve been much more difficult to do. I hadn’t really come up with another plan.”

She perceived power relationships and access to resources as primary constraints in her work and referenced the significant time she spent addressing politically charged issues to obtain things for the school. In advocating for her facility needs:

I spent a lot of time trying to write a carefully worded emails saying, “What were you thinking I was going to do if you’re not going to give me a portable?” The response came back, “Yes, a lot of people are dismantling their computer labs.” I said, “But we all have this three times a year mandatory testing that’s computer based.” And the response was, “Yes, some schools are looking at buying laptops to deal with that.” (Jenna, Interview 1)

Jenna referred to constraints as the outgrowth of a “trickle down” effect where she spent time working with different departments “on these annoying things” and created alternate plans if the district did not support her requests.

The need to attend to building manager demands in a pragmatic manner required time. Birchtree Elementary was built in the mid-1960s and underwent a full school modernization in the mid-1990s; however continued building management was required due to over enrollment. This included working with the city government regarding the use of her school for city business and stated, “It takes a lot of time to craft a letter that I think can...be approved by [my superiors]...It’s that stuff that gets in the way.” In addition to the time spent addressing building manager issues, she had spent time working with her parent community to understand the math curriculum. “I have spent a lot of time, a lot of time with some of my high flying parents” and as a result “I’m certainly not in the classrooms as much as I’d like.”

The negotiation of power relationships to access resources was a constraint in the time required to address issues; however, Jenna also referenced the processes and procedures of the district as constraints. For example, when discussing the processes used to verify banking she stated, “I’m signing this thing three times” and “that’s what takes you away from the instructional focus.” Furthermore, staffing and managing the personnel issues within the building got in the way.

I needed a long term substitute for ESL. The HR system is not very well aligned to that and I only found out after it had been posted for two weeks that the person at HR had posted a 1.0 as a 0.1. After I spent a lot of time going through the 30 résumés and highlighting the five most promising people and we made the phone calls. They’re all like, “This is a 0.1 position not a 1.0.” I mean that was hours of my time lost, shuffling papers because of a system failure at HR. (Jenna, Interview 1)

Her perception of the school system bureaucracy was a distraction from the time she spent engaged in other roles.

Clarity about the district vision and the attitude of principal colleagues toward collaboration were also reported as constraints. Jenna described her lack of movement in making specific choices around instructional leadership as “waiting around” and “treading water” with respect to knowing expectations of district leaders. She also noted that an attitude of isolation stifled the work.

I like them, but they’re not interested in, like, any collaborative planning, sharing dialogue around Common Core. I do think if there was more of that as a principal level, I think it’s a good model for the others to see and I think I would benefit from that. (Jenna, Interview 1)

She identified challenges within her colleague cohort, but did not perceive the attitude of her staff as a constraint. She talked about the Common Core in positive terms and described staff as having a “pretty good attitude” towards Common Core because she was “enthusiastic.”

Jenna relied on her personal beliefs and values to guide decisions. Jenna believed that the job of principal was monumental and “really too big for anyone person” and described herself as “stubborn.” However, she also believed her values informed her priorities.

I think to be a good principal you’ve got to be true to your basic values. The Common Core is a tool I’ve used but that collaborative planning, that relying on each other, that wanting consistency among a grade level, I think would’ve been true regardless of Common Core. (Jenna, Interview 1)

Jenna believed it was “the decisions that we have to make are about what’s best for kids, not what’s best for us.” This included a choice to be outside each morning greeting students as a must-do task.

If students don’t feel like I’m in their corner, I’m not in a position to help them. I want students to know that I’m not just somebody you go to when you’re in trouble or the person behind the curtain, so to speak. I want students to know that I am somebody they come to. It’s really nice. There are kids who will say, ‘I need to talk to [the principal] because my day is really crap.’ (Jenna, Interview 1)

Jenna felt students needed a principal to be someone they knew, related to, and could believe in. She had clear beliefs about her role and the priorities for her choices, but a lack of confidence in knowing what needed to be done. “I think some [of that] became a priority just because I didn’t know how to deal with it, wasn’t sure that I was dealing with it right.”

As a result, Jenna chose to focus on the culture of her school and tried to use the CCSS to influence staff practice. “I tried to do as much as I could, laying the groundwork so that people would see it as a transition and not something completely different.” This included emphasizing small group instruction as preparation for transitioning to CCSS and use of district funds to purchase materials to support implementation. The demand on the school culture to collaborate required Jenna to build

a professional learning community as “survival required them to plan together.” She made choices in who she selected to lead teams because some individuals “can’t bring [the teachers] together.”

Jenna paid attention to team construction in the development of professional learning communities, but chose not to take a lead in the role of professional developer and recognized a potential impact of her decision.

I’m not familiar at any kind of detailed or intimate level with what’s going on. I have to rely on the reports of other people for what our strengths and weaknesses. Particularly with a new staff development teacher, she doesn’t know me as well so she might not know my vision as well and what’s important to me. The things that she’s looking for in a planning session might not be the same as the things that I would look for in a planning session. The more conversation we have, I think the closer we get to that. I think it sends a message to the staff that I don’t value the planning. I mean I don’t know if they perceive it that way but they certainly could since I’m not there does that mean that I don’t value the planning? (Jenna, Interview 1)

Jenna felt it was important to make choices that allowed her to “tap into what our different teachers’ strengths” were and “nurture” the staff culture.

In addition to being influenced by her beliefs, Jenna made choices to work on managing and attending to the politics of the school community. “I monitor the math much more closely than I monitor other subjects because of the concern out in the community.” The decision to be visible was reinforced by the belief that she had “bought goodwill with many parents by being out there [at arrival], even if it’s raining and cold or whatever.”

She explored shared leadership, but found that staff were unclear about how decisions were made. As a result of staff concerns following an unpopular decision,

I’ve put a lot more energy into saying it at staff meeting ... because we as a staff decided x, we are now moving to y. I’m just being a lot more careful about using that language as a reminder to people: [saying] ‘At the last leadership team

meeting, the leadership team decided,' which I never bothered to do before. (Jenna, Interview 1)

Being explicit about decision making was a choice addressed in order to manage the power and culture of the staff.

Politics and personal beliefs were influences, yet Jenna made the least amount of choices as a result of district expectations. She believed that principals were not effectively supervised, reported low levels of contact with her supervisor, and the absence of processes to determine if she was leading Common Core implementation in a strategic manner.

Table 6 is a matrix representing the presence or absence of reported demands, constraints, and choices reported by Jenna for each of the four systems.

Table 6

Jenna: Matrix of Demands, Constraints, and Choices for Each System

	Cultural System	Individual System	Political System	Structural System
Demands	X	X	X	X
Constraints		X	X	X
Choices	X	X	X	X

Jenna consistently reported interactions among and between the demands, constraints, and choices for all systems, except the cultural system. The relatively new nature of Jenna's role as a principal and the fact that she perceived numerous constraints may have influenced her overall view of the opportunities for choice in her work as a leader.

Roberta: Be the voice of the district

Roberta, a White female in her early 40s, had been a principal at Carson Elementary for four years at the time of the study. Carson Elementary was located in a northern, rural part of the district. At the time of the study, Carson Elementary had over

600 students, with a number of special programs for preschool, special education, and gifted students in the cluster. Roberta spent her 19-year career in the district, first as a Head Start teacher in the mid-1990s, followed by time teaching third, fourth, and fifth grades at various elementary schools. In 2000, she moved in to the role of staff development teacher, followed by district staff development specialist. She became an assistant principal in the mid-2000s, and two years later a principal intern at Carson before being appointed as permanent principal.

Roberta saw her charge to meet the expectations of the school district.

I think [the district leaders] expect me to be that instructional leader, and be in a classroom, and be providing all that feedback. I think they expect that my building is safe, and children are safe, and that I'm handling that piece...I think it depends day-by-day, whatever that I'm following up on ... timelines, and making sure I've got this paper in, or that paper in, or whatever's due. (Roberta, Interview 1)

This included being the “voice for the district” because she believed she was being paid to perform a job. The work consisted of must-do tasks for student “safety,” “visibility,” and “planning.” Roberta stated the key components of an instructional leader were:

... keeping current, making sure that I'm up on instructional strategies or new techniques. If I'm going into a classroom, I'm giving a teacher feedback, I can either reference an article or I can share ... If there's a book that I've read, I share either excerpts of that or we, as a staff, need to read something and study something, that's definitely a part of my job as well. I know that's part of the professional development, but if I'm not up on that, then they're not going to necessarily be up on that as well. (Roberta, Interview 1)

The role of professional developer was the predominant demand, particularly the first year Roberta's team began Common Core implementation. Professional development had been a significant priority to provide ideas and guidance as teams engaged in CCSS.

The professional development, while I'm a part of it, most of it is delegated to my staff development teacher and my reading specialist. I sit with them and help them plan, but that's really on them to do most of it. I feel like other things ...

like memos, information ... have to be me. I feel like that has to come from me because if I'm not the one looking at them and getting them where they need to go, then I'm too afraid it won't happen, so I hold that pretty close. (Roberta, Interview 1)

Roberta understood the expectation to be an instructional leader, but found the district demands as constraints. This included a need to respond to district memos and ensure the building operated effectively. "I can't get in the classrooms as much as I wanted, so this year, I feel like I've had more of a disconnect from the classroom than I have in any other year that I've been an administrator."

They [staff] expect me to give them feedback. They expect me to give them support. They expect me to allow them to have that time if they need to cry or complain or get something off their chest, but then also help them turn that around. "I understand you feel that way. Let's talk about how to get over it because it's not going away." It's saying, "What can we do to make this better?" They expect me...to be on their planning sessions. They expect me to find resources for them. They expect me to support where they are right now. (Roberta, Interview 1)

This represented a perceived demand to care for the emotional well-being of her staff as she described the importance of saying "good morning" to teachers, stopping by classrooms to check in "see how they are doing," and being visible. She believed the staff wanted to see her in classrooms, but "I just can't get there as much, but that's a must-do. I just can't get in there."

Roberta's beliefs and ideas about instructional leadership remained unchanged through CCSS implementation.

I still have the same view of what an instructional leader is, but I feel like ... once this is implemented across the board and we have had it under our belt for a couple years, I can go back to getting into those classrooms more frequently. It'll take me away from having to be the developer as well. I feel like I have the same vision, but I can't implement the vision fully right now. (Roberta, Interview 1)

The two largest categories of constraints for Roberta came from district

bureaucracy and school culture. She described frequent memos that involved a “really quick turnaround time,” requiring you to “stop what you’re doing” and communications included duplicative information that was “readily available...I’ve got to stop everything I’m doing to get that information together.” Additional district requirements that demanded attention included the process to obtain mileage reimbursement, “matching to a document,” “calculating on a grid” and other “stupid things like that.” In general, Roberta felt the competing priorities were rapid and challenging.

I feel like things are changing really fast. I don’t know, even though I hear the system saying, “Well, you all gave us input,” I don’t remember giving input to some things that they’re saying that are changing....When you have so many things changing and you’re trying to constantly catch up, it’s really hard to do your job and know if you’re still doing what’s expected of you. (Roberta, Interview 1)

Roberta found that instructional leadership demands and district expectations got in the way of one another. “I feel like the demands that are on us are so heavy,” “I can’t have the priorities that I want upfront,” and “I’ve had more of a disconnect from the classroom” than any other year as a principal. She felt her perceptions were not isolated to her school and talked about the attitude of principals.

I feel like this is something that’s ... it’s been on everyone’s mind, and we’re all talking about it, and we’re all frustrated. It’s really hard, particularly this year, having all of this come down....and trying to maintain a love of the job when you feel frustrated. (Roberta, Interview 1)

As the district demanded Roberta shape school culture around CCSS implementation, the attitudes of staff members were a constraint. She referenced teachers crying, feeling they were not effective, and low morale. This included comments where teachers felt overwhelmed by the demands and unsure if they could meet the expectations for the CCSS. This influenced staffing choices and team assignments in order to manage

attitude.

Each grade level's different. Some of them, I would say willful obedience for sure. Some them, extremely negative. I have one team that is incredibly negative. They can't find one thing good about the curriculum. We're making some changes on that team because I don't know if it's personalities and they just are stuck in that negative rut. (Roberta, Interview 1)

She acknowledged that attitudes were better as teams began to understand more about how to collaborate and people were "really working together," "trying to share things." Roberta provided frequent time for teams to work together as a method to address the constraining forces the culture created.

It's trying to offer them that extra time because when it's new like that and you're trying to look day-to-day, they can't really see what's coming because they're trying to focus on what I need to do today and tomorrow. In the beginning, even this year, the morale was really low. Teachers were talking about, "I used to love this job and I don't love it anymore." (Roberta, Interview 1)

Roberta lessened the constraints, but worried about next year. She provided additional team training to reduce teacher anxiety and felt her kindergarten team "loved" the curriculum and was turning a corner in their fourth year of implementation.

Attitude toward CCSS as a constraint was not limited to staff. Roberta reflected disappointment:

It's unfortunate because that's why, I think, I wanted to be a principal in the first place was to make that change on teaching learning. I honestly feel like I've been terrible this year because that's my main vision of what I should be doing, and when I can't do it, it makes me feel like I'm not doing my job correctly. (Roberta, Interview 1)

The Carson school community was a "high constraint." The written stated school mission reflected a dedication to working with families who she described as "very involved, very tight knit," and "don't care for change." Roberta spent significant time with the community. "I had to do a lot of community outreach when the new curriculum

came. I had to have night, after night, after night of information meetings. I met with more parents during the day, one-by-one, with individual concerns.” Engagement with families was critical in navigating the CCSS math.

When the math changed, I knew. As soon as I saw what was coming down and I saw how long the units were for certain things, I knew my community was going to go nuts, and they did. When we had our evenings, I had to bring out models and show them it’s not just, “Can you do the work?” We looked at, “Can you reason?” All of the strands, and they didn’t want to hear it. (Roberta, Interview 1)

This required Roberta to become an expert in the CCSS; she spent time studying the content, but saw it as a challenging “fight” that went on during the entire year. The priority role Roberta addressed was that of professional developer and teacher leader. She was the primary voice in staff meetings, professional development, and planning and established a vision for teaching and learning. She was challenged by CCSS implementation, but deferent to her role as a principal in the district. Her respect for the district influenced her choices and drove decision-making. She felt the essential role was to support teacher skill development.

Roberta wanted to facilitate a perception that she was working side-by-side with teachers. She thought about how others viewed the ways she spent her time and believed that visibility was a required component to establish credibility. “I could sit in this office 24 hours a day and not get all of my work done, so if I let that guide me, I’ll never be visible and I’ll never be out and about.”

She referred to others being able to “rely on you” and “depend on you” as essential and included the core team.

I have a phenomenal staff development teacher. I feel like if I didn’t have that person...the amount of knowledge ... she spends all her time on Common Core ... and the reading specialist because she does the reading/writing part. My staff development teacher does the math part. I feel like the two of them are such a

great team. I would worry about a school that didn't have two good people that could really help with that because they've been key. (Roberta, Interview 1)

Roberta described the staff as influential. "I think I think about them a lot when we make choices. I consider them." This included asking, "How are they going to handle it?" when she made decisions. She built on past successes and provided support when decisions were difficult for staff. She acknowledged she had to make some decisions on her own, but believed that the leadership team was the decision-making body in the school. She sought feedback, used agendas, and asked, "How do you feel?" as regular processes.

There are times when I let them know ahead of time, "We either need to come to a consensus on this, or I'm going to take your feedback and make a decision on my own." Really, it comes from the team itself. (Roberta, Interview 1)

Similarly, Roberta found the community an influential power source on choices. She knew or worked with district leaders who were leading CCSS implementation and chose to take an active role in providing feedback based in her community experience.

While I respect the county that I work for, and I respect what they tell me to do, and I'm going to filter that respect down to the staff, if I feel I need to go somewhere and have that conversation, I do it with my higher ups rather than making it sound like I'm complaining to the teachers. (Roberta, Interview 1)

In this same way, Roberta made choices that included and involved the community. "With whatever choices we've made, I try to think about that one group of parents and before it even goes out, how am I going to handle that when it happens?"

Roberta honored the priorities established by the district, even when those priorities were in conflict with what she believed she should be doing or how she wanted to spend her time.

I think just because of what we've had to deal with, especially this year, not only the new curriculum, but a new grading system. It's taken me away from being a

true instructional leader in my head. I feel like I have to focus in on what is it in their report card? What does that mean to be standards based grading and the whole Common Core? The district and what they've given us has made me change. (Roberta, Interview 1)

Table 7 is a matrix representing the presence or absence of reported demands, constraints, and choices reported by Roberta for each of the four systems.

Table 7

Roberta: Matrix of Demands, Constraints, and Choices for Each System

	Cultural System	Individual System	Political System	Structural System
Demands	X	X		X
Constraints	X	X	X	X
Choices	X	X	X	X

The interaction between demands and constraints on choices was present in Roberta's perceptions of her work. She noted a number of needs to attend to the culture of her building while simultaneously aiming to meet the expectations of the district. These interacted with her own feelings about her role as an instructional leader and influenced her priorities and decision making.

Vivian: Continuous improvement

Vivian, a Black female in her late 30s, was principal of Darren Elementary for six years at the time of this study. Darren Elementary was located in a middle class community in the northeastern part of the district. Darren Elementary was moderately diverse with majority White students and 15-20% for Asian, Hispanic and Black students. Darren Elementary had special education programs that served the surrounding neighborhood schools including a program for students with preschool and special education needs.

Vivian earned her B.A. in Sociology in the mid-1990s, her M.A. in administration in the early 2000s, and at the time of the study was pursuing her doctorate in educational leadership. She began her career working with children and families as a counselor in the mid-1990s before transitioning to a general and special education teacher position in another district in the state. She joined the current district as an elementary special education teacher in the early 2000's and later became an assistant principal. After two years, Vivian moved to Darren Elementary to complete her principal internship and was later appointed acting principal. Her formal appointment came in the late 2000's as permanent principal of Darren Elementary. In addition to her work as principal, Vivian served as a trainer for new employee orientation, a cluster representative to a principal's advocacy group, and had been asked to serve on interview panels for district level positions.

Vivian was candid and focused on the impact of the CCSS on the work of leaders. She talked about distributed leadership as a reaction to CCSS and used culture to influence how she chose individuals to support implementation. Her primary role was to create the conditions for teachers to do the work of implementation through key instructional leadership tasks.

...collaborative planning, ensuring that our data chats are not structured around just reporting data, but that there's some intervention, planning, evaluation and monitoring going on and its ongoing, and ensuring that I have a competent, highly qualified teacher in those classrooms. If not, take whatever steps I need to provide them with the development they need to grow and learn and become highly qualified. (Vivian, Interview 1)

Vivian perceived a number of demands, with the greatest source from the school district. She felt a need to respond to the "social-political climate" and referenced safety drills, custody issues, policies, action memos, and deadlines as responsibilities. This

included a need to “manage my school building” and deal with issues to “avoid having them go above my head.” She referenced communication and distribution of student performance information as critical.

I have to show that I’m implementing the county expectations whether it’s curriculum, whether it’s other programming or practices that are going on in the building. I have to ensure that those things are happening with fidelity. There’s a big piece of monitoring and evaluation that goes into my job. It’s to prove whether these things are going on and what are the impacts, what are the results, what are impacts, what are the outcomes and what changes I’m being told to make. (Vivian, Interview 1)

She connected demands to her role as an instructional leader for CCSS implementation and a need to “communicate the big picture,” the “vision of the county,” and “long range thinking” about student learning.

...ensuring that teachers know how to teach it [CCSS]. I think it’s essential to make sure that students are actually learning that I have to do. Specific things that I have to do as an instructional leader to make sure that I develop schedules that will allow effective teaching of the Common Core, effective planning of the Common Core. Making sure that students know it and, of course, my parent community. (Vivian, Interview 1)

Efforts to support “continuous improvement” and a need to know the progress of the school in relationship to the district vision were demands. Vivian noted the vision had changed “very little” since Common Core and schools in the district were working on “developing critical thinking for 21st century learners...Once Common Core came along all it did was put everything all in one place. Now I know it’s an expectation across the country.”

Vivian’s feelings about the CCSS included statements such as “I like it a lot,” “it creates a really good foundation for kids early on,” “I wish I had it. I wish my son had it,” “I see the big picture in it.” Her perception of the CCSS was positive, but she acknowledged it as a demand.

I'm going to say for myself, I'm the type of principal that I really, really enjoy. I really understood the old curriculum and I knew it. As an instructional leader I was able to speak to it across the board. Once the Common Core curriculum came along it's a whole new way of thinking. (Vivian, Interview 1)

One area that Vivian worried about was assessment of Common Core. She felt a "mediocre level of stress" and "closing the achievement gap is still a mystery to me."

I don't have a full sense. I know all the right things to do, which is to ensure that multiple measures are in place for kids at this, I would say, at a micro level, but more at a macro level when I look at the summative results. I always wonder if I'm doing the right things to make sure that's going well. (Vivian, Interview 1)

The ambiguity and stress Vivian felt as a principal was present among staff and transferred to choices focused on navigating change gradually. The CCSS was "drastically new" and a change that was "not that easy." This included a demand to "shape where we are and make sure it matches where we need to go" and create the conditions that supported staff engagement and retention. Vivian was cognizant of the need to engage in CCSS implementation and sustain morale. She thanked teachers and provided praise.

I always put this expectation on myself, but I'm going to assume that they do too, that I want them to continue to enjoy their job of teaching because the demand is so high. I'm so afraid that some of these wonderful teachers that work so hard are going to leave the profession. We won't have really good teachers to teach our kids. (Vivian, Interview 1)

To further support teachers, Vivian chose to develop collaborative planning, be visible, address student behavior, encourage staff, and made deliberate efforts to focus on staff engagement.

That engagement for staff is huge because, that has increased too because I would say the Common Core is such a huge transition. It's a new way of thinking; it's quite an adept curriculum, that I feel like I want to keep them engaged and enjoying it. I feel like doing anything I can do to appreciate them like giving them gifts of time. That being number one. I will cover assemblies and not allow them to do that. (Vivian, Interview 1)

In addition to working with staff, Vivian described the need to ensure the teachers were aligned with her message. This included addressing the community's need for time to be spent sharing information about CCSS implementation.

Typically, when I say they are so committed and they bought into the whole idea, they like the Common Core, too. I'm asking them to come along with me for this ride that I could be doing by myself. They don't have to do. No, they decided, you know what, even though we had more than our excess number of nights out per the contract, this is absolutely necessary. (Vivian, Interview 1)

The work within the larger school community to provide information was based on the culture of the community and a need to be involved. "They [teachers] know that down the road what's going to happen is going to make their life easier if the parents really understand it."

Vivian did not attend teacher planning, but led the instruction of the building through professional development. "I've become more of a staff developer than in the past." She relied on other members of her team to ensure CCSS implementation occurred with fidelity. She delegated aspects of monitoring as a result of CCSS implementation because "it's something I can't get through daily. I can't get to grade level team meetings daily."

Vivian referenced her work "as a manager" for securing technology, assigning work space, and staffing. References to the way information was communicated in the school system included "demanding," "redundancy," and "deadlines" for the number of memos, deadlines, and requests that require her attention. She noted the tasks "drive me nuts" and impact on her work as "everybody's demanding, they need it now all the time."

The time Vivian spent addressing individual students, special education process, legal issues, attending meetings outside of her building, or responding to parents

constrained her priorities. The need to attend to the demands from the community was an outgrowth of email and an associated expectation of responsiveness.

If I don't get to a parent quick enough because this child had discipline issues during the day, I get three or four emails from these people. Just one person was just going off because nobody called her immediately what had happened. Even though you try your best to explain or like, okay, I got to you today, people don't understand anything. They don't really care about my role. (Vivian, Interview 1)

She wanted "to try to keep them [parents] at bay," but believed that working with families was "something I'm supposed to do."

Vivian understood the district priorities, but did not feel she managed them effectively. "Do I feel like I'm at the top of my game in all of them? No, but I do feel like I'm managing their priorities and their priorities are my priorities." One specific district practice described as constraining was the hiring and staffing process. Vivian understood policies for hiring and assigning staff, but wished it was "more flexible... [and] based on their [staff] strengths and the needs of my building." The absence of control in this area was described as difficult, not only for Vivian, but also for the staff.

Teacher contracts, making sure that you're staying within those specific guidelines can constrain my work. Making sure that you're not too demanding, otherwise you're going to hear from the union. That could be a constraint on my work. You can't be too demanding. (Vivian, Interview 1)

The attitude of staff toward CCSS was positive, however the norms of the community contrasted with aspects of CCSS implementation.

Sometimes they have ideas that don't quite match the school and I have to sort through all of that..... I see how it works, but I can't quite go that way because here are some policies or different things that will impact you being able to do that. I like a strong instructional focus at the school and sometimes it gets a little on the social side. (Vivian, Interview 1)

She worked through this by examining alignment between CCSS and school activities, but found that "they're very, very strict on traditions around here" and the CCSS was not

quickly embraced. As a result, Vivian increased her work with the community to support the vision for teaching and learning. “One of my roles, I’ve spent so much more time with my community. That has definitely increased gravely because I have to bring them along the way. They don’t understand.” She visited other schools, looked at demonstration videos, and attended meetings to hear examples of what other schools were doing. When she worked with the community she provided long range thinking about student learning, including statistics about workforce preparation. Vivian also modified school academic nights and prioritized addressing community needs. The community was skeptical about the Common Core, however she listened to them and aimed for shared expectations. She addressed parent concerns about homework as a communication tool.

I said to them [teachers], ‘Well how will parents know that what they’re getting is enriching?’ What can we do to translate that? ... We modified the homework to reflect some of the, reflect more of the Common Core expectations. As a result parents are now seeing that they’re so challenged that they can’t even help their kids with the work, all the work’s coming in incorrectly. (Vivian, Interview 1)

The influence of parents and students on Vivian’s instructional leadership choices was seen as a choice to “make sure I hire the right teachers for their kids.” She made changes in order to address the larger political climate and how the community felt about classroom instruction. Vivian’s choices were in relationship to maintaining the power and status of the school. “It is because, in the end, my community is very proud of this school...my staff is very proud, I think I’m the cause of all this proudness to a certain degree.”

Vivian felt that her choices were connected to the district vision for her role as an instructional leader and in her job expectations.

The one thing I love that the county does, they don't just tell you for the sake of doing stuff to do it. They actually have good research to back it up and almost every staff development that I've ever gone to they give me the research connection first. To me it becomes purposeful, I know it's something that we should do, we need to do. There are positive results that are communicated behind it and if it's doable, that we can do it, we make it happen at our school we'll do it. (Vivian, Interview 1)

Table 8 is a matrix representing the presence or absence of reported demands, constraints, and choices reported by Vivian for each of the four systems.

Table 8

Vivian: Matrix of Demands, Constraints, and Choices for Each System

	Cultural System	Individual System	Political System	Structural System
Demands	X	X	X	X
Constraints	X		X	X
Choices	X	X	X	X

Vivian reported demands and choices from all of the systems in the school. Vivian's priorities and how she spent her time as an instructional leader appeared to be the result of the interaction of her respect for and belief in the district as well as building on the culture and climate of the school community.

Shirin: What's crazy and not crazy

Shirin, a White female in her mid-40s, had been principal at Lee Elementary for the seven years at the time of the study. Lee Elementary was located in a middle class community in the northern part of the district and was a diverse school with the majority of students White or Latino. Lee Elementary had the largest poverty rate of any school in the sample with 27% of students identified as recipients of FARMS. It also included a special program for preschool students with special education needs to serve nearby elementary schools.

Shirin began her career in the mid-1990s as a special education teacher in Virginia and after six years, moved into her role as a special educator in the district. In the early 2000s she became an assistant principal and after two years moved into a principal internship. She was then appointed acting principal followed by principal at Lee Elementary in the mid-2000's. She served as a presenter to principal colleagues over the past three years on her work to establish an instructional culture in the school. She was also a representative to a district level elementary principal's advocacy group for her cluster colleagues.

Shirin was confident and shared readily with an energetic, positive, and robust communication style. Shirin was passionate, but focused and did not appear to be seeking accolades or recognition. She preferred to be left to lead her building without direct involvement from central office staff. She seemed to be clear on the state of building culture, where the staff needed to grow, and confident that many of the Common Core requirements were in place.

An emphasis on instructional leadership was embedded throughout Shirin's responses.

...knowing the curriculum. You don't have to be an expert but I have definitely found that by doing the math data chats and by reading the weekly planners every week, I can visually see the work.....because I'm doing these things with instruction, I can talk it and I know it... You have to have some understanding of how to maneuver through the curriculum, but know what's going on because if I have a parent walk in and try to question, if I can't speak it ... the teacher could have done the best job possible, but if I can't talk the same language, they're not going to believe in the curriculum. You have to be able to do that aspect of it.
(Shirin, Interview 1)

Shirin demonstrated knowledge of curriculum and direct involvement in team planning and monitoring of the planning process. She reported commitment to classroom visits,

and acknowledged the needs of triage that take her away from that priority. She had a positive attitude toward CCSS, stated, “I love it!” and noted that the school could navigate the change effectively.

The primary demands reported were to know curriculum, visit classrooms, provide feedback, and follow the policies of the district. Additional demands included working with her community, answering parents, being responsive, and addressing issues that got in the way of implementation.

Shirin rarely reported demands without simultaneously describing her choices or perceived constraints. She was clear on district expectations, but stated she made decisions based on what made sense for her school and her role as an instructional leader.

When [the district] was doing all the trainings on the Common Core with our little teams and they would say, “Oh, you can do common team planning this way and you should have this person here and that person here.” I looked at my team and I said, “We’re not changing what we do.” I said, “This is great and all, but what we’re doing actually works for us”... I’m not having the reading specialist and the staff development teachers do all this pre-planning for teams. Teams need to know the curriculum. (Shirin, Interview 1)

Shirin took district expectations and would “look at it through the lens of what’s crazy and what’s not crazy.” She worked directly with teams because, “I’m doing these things with instruction, I can talk it and I know it.”

Knowledge of the curriculum was connected to choice to discuss student learning with teachers. She described talking with teachers about content in order to guide teachers to examine proficiency on Common Core indicators. She reviewed “almost every math formative” completed by students and valued working shoulder to shoulder with teams.

I’ve been able to guide them because I’m always maneuver in it with them at different aspects and we’ve solved some possible issues because I was able to

catch it...I've just always been hands-on though with the instruction; as a former Special Ed teacher ... kind of my lens. I'm always looking at the individual kid, but how can the teacher be best at what they do instructionally? (Shirin, Interview 1)

Shirin had positive feelings about the CCSS, but believed in the need to be a sounding board for staff during implementation as part of her role to shape culture.

Being an active listener so that if they are moaning and groaning, that I listen and let them moan and groan and not try to shut that down because they're valid feelings. I listen and then I'm their cheerleader...I'm like, 'I know you have so much anxiety and you're so afraid of Common [Core]... but I promise you, I'm going to be there for you...I'll tell you, I'll listen, but I'm also going to tell how I can help get you through this. (Shirin, Interview 1)

This value of encouraging and guiding teachers was seen in Shirin's perception of the demands to provide resources to staff. Shirin reviewed instructional materials requests and would not deny "what they need." She believed the choice to honor requests reinforced a supportive culture.

Shirin ensured school teams worked collaboratively because, "[Coming] to consensus...It's needed with the Common Core. They may not always agree, but you have to come to some consensus." The demand to effectively communicate was "huge," and included attending to all forms of communication as a "major priority." The staff and community came to expect regular communication from her and "sometimes, they're like, 'You didn't get back to me yet,'" as most responses were provided within a few hours.

The communication demands extended to the control of the community and distribution of information. Shirin took phone calls "right away" and found that "if you let them linger even 24 hours, they'll call me three times in a day. I just deal with them."

This need to respond to questions from the community was not limited to Shirin and she believed that teachers must be able to address questions about CCSS.

I told my third grade teachers.... 'I expect that you really know what you're doing because if you have a parent call you and you cannot eloquently speak about what you're doing and why you're doing it, they're going to become a problem for us.'
(Shirin, Interview 1)

Managing the community was a demand, however Shirin described the constraints of Common Core implementation as few. "I don't think there's anything hindering it. I'm [just] tired of the county repeating things." She described the work as redundant and often asked herself, "Okay, is there something new?" resulting in a mixed opinions toward the district implementation plan.

Shirin noted few issues with staff attitude and described them as "good teachers [that] don't like change." She felt all teachers would make the transition to Common Core, but the "collaboration aspect" was an area of need to "think about some things differently" and understand that what they did to be successful may not work any longer.

It's just sometimes it's just their viewpoint and I have to say, "Look, this isn't [the district]. This is not the state ... Common Core is a national thing here." For some of them, it's their personality because they've been teaching for 20-something years and I value them at how they teach it. It's just sometimes the attitude. (Shirin, Interview 1)

Understanding the need to manage the attitudes of her staff, Shirin chose to be to be visible in classrooms. However, while kids were "excited to see me" and teachers "value the fact that we care about what's happening in the rooms," she "wishes it could happen more." She took a visible role and described "walking around the building" as an important task, paired with active and consistent communication.

My goal every day is to hopefully get into those classrooms, whether it's an hour. That is always the goal. I might have a focus of what I want to look for, but the day, it could be because a parent called. It could be because I have a kid who's

coming to the office, could be one of those kinds of crazy things. It could be a staff member who walks in because I always have an open door policy. (Shirin, Interview 1)

Shirin described her positive feelings about the CCSS math content as something she “firmly” believed in and said to detractors, “I’m going to let the [school] system deal with you.” She stated that “I don’t worry about stuff until I have to worry about it” and “I’m going to focus on my job at hand,” but acknowledged the community as a power source. “[The community] sees something that I didn’t know was happening” which influenced her to be more observant in those areas.

Shirin reported accessing district resources as political. When her prior reading specialist “knew the higher-ups” she got favors in the form of training and support. Her new reading specialist did not have those same connections and Shirin felt limitations to what she could obtain.

The key person in your building doesn’t really have that contact up there, it could take a really long time or you might ask somebody else to ask to get your help and assistance. It just never happens. (Shirin, Interview 1)

She needed to get better at “the politics of it” and found processes to obtain resources and information got in the way. She talked about a desire to not “have to go through my [supervisors]” and “you don’t get the information as quickly as you want it.”

Resources constraints included the “battle between instructional materials.” She talked about technology to teach the CCSS and had to choose between purchasing digital tools or buying classroom materials. Resource constraints were also reported for accessing facility needs. Shirin described multiple attempts to secure portable classrooms as enrollment increased and, after two denials of the request, someone came to her school and said, “Oh, you really do have some issues.”

It really shouldn't be happening, but the person was enlightened about my really, truly constraint issues or really good instructional spaces and I might now, come next year, get one or two portables because my enrollment is not decreasing, it's progressively so ... The politics of that have ... I'm not a principal who really, if I have an issue, it's got to be pretty bad for me to speak up about it. I'm not one of those people that make a lot of waves or noise or complain. I don't really do that. That one, I was like, and that was great, I've got a problem that they solved. I think, and that doesn't happen very much. (Shirin, Interview 1)

Shirin saw choice in her work and made decisions as a reflection of what she believed, valued, or felt was important to the culture of her school. In examining her role as a professional developer, Shirin chose to deliver expectations to staff on CCSS implementation because of a belief that messages from the principal were more likely to be followed.

Shirin didn't delegate CCSS implementation in order to be strategic in how she used her team.

Everything involved the transition planning...how to even go on the computer, find the curriculum, my staff development teacher and I did it together. We planned the training together...I would say I'm more strategic in utilizing the reading specialist and the staff development teacher in our trainings, but I can't say, "No," I haven't delegated really anything out with the Common Core that I haven't been a part of when it has to do with expectations. (Shirin, Interview 1)

Her decision to be active in leading the building through CCSS implementation came from understanding the personalities of her team. She was sometimes "behind the scenes" and would often "guide," "reflect," and "talk it through" in order to make suggestions and move teams ahead. This included identifying experts on staff and asking others to lead the work to learn technology. She believed that shared leadership strategies made her vision pervasive.

Shirin was "always there from the very beginning" and chose to get teachers started as they navigated the implementation of CCSS. In response to the lack of time the

district provided to train teachers, she provided coverage for teachers to extend planning time prior to the start of the school year. Over time she pulled back her direct involvement because “I do trust their judgment with the curriculum” and staff had “proven to me they do know how to understand curriculum.” Shirin “knew [teachers] were going to be freaked out” and the extra planning time made staff more relaxed. This outcome reinforced Shirin’s thinking about the types of choices she made as a leader. As she prepared to navigate two new grade levels into CCSS implementation she intended to be “more strategic” to ensure staff understood planning expectations. The collaboration CCSS implementation required guided Shirin toward use of staff and teaching assignments so that teams “don’t derail each other and not do what they need to do.”

Shirin was involved and “always had my hand in everything.” She felt other principals delegated professional development to the staff development teacher, but in her case she didn’t often transfer professional development planning or staff meetings to others. Shirin solicited input, filtered suggestions through her view of the “big picture”, shared the rationale, honored ideas as “good ones,” and let people know what needed to be done first before a new step could be taken. She discussed her vision with the reading specialist and sent her in to specific teams to have critical conversations about instruction.

Shirin’s choices allowed her to speak with families from a place of knowledge; as a result, the staff came to expect her to be an instructional leader. “...I have always liked instruction and I am just a hands-on principal in that way.” Her leadership choices were the result of looking “through the instructional lens” and she shared things that she felt were important for the school.

I’m going to focus on what I need to focus on in my building and when you can get me more specific information [on other ideas] then I will start to focus on it

and I will then figure out how will I convey that information, but I'm not going to rile up my teachers over something that no one has answers on. (Shirin, Interview 1)

Table 9 is a matrix representing the presence or absence of reported demands, constraints, and choices reported by Shirin for each of the four systems.

Table 9

Shirin: Matrix of Demands, Constraints, and Choices for Each System

	Cultural System	Individual System	Political System	Structural System
Demands	X	X	X	X
Constraints	X		X	X
Choices	X	X	X	X

Shirin articulated demands from each of the systems. While she noted constraints, her choices appeared to be the reflection of a desire to ensure staff demonstrated teaching and learning practices consistent with her vision.

Barbara: Alone to lead

Barbara, a White female in her early 40s, had been principal at Frederick Elementary for three years at the time of the study. Frederick Elementary was in an affluent community in the southwestern part of the district and included a program for students with social and behavioral needs. Demographically, Frederick Elementary was a majority White student population with very low levels of poverty.

Barbara earned her B.A. in Psychology and an M.A. in Elementary Education in the early 1990s from Mid-Atlantic universities. She earned a certificate in Administration and Supervision in the early 2000s and served her entire 19-year career in the district. Barbara spent six years as a classroom teacher, followed by two years as a technology teacher. In the early 2000s, she became an assistant principal and moved on

to her principal internship after two years. In the mid-2000s, Barbara became principal at a small school in the northern part of the district. After five years at that school, she moved to Frederick Elementary in the southern part of the district. Frederick Elementary was in the midst of an onsite construction project for a classroom addition, including a new cafeteria, gymnasium, and outdoor space. The front of the school consisted of various portable classrooms. It should be noted that while the study was ongoing, Barbara submitted her end of year resignation from the school system to take a leadership position in a neighboring district.

Barbara was eager to discuss her work as an instructional leader with a viewpoint that was candid and communicated frustration with the principalship. She described the key instructional leadership practices of a principal as:

... ensuring that teachers are looking at it [curriculum] differently, that they are embracing a different approach and the fidelity to the curriculum. To really put it in one word, it's that fidelity, that there is that happening and that consistency across schools. (Barbara, Interview 1)

Barbara identified a clear sense of constraints and was the only principal in the study without an assistant principal. As a result of managing the administrative, construction, and special education needs in a high impact and affluent community, she reported "tremendous effort to make choices focused on instruction."

As the only principal in the study who served at more than one school in the district during her career, Barbara reported that demands for principals were the same throughout the district and included understanding the job.

From my point of view, the system expects me to take care of this building, whatever happens within it, and address those needs and ensure that children are getting the appropriate instruction. Whether that's ensuring that teachers are following the curriculum or that a teacher's being effective, that instruction is

occurring, that my building is safe, that things are well taken care of because they can't possibly run all the buildings. (Barbara, Interview 1)

She shared that the district was there for support and assistance, but she was ultimately accountable for the outcomes in her school.

Our expectations are we do what [the district] and the state of Maryland expects. We don't create our own path. You can but it's here's your end goals, here are your objectives, and so forth. To me, some of it just falls in line with the expectations. (Barbara, Interview 1)

Barbara described the district meetings on the former curriculum as ones she could miss and read the handouts to "figure out" what she needed to know. However, she shifted her understanding about the importance of leading professional development when CCSS implementation began. "Now it's more about instructional practices and the curriculum and what you need to bring back to your teachers." Barbara identified immediate changes that needed to happen for teams entering CCSS implementation.

We're all going through this change. The state is changing it, so [the district] is changing, so we have to change with it. Because we have to do what's asked of us, that has forced everyone to kind of come together and change the vision and look at it and how do we do it. (Barbara, Interview 1)

She used the Common Core to emphasize expectations and told staff, "It doesn't matter what you've been told in the past. Here's what it is now."

Barbara referenced her work as a building manager as a consistent demand due to construction on her school facility. Frederick Elementary's parent community was involved and supportive of the school and created a foundation that provided considerable additional sources of funding to the school construction project. As a result, Barbara needed to notify the community of daily work and project completion and regular access to the principal was expected.

This sense of access extended to how power was leveraged to influence the direction of the school. Barbara worked with families to “make things fit,” so that parents felt she was partnering with them when CCSS implementation required traditional learning activities be adjusted or discontinued. She attended to the community instead of working directly with teachers and the initial implementation as “challenging” for the community.

[Parents] want replies from me, not the teachers. They want information. If I don't give it to them, they go above my head, and they are contacting my [supervisor]. I've had parents contact the state of Maryland saying I am not doing my job. (Barbara, Interview 1)

Parents did not drive choices, but were considered, particularly for sharing information.

“You have to supply [information] way ahead of time and communicate with them and be ready to explain things because they don't like to be in the dark.”

Barbara addressed the culture of the school during the first year of CCSS implementation, when rollout was optional. The district provided extra planning time for schools that opted in the first year and Barbara used that year to shift the culture of the building. She used the momentum to “carry us through” and considered the challenges part of the adjustment period of “everybody getting to know me and me getting to know them.” Her teachers were not early adopters, but they “embraced it” because she emphasized the changes instructional practices versus content. She looked at how teams spent time together and established clear expectations for team planning.

My teachers like their jobs. They like to teach. They like being here. They like being with each other, and I have really high-functioning teams. I mean, they all come to the table and contribute and share the responsibilities and so forth, so it [CCSS] really has not done anything except almost give a common ground for all the grade levels. (Barbara, Interview 1)

She did not label her teachers as struggling and had “not heard any gripes about the new

curriculum.”

Barbara described the role of professional developer and instructional leader as priority components of her work to be sure teachers were using the curriculum and engaged in collaborative planning.

I think [collaborative planning is] really critical with the new curriculum....their meetings were more about the upcoming field trip and who’s going to do what. That’s a business meeting. That’s not instructional planning, and getting teachers to know the difference between the two kinds of meetings. (Barbara, Interview 1)

Instructional leadership expectations and staff roles evolved due to the philosophy of the Common Core.

The role of my staff development teacher has changed dramatically with [Common Core] in terms of teams really needing her presence, needing involvement, needing that person to bounce ideas off of and moving away from paper, pencil tasks and being more interactive and more student focused. (Barbara, Interview 1)

Understanding the changes to planning and how teams should collaborate were demands, however Barbara perceived a number of matched constraints. The district organizational constraints impacted time and instructional leadership choices. The absence of an assistant principal and full time counselor for the school resulted in a need to manage the building and student behavior at a cost of active involvement in the instructional program.

Barbara often left teacher planning meetings in order to address issues that would have been handled by other staff. Barbara chose to delegate actions that she would otherwise have led and asked:

“Would you be willing to kind of head that up and take care of that and take a look at that?” Sometimes they’ll delegate to staff members who bring things up as concerns or as things that they want to look at differently. It kind of depends, but I do have to delegate things, and my secretaries get delegated things too. (Barbara, Interview 1)

She understood the job responsibilities of her position, but found the district expectations constraints because they didn't take in to account the daily work of leading a building. She was frustrated by the superintendent's message to have a "laser-like focus on instruction" and while she wants that "more than anything," it was difficult to achieve. "I'm not the principal I want to be. I'm not the instructional leader that I want to be...I can't do that here because I don't have the time."

Barbara's work to guide professional development was also constrained by the time available to work with her staff.

We can spend, as principals, an entire morning at curriculum update ... I mean, think about how many times we've spent a half day talking about math alone and the philosophy. Do you have those half days to do with your staff to really develop that philosophy and that understanding? No. That doesn't equal out in terms of the amount of time we spend as administrators on it and then what you come back and area able to bring to your staff. Then with the contracts of you can only require this much meeting time, you can only expect this much and so forth. Those certainly impact the time. (Barbara, Interview 1)

The CCSS took "more time in the sense of the thought processes" and Barbara was unable to support teachers. She did not reference the union as a constraint, but noted that she was "aware of the time I can expect teachers to stay after school or meet."

Staff had a generally positive attitude toward the CCSS, however Barbara stated the attitude she confronted most was her own. She indicated she felt it was a "losing battle" to provide feedback to the district about CCSS implementation as they always will say, "Hmm, no. You've got to do this."

Access to information was a constraint within the school community, but a resource at the district level. Barbara referred to people in the curriculum office and said, "I feel like I have networks... If you're a new principal and you don't know the players as well, you may not even know who to call or who to e-mail or who to reach out to."

Although accessing information was not a constraint, technology supports to implement CCSS were initially minimal. Barbara worked with her PTA to obtain funding for technology as the school awaited the initiative to provide interactive whiteboards for all schools.

Barbara did not believe she was an expert in curriculum and it was “not my interest”, but wanted to meet district expectations.

I am a rule follower...I think back to my program [in school administration], and my least favorite class was the curriculum development class. It just was not my thing, so me as a person, I know that's not where my strength is in making that decision of what you would do, what you wouldn't do. If this is what the county expects, great, then this is what we do. (Barbara, Interview 1)

Her deference to the district demands superseded her feelings about the CCSS. “I don't think that my school, or really any school, was in a place to say, ‘We're not going to teach this content.’” She listened at leadership team meetings and allowed others to describe the state of implementation. She stepped in if decisions did not match with the curriculum, but trusted them to teach in the way they felt was appropriate for CCSS implementation.

She “rarely” attended team planning, but supported teachers so that they could “focus on the job they need to do.” This included addressing student behavior immediately so that, “If I can give them that break too, it helps them keep their sanity and not get bogged down or frustrated or kill their morale. I look at it that I support in whatever way I can.”

Barbara relied on members of school team to carry out the work and believed that delegating instructional leadership to others impacted a clear vision. She sensed a “loss of continuity” and felt that CCSS implementation messages were ones she should carry

forward. She asked herself, “Are they losing some of their importance or understanding that this is not just advice from a colleague but rather this is the way it will be done?”

Barbara delegated many instructional leadership tasks to her staff development teacher, but felt that there was little impact except for “those rogue folks.” The leadership team was the primary group that provided input and informed her choices through “shared leadership with parameters.”

I try to always be like, "What do we want to see happen?" There are some things where I have to be the ultimate decision maker and it's not about a group consensus, but as much as I can, I try to have it be that leadership team. (Barbara, Interview 1)

This regard for the leadership team extended to staff and influenced her choices. “If you make decisions without considering them [staff]; you’re only as good as your last decision.” She spoke with staff and explained the outcome of possible choices. She also met with students to seek input about school operations.

We have to allow them [students] to have that voice. I mean, we have to build those leadership qualities, so we do try to have them be a part of it as much as you can. I think it's tricky at the elementary level because they don't have quite all those big picture things, but when they do come with those ideas, it's taking the time to sit down with them and talk to them about the big picture so that they learn from it. (Barbara, Interview 1)

Barbara perceived “local school decisions” as ones she had the most control over. This included flexibility with how students were grouped, teams selected, the school schedule, and Common Core implemented. She followed the district model for homeroom math instruction when some colleagues continued to regroup students by ability because “I don’t think that I am smarter than the curriculum writers.”

Table 10 is a matrix representing the presence or absence of reported demands, constraints, and choices reported by Barbara for each of the four systems.

Table 10

Barbara: Matrix of Demands, Constraints, and Choices for Each System

	Cultural System	Individual System	Political System	Structural System
Demands	X	X	X	X
Constraints	X	X	X	X
Choices	X	X	X	X

Barbara noted demands and constraints as significant influences on how she perceived her role and leadership choices. Barbara reported needs to attend to the community, constraints on her time, and challenges from staffing allocations. As a result, Barbara made a range of choices that both reflected these demands and constraints, but also contributed to her beliefs about the principalship.

Demands, constraints, choices, and patterns

All participants had related understandings of their position, but viewed the climate, organizational demands, and power structures differently. This included developing processes and procedures that clarified how individuals in the school worked together. In addition, a demand to monitor and support morale, including navigating through the change process with positive self-efficacy was presented. Table 11 indicates the presence or absence of demands, constraints, choice themes, and systems across all individual participants.

Table 11

Demands, Constraints, and Choices Patterns and Interpretations

Concept	Theme	System	Georgina	Jenna	Roberta	Vivian	Shirin	Barbara
Demands	Climate/ Culture	Cultural	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Policies, Memos, & Facilities	Structural	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Power management	Political	X	X		X	X	X
	Beliefs about Role	Individual	X	X	X	X	X	X
Constraints	Time	Structural		X	X	X	X	X
	Organizational Hierarchy	Structural		X	X	X	X	X
	Resources/ Power Distribution/ Community	Political		X	X	X	X	X
	Staff Attitude	Cultural			X	X	X	X
	Principal Attitude	Individual		X	X			X
Choices	Beliefs, Values, Ideals	Individual	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Climate/ Culture	Cultural	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Power Influence	Political	X	X	X	X	X	X
	District Expectations	Structural		X	X	X	X	X

All participants perceived clear demands for roles and responsibilities. This included student safety, building management, action memos, policies, and instructional leadership. All but one principal noted demands for how to understand and manage the power of the school community, including parents, district staff, and students as stakeholder groups. All principals' shared individual expectations for their work, including conceptual ideas about job expectations.

Constraints were reported by five principals and reflected three consistent themes. First, navigating organizational hierarchy and processes and procedures that must be followed, presented challenges. Constraints were also connected to the variable of time, including time-demanding tasks or the absence of time to attend to all of the

responsibilities of the principalship. Additional constraints encompassed access to resources, navigating the larger political network, and community engagement. Staff attitude toward CCSS implementation was a challenge and included principal beliefs about the CCSS as barriers.

Choices were driven by a variety of factors across all participants. The scope of responsibility, a desire to meet district expectations, and preferences for particular tasks were influences. This included assessments of school strengths and professional development priorities. All principals reported influences from the larger political context, including a desire to satisfy parent concerns, attend to student needs, and position the school positively in the district.

The following narrative matrices reflect the themes and evidence to support the findings. This data answers the research questions on demands, constraints, and choices through the lens of the social system of schools [Tables 12, 13, 14, & 15].

Table 12

Narrative Matrix of Demands by System and Theme for All Participants

Theme	System	Georgina	Jenna	Roberta	Vivian	Shirin	Barbara
Climate/Culture	Cultural	Maintain positive climate; take the temperature; “increase the will so teachers can teach”	More training on how to be a team leader; collaboration, respect, excellence	Emotional well-being of staff; provide time to vent and get things off their chest, problem solve and provide support for morale	“Shape where we are and make sure it matches where we need to go”; PLC; need to guide staff toward gradual change	Ensuring staff hear each other’s perspectives; ensure collaboration; be available and responsive to staff and families	Being sure that staff maintain commitment and “high-functioning teams”; ensure collaboration to teach differently
Policies, Memos, & Facilities	Structural	Use policies to guide work, develop PLCs, “make sure every child reaches their ultimate goal educationally, socially, emotionally, and academically”	School Improvement Plan, focus on race and equity, provide clear expectations for planning	Represent the district image; be in classrooms and provide feedback, safe building, meet memo action timelines; guide professional development	Communicate the big picture for 21 st century learning skills; “Manage my school building”; monitoring and evaluation of curriculum; develop schedules that allow for effective planning	Visit classrooms; be aware of district policies; ensure collaborative planning	“Do what the [the district] and the state of Maryland expects”; take care of building, ensuring teachers are following the curriculum, address performance issues, building safety
Power Management	Political	Hire teachers that serve as role models for students and meet the community’s expectations	Work to support math; advocate for school needs and facility requests	Provide access to information and be available to parents	“Be in charge of my community”; share information; align actions with school	Provide effective communication; direct parents to resources	Provide access to information and resources for community, staff, and students
Beliefs about Role	Individual	“I became an Elementary Principal because I feel that I should increase the will so teachers can teach. Make sure they have all the materials and get out of their way. I think the best job that I can do is hire the best and the brightest.”	Use the school improvement plan to set the vision; get everybody on the same page using the school improvement plan	“Be the voice” for the district; make sure students are safe, be visible, retain and train teachers to be effective	Know the curriculum and be able to speak to it; ensure that teachers enjoy teaching and remain in the profession; support collaboration; address student behavior, be visible and accessible	Take the information and know what works for your school; know curriculum in order to guide teachers; be an active listener, support staff and provide resources for them to teach CCSS	Meet system expectation; make sure that the teachers are using the new curriculum and planning as expected

Table 13

Narrative Matrix of Constraints by System and Theme for all Participants

Theme	System	Georgina	Jenna	Roberta	Vivian	Shirin	Barbara
Time	Structural	Parent contact time requirements, time to navigate different offices, requirements for financial management, signing requirements,	Parent contact time requirements, requirements for memos/turn around time; time spent leading PD; responding to emails	Parent contact time requirements, requirements for memos/turn around time; time spent leading PD; responding to emails	Parent contact time to “Bring along” community; memos, deadlines; “demanding”, “redundancy”; responding to emails	Lack of time to visit classrooms due to time spent working with student behavior; returning parent calls; meeting with parents; open door policy with staff	“Never enough”; no opportunity to visit classrooms or train staff on PD from trainer or trainers; contractual regulations on time use
Resources / Power Distribution / Community	Political	“Taken a great deal of finesse and patience” to work with the community around CCSS, especially math; need to word things carefully	“Tight-knit community”; “don’t care for change”; “high constraint” described as challenging and often “a fight”	“It’s been really difficult”; morale down; “awful”; trying to share things; Kinder team “love it”	“Strict on traditions”, don’t like change and need to be convinced CCSS is a good thing	Access to system resources depends on connections and networks; need to go through supervisors for certain resources	Parents want access to the principal or will “go above my head”; managing requests for information from community
Staff Attitude	Cultural			“It’s been really difficult”; morale down; “awful”; trying to share things; Kinder team “love it”	Change that is “drastically new”, and “is not that easy”.	Personality conflicts; coming to consensus as a team; most staff positive about CCSS; honor current work while trying to shift practices that have been viewed as effective	“Adjustment period”; not early adopters, but have embraced it and “works together”
Principal Attitude	Individual	“Nothing constrains me. I’ve never been constrained. Since I went out on my own, I never had them. Marriage did it for a while, but that was all.”	Lack of clarity on system vision, negative colleague attitude toward collaboration across schools, sense of isolation	“Can’t have the priorities that I want up front”; feel ineffective as principal and “not doing job correctly”			Instructional planning/leadership must get delegated to other staff in order to focus on building, student, and community management needs
Organizational Hierarchy	Structural	HR system, to post, hire, process new employees		“Heavy demands”; Number of memos, mileage process	Inflexibility of staffing; want to use staff based on needs of building and their strengths	Repetitive trainings and meetings; asks, “Is there something new?”; Needing to purchase technology over instructional materials	More direct support need for teachers, “more needs to be done centrally”;

Table 14

Narrative Matrix of Choices by System and Theme for all Participants

Theme System	Georgina	Jenna	Roberta	Vivian	Shirin	Barbara
Beliefs, Values, Ideals Individual	Not a micromanager; stay close to school, feeling of staff	Stubborn; ideas supported by research “have to be true to your basic values”; “best for kids and not what is best for us”	Primary role of a principal should be as a teacher leader; lead PD	Choices must be connected to vision; believes in the district vision as “It’s my job”	Makes decision based on what she believes and makes sense for the school; “focus on job at hand”; will do what system expects, but “tweak it”	Has an opinion, but will often hold it back; desire to meet system expectations as a “rule follower”
Climate/Culture Cultural	Get out of their way; “don’t beat them to death”, “cheer them on and applaud their successes”	Lay ground work for PLC; “survival required them to plan together”; deliberate selection of team leaders	Stopping by classrooms to check in and “see how they are doing”; providing time for teams to work together; making changes to team leader based on attitude toward CCSS	Encouraging the staff; greeting students and families; want staff to continue to enjoy teaching; making sure staff are “fully engaged in the work”; “thanking teachers”; “providing praise”	“Be an active listener”; validate feelings, cheerleader; “I will help you”; be visible; walk the building daily; respond to emails frequently; will meet with any parent that asks	Used CCSS as a tool for “momentum” to implement changes staff wanted for more planning time; hold back opinion so that “it’s more about what everyone wants”, trust teachers to make decisions about what to teach
Power Influence Political	Parent and student voice, solicits input from community and students to “use their power”; chose to hire male teacher for every grade level, leadership team identified priorities and expectations for planning	Need to work with local government; monitor math more closely than other subjects because of community concerns	Thinks about parents before information is shared; led a number of parent evening events (“night after night”) to share information about CCSS; thinks about staff and “considers them”, provides feedback to district	Listens to community and aims for shared expectations to “avoid issues going above my head”; influence on hiring, academic nights, and homework policy	Takes phone calls from parents “right away” so things don’t linger; “just deal with them”	Uses CCSS as leverage to change practices; provides access to and meets with all parents and responds to emails; thinks about “will it fly” with families when making decisions; “you are only as good as your last decision”
District Expectations Structural		Changes to master schedule to provide extended planning time; lack of oversight by district supervisors; “nobody’s checking” to see if CCSS is happening	Ensure staff are teaching the curriculum as the county expects, respond to memos and “get the information together”, follow policies for initiatives [CCSS, grading]	Ensure the building is safe and drills are done correctly; follow policies and rules; use district vision to set school vision; “ensure teachers know how to teach [CCSS]”	Do what the system expects, but modify it to meet the needs of the school or identify which parts work and “tweak it”	“Desire to meet system expectations”; Attend training; know curriculum; ensure that teachers are doing what the CCSS expects; building safety; keep community happy

Table 15

Narrative Matrix of Additional Choices by System and Theme for all Participants

Theme	System	Georgina	Jenna	Roberta	Vivian	Shirin	Barbara
CCSS	Individual	Believes in intentions, no district experts wrote curriculum, Math (-), Reading/writing (+)	Math (+), Use of CCSS to shift instructional practices	No stated opinion; challenged by math implementation and opportunities for rigor	Likes the CCSS; "I wish I had it. I wish my son had it"; concern about assessment targets	Positive feelings; "firmly" believes in math; mixed feelings toward district implementation approach	Neutral feelings; curriculum is "not my strength or interest"; focus on teaching differently not different content
Leadership Style	System + Cultural	Participatory; "don't make decisions unless it's the fire drill"	Exploring shared leadership	Distributed leadership	Shared leadership	Shared leadership	Distributed leadership; heavy focus on leadership team
Planning	Individual + Cultural + Political	Do not collect notes, "in the background", drop in on meetings. Allow teams to select team leader; Reinforce and guide	Master schedule time provided; Does not attend team planning; "not familiar at intimate level with what is going on"	Attends planning; works with teachers; "need to support teachers", attend planning; providing extra time for teams	Relies on other members of team to ensure implementation occurs with fidelity; delegates aspects of monitoring and attending planning	Attends planning; engages in curriculum, "I can talk it and I know it"; after 1 st year is less involved less if team demonstrates skills for CCSS planning	"Rarely" attends planning; relies on staff development teacher; role of staff development teacher has "changed dramatically"
Professional Development	Individual + Cultural	Pulled back on meetings and staff development; "can't get blood out of a turnip"; "they're dead"	Tap into what our different teacher's strengths" and "nurture" the staff culture.	"The professional development, while I'm a part of it, most of it is delegated to my staff development teacher and my reading specialist. I sit with them and help them plan, but that's really on them to do most of it."	Assess needs; focus on strengths, build collaborative planning; "to me, I was able to recognize that collaborative planning was the biggest piece that I needed to make sure was happening."	Leads staff meetings; behind scenes for weekly planning; provides additional planning time beyond district allocation; focus on math formatives; "have really good [math] conversation; providing resources	Increased emphasis on principal level meetings to develop knowledge

Chapter Summary

Principals described the demands and constraints of the work, while simultaneously recounting how time was spent and choices were made in schools. The overlapping nature of these descriptions provided a representation of the thinking and understanding principals possessed, suggesting that demands, constraints, and choices interacted. This was not surprising as Stewart (1982) noted that all jobs offer opportunities for choosing what and how the job is done, as a result of the beliefs, guidelines, and personal priorities of individuals engaged in the work (p. 105). Participants worked within similar demands, however their thinking about the constraints and how those experiences interacted with the systems drove their instructional leadership choices.

Chapter 5

This chapter is the second of two examining the findings of principal perceptions of demands, constraints, choices, and instructional leadership. This chapter reports on patterns among all principals and provides a more complete explanation of answering the research questions.

1. What are the current demands that elementary principals perceive in their work?
2. What are the constraints that impact implementation of the CCSS?
3. How does a principal make instructional leadership choices in implementing the CCSS?

Instructional leadership was examined using the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework (MILF). The chapter begins with a description of the development and intentions of MILF followed by an analysis of MILF outcomes as demands, constraints, and choices. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the decision-making processes for choice and instructional leadership priorities.

Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework (MILF)

Maryland established a policy framework for describing the specific outcomes for principals. MILF was an outgrowth of work that began in 2000 when Dr. Nancy Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools at the time, created the Division for Leadership Development. The mission of the division was to “increase the instructional leadership capacity of present and potential school leaders in the content and skills needed to increase student achievement” (MSDE, 2005). In describing the emergence of the MILF at the time:

The division was responsible for providing professional growth opportunities for principals around the state, serving as the voice for principals in policy discussions, and advocating for principals in their roles as instructional leaders. As the work of this division has evolved, it has become apparent that the next step in leadership development requires the creation of a framework for instructional leadership that will drive principal preparation programs in higher education, professional development, and policy initiatives. (MSDE, 2005, p. 1)

MILF was created by the division and shared with stakeholders for feedback and revision. It was expected that the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework would:

1. Drive the instructional leadership curriculum of the Division for Leadership Development, MSDE;
 2. Guide instructional leadership professional development for veteran, new, and potential school leaders;
 3. Serve as a catalyst for the alignment of professional development for Executive Officers (those who supervise and evaluate principals as defined in Code of Maryland Regulations [COMAR] 13A.01.04.02B);
 4. Provide a self-assessment/reflective practice tool for principals and potential school leaders;
 5. Promote dialogue in districts around matters of instructional leadership;
 6. Be referenced in policy through the Code of Maryland Regulations;
 7. Influence future policy decisions about the principalship;
 8. Be incorporated into a part of the program approval process used by institutions of higher education to guide their principal preparation programs;
- and

9. Serve as the Maryland-specific evidence in practice for the instructional leadership component of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards” (MSDE, 2005, p. 3).

In describing leadership, MSDE stated, “School administrators are the instructional leaders who lay the foundation for establishing a culture of collaboration with their staff, parents and community to create a positive school climate that promotes student success” (MSDE 2014b). Maryland had a unique context in that they adopted into regulation expectations for principal leadership. These demands were defined through MILF as the minimum performance for principals (MSDE, 2005). These standards were constructed to emphasize the many roles and responsibilities of the principal and included eight outcomes:

1. Facilitate the development of a school vision.
2. Align all aspects of a school culture to student and adult learning.
3. Monitor the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
4. Improve instructional practices through the purposeful observation and evaluation of teachers.
5. Ensure the regular integration of appropriate assessments into daily classroom instruction.
6. Use technology and multiple sources of data to improve classroom instruction.
7. Provide staff with focused, sustained, research-based professional development.
8. Engage all community stakeholders in a shared responsibility for student and school success. (p. 8)

On June 26, 2012 revisions to the Code of Maryland Annotated Regulations (COMAR) were presented and subsequently approved formalizing the use of the MILF for principal evaluation.

The emphasis on deliberate choices aligned with MILF outcomes was a priority and expectation for principals in practice. Given the specific focus of the MILF and the connection to expectations for principals in this study, MILF was utilized as an anchor to explore principal instructional leadership.

MILF Outcomes: Demands, Constraints, and Choices

MILF 1: Facilitate vision

Outcome 1 of MILF refers to establishing the processes and procedures to review the vision and align resources to support it. This includes: 1) A written school vision that encompasses values, challenges, and opportunities for the academic, social, and emotional development of each student; 2) A process for ensuring that all staff and other stakeholders are able to articulate the vision; 3) Procedures in place for the periodic, collaborative review of the vision by stakeholders; and 4) Resources aligned to support the vision.

Principals referenced the district vision for CCSS as the starting point for their work and understood the expectation to establish a written or stated vision as a key part of their role. No principals referenced individual school visions, but referred to the district vision as one that “always had this college and career readiness” and “the vision of the school is about the whole child.”

All principals communicated an understanding of vision as it connected to district objectives, student data, and overarching goals. Each principal reported personal feelings

about Common Core, but also felt a need to honor district expectations.

Establishing a vision and ensuring it was sustained through regular review was a demand; however, participants identified barriers or constraints to meeting that outcome. Time continued to be reported as a challenge for visionary activities specific to instructional leadership. The ability to “get into team planning” and “getting into those classrooms” was impacted consistently.

I feel like I have the same vision, but I can't implement the vision fully right now, I think. It's just absolutely impossible...I'm doing less, and it's unfortunate because that's why, I think, I wanted to be a principal in the first place was to make that change on teaching learning. I honestly feel like I've been terrible this year because that's my main vision of what I should be doing, and when I can't do it, it makes me feel like I'm not doing my job correctly. (Roberta, Interview 1)

Jenna was the only principal that identified resource and staffing constraints related to vision. She noted the absence of support staff impacted her ability to have the entire team understand the work. “I'm very constrained in my ability to make them part of the team, to hear my vision.” Jenna felt constrained by a lack of clarity, talked about “struggling” with the priorities of the superintendent, and didn't feel he had a “clear vision.” As a result, she was unable to identify specific actions she could take to meet district goals.

An additional constraint reported by principals to lead vision was addressing the attitude of staff and community toward Common Core implementation. Vivian and Shirin reported no challenges with attitude and felt that was because they were “enthusiastic” and a “fan” of Common Core. All principals reported a need to address the attitude of their community, with particular emphasis on math instruction. Roberta, Vivian, and Barbara reported their communities were resistant to change with a focus on

traditions. As a result, the principals had to spend time providing information and convincing parents about the merits of the CCSS.

Vision was understood by all participants as an element of their work, but not considered a strategic requirement to lead CCSS implementation. This is not to suggest that vision was absent, but perhaps not viewed as a tool to lead the school through the change process. This may be the result of a perception that the vision of the school was merely a reflection of the district vision and the expectations of the Common Core. In addition, principals may not have felt that vision was required to demonstrate what was important nor necessary to clarify the outcomes expected. However, aspects of vision, including how teams should work together and the types of instructional opportunities provided, were all part of examining and supporting the school culture.

MILF 2: School culture

Outcome 2 for MILF refers to aligning all aspects of the school culture for teaching and learning. This includes: 1) Mutual respect, teamwork, and trust in dealings with students, staff, and parents; 2) High expectations for all students and teachers in a culture of continuous improvement; 3) An effective school leadership team; 4) Effective professional learning communities aligned with the school improvement plan, focused on results, and characterized by collective responsibility for instructional planning and student learning; and 5) Opportunities for leadership and collaborative decision making distributed among stakeholders, especially teachers.

As a demand, this outcome was the second largest area referenced repeatedly by all participants. Principals perceived not only a need to address shifts in culture, but also found they were required to make a number of choices in how to navigate Common Core

implementation. Not all of the indicators of this outcome were reported by participants, but perceptions centered on teamwork and collaboration.

As principals engaged in instructional leadership, the expectation to create, sustain, and enrich the culture of their buildings was paramount. In the wake of Common Core implementation, principals sensed demands to be sure they attended to the way that staff and families felt about their work. All principals except Georgina reported a need to “increase the will,” “empower them,” “build relationships and trust,” and “treat them professionally” as fundamental requirements for supporting staff. This was paired with providing time for staff to collaborate with an emphasis on common planning as a high priority. Roberta, Shirin, and Barbara mentioned collaboration, while Georgina, talked about the expectation to provide staff with “latitude to deviate.” Vivian was the only principal who referenced demands to create a “culture around technology” in order to “shape where we are and make sure it matches where we need to go.”

The common trend across all principals was a need to establish the conditions that would allow staff to be engaged and persist through implementation.

It’s the conditions, making it doable. That’s all and that they still have a life outside of work. You made my job so much easier that I’m going to be around and I’m going to still enjoy it. It’s really about making sure they’re fully engaged in the work. If I’m managing it and creating those conditions then they will still continue to enjoy the work. (Roberta, Interview 1)

Principals perceived a number of choices in how to establish a school culture.

This included how schedules were structured and the support provided to staff.

The Common Core is here. The amount - how I reinforce and guide - I have great control over that. I have control over the degree in which they push implementation and I can cheer and celebrate and appreciate what they’re doing. I’ll be around. I try to be omnipotent all the time, the model what I want and so forth. I listen. I do an awful lot of listening. (Georgina, Interview 1)

One of the key features to establish a school culture in support of Common Core implementation was the use of collaborative planning time, reported by all principals as a priority. Principals described teams as “working together” and “trying to share things” as “survival required them to plan together.” This focus on time for teams to work together was associated with a desire to facilitate understanding of the Common Core. Roberta reported turning all of her staff meetings back to the teachers in order to give them additional time to collaborate, while Jenna noted that she felt paraeducators were essential, but often unavailable to attend planning and missing members of the collaborative planning team. Vivian referenced planning as an extension of existing professional learning communities work. Jenna reported Common Core as a new tool to develop collaboration, but some staff had been reluctant to rely on one another. This resulted in a lack of alignment and consistency in how planning occurred.

The differences in time for teams to engage in collaborative planning were in direct relationship to staffing allocations and the organization of the school schedule. The constraints for collaborative planning were the result of differences in time available for teams to meet and the dynamics of individual teams. Larger schools, such as Georgina’s, only had collaborative planning time once per week, where other schools, such as Shirin’s, had it three times a week. The approach to maximize time for the teachers to collaborate was best captured by Roberta.

That’s why we put in the extended planning times so they back up to coming to school, or dismissal, or lunch/recess. Then, at a staff meeting, if I look at where we are and what things we’ve covered in staff meetings. A couple of times this year, we’ve taken a staff meeting and said, “You’re expected to be here, still, from 3:30 to quarter of five for the expectations that your team is planning. We’ll have resources available. If you need the staff development teacher or whoever,

they'll come help you." It's still not enough. It's not enough. (Roberta, Interview 1)

All principals reported time was a barrier for implementation, including the ability to bring district training models back to the school. Barbara felt the different instructional expectations associated with Common Core, not the standards themselves, were difficult. She stated, "This is really asking them to teach it in a different way, to approach it differently and break it down with the kids differently, use different vocabulary. All of that takes time to really do..." However, even with time as a challenge, Barbara stated that staff had "embraced it," some are "really excited," and by the end of the first year she felt the team worked well together implementing Common Core.

The need to have high functioning collaborative planning sessions required principals to reexamine how they identified and assigned team leaders. Shirin stated, "They needed a lot of help in how to meet the needs of kids, to have high[er] expectations, but also to help them get there; the scaffolding, the differentiating" and "I'm going to change the team leader for next year because she just ... I can't bring them together." This need to examine the role of team leaders was best captured by Barbara.

I had some really high-functioning teams and I had teams that didn't have strong leaders. I had teams that needed more support than others, so I looked at my strong staff members and asked them to change grade levels....I need you to bring that team together sort of planning together and their support...I'm using their strengths or their weaknesses to think about where people are placed. (Barbara, Interview 1)

This sentiment was echoed by others, including Shirin, who referenced a need to work to ensure teams "were hearing each other's perspectives to come to consensus...because it is needed with the Common Core." Jenna noted that team leaders

must work to develop the team, build on collaborative planning, and next year she planned to direct leaders to “have a team goal...of being a professional learning community.”

A key feature of leading the school culture included addressing and supporting the attitudes of staff and stakeholders toward Common Core implementation. In all cases, principals reported a need to attend to the optimism of their staff and an association between Common Core implementation and staff morale. While Jenna, Roberta, and Barbara reported staff attitude toward the Common Core as a constraint, Shirin and Vivian noted less difficulty. Shirin felt she was able to provide additional time for teams which reduced negativity. She stated, “They have enough time,” but also acknowledged, “The job we do, you can’t do everything within the school hours; it’s just not possible. I don’t think you could be an effective leader or a teacher if you did everything within the hours of school time.” Vivian noted that attitude “could be” a constraint, but that her overall climate was “so good to the point where they feel like they owe it to themselves and to the children...they are completely invested and they really see the positive results of using this curriculum.” Jenna shared a similar comment and that she had a “talented staff that wants what’s best for students. We really played out how the Common Core is integrated and the staff likes that.” Georgina described her staff as having a “pretty good attitude towards Common Core,” but felt it was “because I’ve been excited [and] enthusiastic.”

All principals shared priority actions that worked toward positive morale including creating space for staff to vent while encouraging them to persevere. Principals reported difficulties resulting from the Common Core, as well as from the additional

district initiatives for grading, reporting and technology. Principals shared teacher comments including “They gave us too much at once,” and “I can’t do all this.” Roberta described the impact of implementation as difficult with frequent staff upset. “I’ve had staff members that were crying and saying, ‘I don’t feel like a good teacher.’” Barbara reported a need to develop a culture that supported sustained commitment and shared, “Engagement for staff is huge...the Common Core is such a huge transition. It’s a new way of thinking...I want to keep them engaged and enjoying it.” Shirin captured it best when she stated, “Being an active listener...not try to shut that down because they’re valid feelings...listen and then I’m their cheerleader.” All principals focused more on bringing teams together and facilitating collaboration.

One of the key features of developing a culture around teaching and learning was the use of the staff development teacher. This non-classroom-based role was reported by all principals as an essential element of implementation. Principals identified staff development teachers and reading specialists as knowledgeable and vital players in leading the culture. Roberta stated that she would “worry about a school that didn’t have two good people that could really help with that because they’ve been key.” Vivian used the staff development teacher for the “daily monitoring of the collaborative planning.” Shirin worked with her staff development teacher to strategically examine the school culture and identify phases of implementation work.

School culture reflected the values present in a school building and the norms for engaging in the work. Principals demonstrated an understanding of the significant changes CCSS required and made choices that provided time for teachers to evolve in their practice. This included deliberate steps to build commitment and support,

understand the present state of the culture, address barriers or attitudes, and make decisions to support collaboration and climate. Principals did not describe the culture shifts of their schools over time, which suggests differential levels of priority prior to CCSS implementation. Principals emphasized the use of team leaders to develop a collective responsibility for continuous improvement and where they began to build collaboration skills as Common Core unfolded. Principals appeared to understand the importance of attending to the school culture, but there were different aspects of the instructional program that received focus depending on the state of CCSS implementation.

MILF 3: Monitor curriculum, instruction, and assessment

Outcome 3 refers to monitoring the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This includes: 1) Ongoing conversations with teachers as to how state content standards, voluntary state curriculum and/or local curriculum, and research-based instructional strategies are integrated into daily classroom instruction; 2) Teacher assignments that are rigorous, purposeful, and engaging; 3) Student work that is appropriately challenging and demonstrates new learning; and 4) Assessments that regularly measure student mastery of the content standards.

Jenna, Roberta, Shirin, and Barbara referenced monitoring the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment as a demand. All principals reported attention to monitoring through the lens of assessing the state of the school and ensuring the depth of collaboration required to study the CCSS and plan instruction. Monitoring was viewed as part of the roles and responsibilities of a principal and not specific to CCSS implementation. Jenna described a demand to “implement curriculum, policy,

regulations with fidelity” and Roberta shared it was “implementing the county expectations [with]...a big piece of monitoring and evaluation.” Monitoring included an expectation Shirin noted to “have some understanding of how to maneuver through the curriculum,” whereas Barbara described it as a need to “ensure that children are getting the appropriate instruction.”

Shirin was the only principal that reported constraints for Outcome 3. The primary constraint was staff attitude, as she found a number of teachers on “autopilot” who were effective, but ingrained in their thinking and were required to reexamine their practices. “They might say [about CCSS], ‘That’s stupid. I can teach.’”

Jenna, Roberta, Shirin, and Barbara discussed choice opportunities in relationship to monitoring curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Jenna noted the choices she perceived were an outgrowth of the way she was supervised.

There’s no oversight from the district level...If I were implementing, would anybody know? I’m not held accountable...Obviously, the theory is that if you’re not implementing the curriculum, you’re not going to have the student achievement but I don’t feel like I’m held accountable for implementing the Common Core in any way. There’s nobody here checking to see if it’s actually happening. (Jenna, Interview 1)

No other principals referenced supervision as an influence on choice, however Roberta talked about the importance of knowing how to access resources for teachers and Shirin described a need to know the curriculum well enough to “tweak it.” This idea of adjusting how the Common Core is implemented was echoed by Barbara.

The curriculum goals are ones you still do. How you do that you can certainly ... there can be ways that my teachers are smarter and say, “This is what has worked in the past,” or “This did not work, so we want to try it differently.” I think they’re appropriate to make that decision, and I trust them to do it as long as they’re sticking at the heart of what they’re doing. If they’re abandoning it and saying, “This is not what I want to teach,” that’s not right. (Barbara, Interview 1)

Barbara talked about the importance of knowing good instruction and being sure that teachers designed lessons as expected. This included using resources provided by the district and grouping students for instruction. When she had a concern about reading groups being too varied, she stated, “This is what the [school] system expects. This is what we’re going to do.”

Principals referenced a need to know the curriculum in order to address questions about implementation to the community at large. Shirin described the ability to speak to the curriculum with confidence and knowledge. Georgina did not indicate any demands, constraints, or choices for this MILF outcome, while Vivian did not report influences on choice. The few references for this outcome as a demand or constraint, and varied choices suggests that principals were not focused on monitoring, perhaps as an outgrowth of the lack of CCSS assessments or due to the perceived absence of structured expectations from the district surrounding the examination of implementation.

The alignment of the Common Core district curriculum, instructional practices, and assessment continued to be a priority for principals. Principals that viewed themselves as learning alongside teachers had increased choices associated with monitoring. However, there appeared to be ambiguity about monitoring due to the absence of assessments at the state or district level examining CCSS mastery. In addition, the CCSS required a shift in thinking about how to instruct students and determine proficiency on learning skills. The Common Core curriculum and the daily approach to teaching and learning appeared similar on the surface, however changes to how teachers provided instruction and determinations about student learning were

different. The ability to monitor changes to teacher practice connected to how principals supervised and observed classroom instruction.

MILF 4: Observation and evaluation of teachers

Outcome 4 refers to improving instructional practices through the purposeful observation and evaluation of teachers. This includes: 1) A process to determine what students are reading, writing, producing, and learning; 2) Use of student data and data collected during the observation process to make recommendations for improvement in classroom instruction; 3) Formal feedback during observation conferences as well as ongoing informal visits, meetings, and conversations with teachers regarding classroom instruction; 4) Regular and effective evaluation of teacher performance based on continuous student progress; and 5) Identification and development of potential school leaders. All principals in the study were aware of the obligation to observe and analyze teaching, yet very few referenced it as a specific instructional leadership demand, constraint, or choice related to Common Core implementation.

Only two principals, Jenna and Roberta, indicated perceived demands for observing instructional practice. Vivian did not report any demands, constraints, or choices for this outcome and Georgina, Shirin, and Barbara only referenced choices.

Jenna noted an expectation that she “help [teachers] improve their artistic technique and [their] technical technique.” She discussed the formal observation process and will “do a formal observation of everyone every year, whether or not they are in evaluation year.” She believed that observation conferences were “one way of guaranteeing that at least once during the year, I’m having a good, half-hour, meaningful conversation with each individual about their instructional program.” Roberta described

a demand to be in classrooms and provide feedback. “Last year, every single teacher in this building ... and for the last three years, every single teacher in this building has received an informal observation” from members of the core instructional team.

Roberta and Jenna also reported that constraints included time spent on tasks that took away from classroom visits. Jenna was “certainly not in the classrooms as much as I’d like”, Roberta hoped she could get back in to classrooms more frequently, and Shirin referenced a decreased classroom presence.

The choice to focus on observing teachers stemmed from Jenna’s desire to tap into different teacher strengths. Roberta felt classroom visits were a critical connection to identify the professional development needs of staff. “Every teacher gets an informal observation...It’s a quick, 15-minute snapshot of their classroom and we look at the four standards. We bring those back together and we look at ... Are there commonalities of things that we saw that we really need some training on?” Shirin shared a similar perception and noted that classroom visits helped determine what would be a priority in the school. “Through the instructional lens I can figure out, yes, that’s really important for my school or, no, that’s really not.” The idea of using observations to examine teacher practices extended to student learning. Barbara looked at teacher practice to see “what are we doing to move kids [in learning]?” and used her results to inform decision making.

The observation and evaluation of teachers was understood by all principals as an expectation of their role; however, it was not actively reported as a demand or choice priority for implementation. Principals reported not being a presence in classrooms as much as they would like, but indicated spent time working with teachers through

professional development contexts. The decreased or absence of frequent classroom visits suggests that principals did not view observations as essential to change teacher practice or guide CCSS implementation. It also suggests that there was ambiguity or a lack of confidence by principals on what effective teaching practices included. This created a challenge for principals with respect to monitoring the effectiveness of professional development, identifying priorities, and collecting evidence of student learning. This included a need for principals to examine and use assessment data as part of instructional leadership practice.

MILF 5: Integration of assessment

Outcome 5 refers to ensuring the regular integration of appropriate assessments into daily classroom instruction. This includes: 1) Multiple and varied assessments that are collaboratively developed; 2) Formative assessments that are a regular part of the ongoing evaluation of student performance and that serve as the basis for adjustments to instruction; 3) Summative assessments that are aligned in format and content with state assessments; and 4) Appropriate interventions for individual students based on results of assessments.

There were only five references across demands, constraints, and choices for Outcome 5 in all participant responses and Roberta, Vivian, and Barbara did not report assessment at any point in the interviews. Jenna acknowledged the regular integration of assessments was a "high priority with the Common Core," but did not specifically discuss the type or use of assessments in her work. Shirin described the importance of looking at assessment through the lens of mastery to "help guide [teachers] to have a better understanding of really what does proficiency look like?" Georgina was the only

principal who reported assessment as a constraint as it related to technology demands.

“With all the assessments you do...I'm getting a mobile lab - maybe one or two because if not - your computer lab is tied up.”

Jenna and Shirin were the only principals that reported choices for the use of assessment. Jenna noted that assessments had power that could “force you to do other things,” but did not specifically describe what choices were made as a result of testing. Shirin had tried to use assessments as a tool to inform instruction and “We’ve solved some possible issues [and were] able to catch it...really early on.”

The absence of state and district assessments of Common Core implementation shifted the focus to formative assessments. Principals had to not only observe teacher practice, but also identify how well and in what manner data on student learning was collected. This included a need to have familiarity with the Common Core standards, lesson design, student proficiency, and effective formative assessment models. The ongoing nature of data collection required for formative assessment was seen as time intensive and, as a result, was not viewed as a priority. The presence of principals in teacher planning sessions provided a lens into assessment practices, but at a macro level principals did not appear to be focused on collecting or using data in a strategic way to examine instruction. As technology programs emerge and principals seek clarity on the types of data necessary, it is possible this outcome would be more widely reported as a demand or choice.

MILF 6: Use of technology and data

Outcome 6 refers to the use of technology and multiple sources of data to improve classroom instruction. This includes: 1) Effective use of appropriate instructional

technology by students, staff, and administration; 2) Regular use of the MSDE websites (Maryland Report Card and School Improvement); 3) Review of disaggregated data by subgroups; 4) Ongoing root cause analysis of student performance that drives instructional decision making; and 5) Regular collaboration among teachers on analyzing student work.

Jenna, Roberta, Vivian, and Shirin reported demands, constraints, and choices for Outcome 6. Jenna described the use of data as “a high priority,” while Roberta noted that technology was a constraint that impacted her time as “frequently there’s an issue with technology, or something that we have to go help with.” Vivian reported her staff utilized “a lot of technology in this building” and maximized it. She described “the demand for technology literacy” and a need to “increase my knowledge and skills around technology” connected with a deliberate choice to model technology. Her staff had technology resources that were particularly helpful in allowing teams to engage in collaborative planning using the online curriculum tools. Georgina did not report any connections to the use of technology or data in her comments for demands, constraints, or choices.

The use of data was not mentioned by any principals except Vivian. She was “always giving [the parents] statistics to what is happening in the workforce so that they can understand that math, for example, is everywhere and technology’s everywhere.” She was the only principal to reference the Maryland School Performance Index (SPI) and stated:

I know the county feels a little differently about the SPI. Closing that achievement gap is still a mystery to me...I haven’t read enough research that tells me what I need to do to close that gap. (Vivian, Interview 1)

Shirin was the only principal that mentioned her role to review formative assessments as a data collection tool. “I have a system of how we put the data in that the county doesn’t offer. I had to create something ourselves.”

The constraints reported for meeting the assessment and data collection outcomes were connected to resources and time. Jenna described an emphasis on technology and that frequent use of the computer lab for assessments was a staff frustration due to the impact on teacher access for other instructional activities. The Promethean board initiative was ongoing during this study, however principals continued to view constraints due to the lack of resources and time for staff training.

Originally, the technology [was a constraint] because there were so many things. Now, we have the Promethean boards, but I still think that the teachers need to go to some training because they don’t have all of the skills they need to use them all the way... As far as resources, we had to spend a lot more money, like I said before, than we had in the past just on getting those materials. It took away from other things. (Roberta, Interview 1)

Shirin described a need to prioritize technology during implementation.

[Staff] has been wanting the Elmos [document cameras]...I have been having to decide, how much money do you put aside for Elmos?...For my staff, the Promethean boards have been huge because they want them and not everyone can have them...so I’ve slowly been trying to give them the technology within my budgetary long-term plan. (Shirin, Interview 1)

Barbara described similar constraints and needed to address the absence of technology at her school. She did not provide individual resources such as Promethean, document cameras, and laptops to all staff and “the teachers are fighting over using them.”

Shirin made choices to establish an expectation for staff to use available technology for Common Core implementation. When she found out that her classrooms would receive Promethean boards, she encouraged teachers to attend training.

The teachers know that, yes, this is voluntary, but if you're going to be getting the board, you really need to go because I don't want you staring at the board when it gets installed, and being like, "Well, I don't know what to do." (Shirin, Interview 1)

Barbara chose to use additional funding for technology.

Definitely taking it to a different level where primary classrooms will have four student computers each. Then three, four, and five because we have three teachers per grade, they're each getting a 24-cart laptop cart for each grade. They can either choose to put eight in each room or keep them as a cart and move it around. (Barbara, Interview 1)

Data systems specific to monitoring implementation outcomes were minimally reported by principals. The state continued to test student learning, however the assessments and reported data were not viewed as supportive models for leading CCSS implementation. It was evident that principals understood a need to have access to technology, but viewed access primarily as a support to instructional practice, not leadership. In addition, it did not appear that principals clearly defined how technology could be used for teaching and learning.

Data-driven decision making, the analysis of root causes, and the identification of instructional foci for each principal was an emerging practice. Collaborative planning provided opportunities for teachers to examine evidence of student learning; however, there was a lack of specificity across principals as to the expected practices or outcomes for each team. It is possible that, as with other MILF outcomes, technology and data were less of a priority due to the significant need to focus on content-specific professional

development.

MILF 7: Professional development

Outcome 7 refers to providing staff with focused, sustained, research-based professional development. This includes: 1) Results-oriented professional development that is aligned with identified curricular, instructional, and assessment needs and is connected to school improvement goals; 2) Opportunities for teachers to engage in collaborative planning and critical reflection during the regular school day (job-embedded); 3) Differentiated professional development according to career stages, needs of staff, and student performance; 4) Personal involvement in professional development activities; and 5) Professional development aligned with the Maryland Teacher Professional Development Standards.

The role of professional developer was widely reported as a demand and choice for principals. There were constraints on the ability to meet this demand, however all principals reported guiding the development of staff was an essential component of leadership practice for CCSS implementation. Principals reported that the role of professional developer was a high priority; however the delivery models for training differed.

Georgina described taking less leadership in professional development than in the past. This role change was echoed by others who focused on staff training and design to build team capacity for collaborative planning. The expectation that principals understood the current demands for teachers and develop commensurate skills was emphasized.

Keeping current, making sure that I'm up on instructional strategies or new techniques. If I'm going into a classroom, I'm giving a teacher feedback, I can either reference an article or I can share ... If there's a book that I've read, I share either excerpts of that or we, as a staff, need to read something and study something, that's definitely a part of my job as well. I know that's part of the professional development, but if I'm not up on that, then they're not going to necessarily be up on that as well. (Roberta, Interview 1)

The belief to have particular skills to lead professional development was shared by others. This included attending trainings from the district and state to develop competencies and clarify staff development priorities. All principals reported involvement in identifying topics for staff training, but had different structures in place for facilitating and leading. Described as needing to be seen "as someone who knows...who can give them some ideas ... almost act like their team member," Vivian referenced the state Educator Effectiveness Academy as a tool to identify priorities for her work.

All principals in the study had full-time staff development teachers in their buildings and described demands as a reflection of how they utilized the staff development position to guide Common Core implementation. This included identifying roles and responsibilities for professional development facilitation. The interaction of demands, constraints, and choices was seen in how the staff development teacher was used. Each principal had different thinking about their personal involvement in training or planning and subsequently and how they used the staff development position.

Because of the way Common Core was given to us and that teachers didn't have that direct instruction from the county, it was a trainer-of-trainer's model. I feel like I have to be more of a trainer than I've ever been before. While I have a phenomenal staff development teacher ... She's by far, I think, the best ... period. She's doing a great job. She can't do it by herself. (Roberta, Interview 1)

Roberta, Vivian, and Shirin reported an expectation to attend team planning;

Roberta and Vivian would observe or engage with teams, whereas Shirin had direct leadership involvement. The decision making around the role of the principal in professional development appeared to be related to feelings about individual content knowledge and expertise. Roberta felt “like I have to get my hands in there...It’s really being with them, doing the work alongside them,” and Vivian didn’t “feel as much of an expert with the curriculum” and often asked the teachers to help her learn. Based on the staff development teacher’s capacity and skill set, the facilitation roles differed. Barbara noted that, “The role of my staff development teacher has changed dramatically [with Common Core]” and Jenna shared that the staff development teacher facilitated planning because she “knows that curriculum really well.” Georgina reported that her role was to identify staff experts to lead professional development, but pulled back. “I don’t give as much for this year. I used to be able to say, ‘Would you mind sharing that?’ You can foster the professional development, but I feel wretched making another faculty meeting.”

Principals clarified their role to lead professional development, but there were different structures and topics identified at each school. All principals reported the provision of extended planning time, but to different degrees. This appeared to be related to the size of the school and the availability of coverage for teams to have common release time to work together. Professional development sessions were often planned with input from the staff development teacher, reading specialist, and assistant principal. Topics were a reflection of classroom observations, district trainings, and individual preferences. Roberta shared, she would not only go to classrooms, but reviewed the curriculum online and attended planning sessions to see what areas needed attention.

Shirin referenced the use of one-on-one professional development if an individual showed need.

When we first started, the [district] gave us, what, one day to give to teachers? I gave them another two half-days where my reading specialist, SDT, and AP covered their rooms, so that they could do backwards mapping, but then also get two to three weeks done before pre-service week. (Shirin, Interview 1)

No other principals reported providing extra time to teams through coverage, but many often gave back time to teachers. This included using staff meetings for extended team planning and reducing in-service and other models to provide teachers with time to work together on curriculum implementation.

All principals reported structures around professional development and similar topics of study. The main focus of professional development was collaborative planning and principals felt different degrees of choice around working on topics other than Common Core. Georgina used to feel latitude, but this was “taken over by Common Core... I don’t have as much freedom... [for] professional development.” Roberta agreed and shared that she had no control because “the professional development has to be around Common Core. In years past, if I would’ve said, ‘I want to do math discourse,’ or ‘I want to pick some other topic,’ I can’t do that.” Vivian felt less need to develop a team’s ability to plan collaboratively, but described the topics as driven by “giving them time to really learn that curriculum. That’s it.” Shirin felt differently and still saw choice in professional development topics.

[What do I have] the most control over? I would say definitely staff development, my leadership team and I have ultimate control over, “These are our student data. What are we going to do for the next year? What’s the focus? What’s the staff development?” (Shirin, Interview 1)

The need to focus primarily on the Common Core may not have been negative.

The core curriculum, the new Common Core, it takes more time in the sense of the thought processes and how you're doing it and kind of that ... teachers know how to add. They know how to subtract, but this is really asking them to teach it in a different way, to approach it differently and break it down with the kids differently, use different vocabulary. All of that takes time to really do... (Barbara, Interview 1)

The main constraint shared by principals was the design of district training and staff resources. Challenges with the trainer-of-trainers model were reported. Principals were provided the first level of training and then asked to train staff at their respective schools. Roberta felt "like I have to be more of a trainer than I've ever been before" and Vivian talked about challenges with processing all of the information. She noted the district was, "telling us to attend all these meetings and then we get sent all these thick publications. I don't know what I'm supposed to memorize." Shirin didn't find the trainings a constraint, but felt that the county was duplicative and this resulted in principals becoming less engaged as, "I'm tired of the county repeating things."

The constraints related to how staff development teachers were utilized informed decision making for staff roles. Barbara described delegating almost all of the instructional support to her staff development teacher. As a school without an assistant principal, she felt it was easier for her to give up the role of professional developer.

My staff development teacher gets delegated a lot of, kind of, that instructional support and the instructional planning...I don't like when other principals treat their staff development teacher as the assistant principal where they do a lot of the discipline or they do ... that's not their role. That's not a staff development teacher...I feel like it is better for me to do because then, if there is follow-up that needs to be done, that really falls on me with a parent or if there needs to be consequences and so forth. I do delegate that. (Barbara, Interview 1)

Roberta agreed and while she was part of professional development, she also chose to delegate to her staff development teacher and reading specialist. She would “sit with them and help them plan,” but had to focus on other tasks.

I feel like other things ... like memos, information ... have to be me. I feel like that has to come from me because if I'm not the one looking at them and getting them where they need to go, then I'm too afraid it won't happen, so I hold that pretty close. (Roberta, Interview 1)

Shirin communicated more direct involvement in professional development, but had to delegate and be “more strategic in utilizing the reading specialist and the staff development teacher” in trainings.

The element of choice to be a professional developer was seen in how principals pulled back and self-edited what they shared and asked of staff. This was seen in planning fewer meetings or providing more latitude for teams to use time to work on Common Core implementation. Principals were unsure of implications for this choice, but described concerns with consistent understanding of expectations.

My reading specialist, my staff development teacher ends up carrying forward messages that I really should be carrying forward. Are they losing some of their importance or understanding that this is not just advice from a colleague but rather this is the way it will be done? Is some of that lost? (Barbara, Interview 1)

Shirin had a similar view and noted that when she did not lead a staff meeting, “Someone said to me, they wanted me up there because they knew that if they heard it from my mouth; they knew it was important and that they would follow-through on it.” As a result, principals reported using a core team structure to regularly meet with their reading specialist and staff development teachers to gather information about the state of implementation in the school. This structure allowed principals to assess the impact of professional development and discuss transfer to classroom practice.

The choices around leading professional development were the second largest reported by principals. Ultimately, choices were seen as a need to ensure that teachers were using the new curriculum and planned collaboratively. Vivian noted, "...ensuring that I have a competent, highly qualified teacher in those classrooms. If not take whatever steps I need to provide them with the development they need to grow and learn..."

Effective instructional practice aligned with Common Core required dedication, practice, time for study, planning, and reflection. Professional development included work as an individual and with other members of the grade level or school team. Time to unpack content and opportunities to shift the thinking about teaching and learning was required for CCSS implementation. As a result of the need for principals to focus their efforts on the development of staff, attention to the broader school community was impacted.

MILF 8: Engaging community stakeholders

Outcome 8 refers to engaging all community stakeholders in a shared responsibility for student and school success. This includes: 1) Parents and caregivers welcomed in the school, encouraged to participate, and given information and materials to help their children learn; 2) Parents and caregivers who are active members of the school improvement process; and 3) Community stakeholders and school partners who readily participate in school life.

Jenna, Roberta, and Barbara referenced demands to involve and engage stakeholders as an expectation of their role. All principals reported deliberate choices in this area, however time spent working with the community was shared as a constraint.

Jenna noted it was a “lower priority” and Vivian indicated she was expected to “make sure I’m dealing with them” so that her supervisors did not have to be involved. The district provided parent resources, but principals reported they bore primary responsibility to bring the community on board during Common Core implementation.

They only know things about the old curriculum and based on how they were taught. To just do simple math, one plus two, that’s all they cared about. That’s fine, we already know. We can add, simple problem solving. Now it’s, go through all the [math] strands to a high level now. That is very difficult for them and since they show multiple representations, it’s difficult for them to understand why this is necessary. (Vivian, Interview 1)

Principals reported changing the structure of parent information nights, homework, and grade level newsletters. Principals wanted to alleviate the stress that teachers felt to respond to concerns about CCSS implementation and, as a result, established expectations and increased community contact time.

I expect that you really know what you’re doing because if you have a parent call you and you cannot eloquently speak about what you’re doing and why you’re doing it, they’re [parents] going to become a problem for us. (Shirin, Interview 1)

Principals worked with the community to understand the Common Core, content and instructional delivery models. When Barbara arrived at her school and began the work on Common Core implementation, a number of traditional field trips and grade level projects had to be discarded.

A group of parents flipped out and they rallied the parent troops. We were bombarded with you are ruining everything about the school. No, we’re following the new curriculum, so we had a meeting, literally invited a group of parents. (Barbara, Interview 1)

Choices to focus on engaging the community were present for all principals. A number of strategies included meeting regularly with the PTA, meeting with families through invitation to events, talking one-on-one with families, and direct appeals for

feedback. Principals did not indicate specific changes they made to Common Core implementation from the community, but noted an influence on monitoring, hiring practices, and the frequency and type of information that was shared.

I feel like I involve the community as much as I can. I have some very vocal parents, and I know, if something's going out there, they're going to be the first ones at my door. I try, when I'm making decisions, to think ... Or, with whatever choices we've made, I try to think about that one group of parents and before it even goes out, how am I going to handle that when it happens? (Roberta, Interview 1)

The need to address and involve community stakeholders required significant time and served as a constraint. Roberta, Vivian, and Barbara reported that their communities struggled with the change to Common Core, which resulted in frequent evening meetings as well as one-on-one interactions to address issues or questions. This was particularly noted for the math content where families had a need for input and clarification. The district created print resources to explain the changes to the math program, however the documents were not produced until the transition to CCSS was underway, complicating the principal's ability to provide clear information. Principals found the time needed to meet with families functioned as an immediate priority that took away from visiting classrooms or meeting with teams.

Principals reported reactive engagement with the community during CCSS implementation. This included missed opportunities to educate and engage families in order to build commitment and understanding. Some principals reported that the trust and confidence they instilled in the community gave them momentum, however the focus of the work across principals was on managing and responding to the community not engaging stakeholders.

Summary of Demands, Constraints, and Choices for MILF Outcomes

Principals had an interest in understanding their role as instructional leaders. The emergence of the CCSS shifted the view of the principal as the highest skilled staff member to the individual charged with creating the conditions for implementation to succeed. Across participants, the two primary roles that principals focused on were to establish a school culture and lead professional development. As a result of the changes to curriculum and the other district initiatives, staff morale and self-efficacy was impacted. Instructional leadership was characterized by a variety of roles. A number of outcomes including monitoring data, communicating vision, and observing teachers were reported as expectations, but low priorities for choice. In order to explore how the choice process unfolded, a closer examination of the MILF priorities was required.

Matrix of Demands, Constraints, and Choices

As a complement to the narrative findings, the following tables indicate the presence of demands, constraints, and choices reported by principals. This includes aggregate and disaggregated data for demands, constraints, and choices.

Table 16

Aggregate Matrix of Demands, Constraints, and Choices

MILF Outcome		Georgina			Jenna			Roberta			Vivian			Shirin			Barbara					
#	Description	D	C	C	D	C	C	D	C	C	D	C	C	D	C	C	D	C	C			
		E	O	H	E	O	H	E	O	H	E	O	H	E	O	H	E	O	H			
1	Facilitate the Development of a School Vision	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X		X		
2	Align All Aspects of a School Culture to Student and Adult Learning	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
3	Monitor Alignment of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment				X		X			X	X				X	X	X	X		X		X
4	Improve Instructional Practices Through the Purposeful Observation and Evaluation of Teachers				X	X	X	X	X	X					X	X						X
5	Ensure the Regular Integration of Appropriate Assessments into Daily Classroom Instruction		X		X		X								X		X					
6	Use Technology and Multiple Sources of Data to Improve Classroom Instruction				X	X		X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
7	Provide Staff with Focused, Sustained, Research-based Professional Development	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
8	Engage All Community Stakeholders in a Shared Responsibility for Student and School Success				X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X

Table 17

Matrix of Demands References for all Principals

#	Outcome	Georgina	Jenna	Roberta	Vivian	Shirin	Barbara
1	Facilitate the Development of a School Vision	X	X	X	X		X
2	Align All Aspects of a School Culture to Student and Adult Learning	X	X		X	X	X
3	Monitor Alignment of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment		X		X	X	X
4	Improve Instructional Practices Through the Purposeful Observation and Evaluation of Teachers		X	X			
5	Ensure the Regular Integration of Appropriate Assessments into Daily Classroom Instruction		X			X	
6	Use Technology and Multiple Sources of Data to Improve Classroom Instruction		X	X	X	X	
7	Provide Staff with Focused, Sustained, Research-based Professional Development	X	X	X	X	X	X
8	Engage All Community Stakeholders in a Shared Responsibility for Student and School Success		X		X	X	X

Table 18

Matrix of Constraints References for all Principals

#	Outcome	Georgina	Jenna	Roberta	Vivian	Shirin	Barbara
1	Facilitate the Development of a School Vision		X	X	X		
2	Align All Aspects of a School Culture to Student and Adult Learning	X	X	X	X	X	X
3	Monitor Alignment of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment					X	
4	Improve Instructional Practices Through the Purposeful Observation and Evaluation of Teachers		X	X		X	
5	Ensure the Regular Integration of Appropriate Assessments into Daily Classroom Instruction	X					
6	Use Technology and Multiple Sources of Data to Improve Classroom Instruction		X	X		X	X
7	Provide Staff with Focused, Sustained, Research-based Professional Development	X	X	X	X	X	X
8	Engage All Community Stakeholders in a Shared Responsibility for Student and School Success			X	X		X

Table 19

Matrix of Choice References for all Principals

#	Outcome	Georgina	Jenna	Roberta	Vivian	Shirin	Barbara
1	Facilitate the Development of a School Vision		X	X	X	X	X
2	Align All Aspects of a School Culture to Student and Adult Learning	X	X	X	X	X	X
3	Monitor Alignment of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment		X	X		X	X
4	Improve Instructional Practices Through the Purposeful Observation and Evaluation of Teachers	X	X	X		X	X
5	Ensure the Regular Integration of Appropriate Assessments into Daily Classroom Instruction		X			X	
6	Use Technology and Multiple Sources of Data to Improve Classroom Instruction			X	X	X	X
7	Provide Staff with Focused, Sustained, Research-based Professional Development	X	X	X	X	X	X
8	Engage All Community Stakeholders in a Shared Responsibility for Student and School Success	X	X	X	X	X	X

Understanding Choice: MILF Priorities

Priorities for CCSS implementation

Table 20 summarizes overarching themes for priority attention reported by principals to lead Common Core implementation.

Table 20

MILF Priorities: Interview #1

#	Outcome	Georgina	Jenna	Roberta	Vivian	Shirin	Barbara
1	Facilitate the Development of a School Vision	High	Low	Low	High	High	Medium
2	Align All Aspects of a School Culture to Student and Adult Learning	Medium	High	High	High	High	Low
3	Monitor Alignment of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	High	High	High	High	High	High
4	Improve Instructional Practices Through the Purposeful Observation and Evaluation of Teachers	High	High	Medium	High	High	High
5	Ensure the Regular Integration of Appropriate Assessments into Daily Classroom Instruction	High	High	High	High	High	High
6	Use Technology and Multiple Sources of Data to Improve Classroom Instruction	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium
7	Provide Staff with Focused, Sustained, Research-based Professional Development	High	High	High	High	High	High
8	Engage All Community Stakeholders in a Shared Responsibility for Student and School Success	Low	Low	Low	High	High	Low

Outcome 1, “Facilitate the Development of a School Vision,” had the most varied responses. As principals discussed this priority they shared that vision was either a

priority because the district had already established it or vision was a priority in order to describe the teaching practices essential for CCSS implementation.

All principals reported that monitoring alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, ensuring the regular integration of assessment into daily instruction, and providing staff with focused, sustained professional development were high priorities. This was consistent with the significant emphasis on training in order to learn the new standards and instructional practices for CCSS implementation. Additionally, principals emphasized the significant time spent supporting teams, developing collaborative planning, and ensuring teams used common language to scaffold student learning.

Engaging all community stakeholders in a shared responsibility had mixed responses; four principals reported engagement as a low priority. In the discussion, all principals expressed a need to work with the community, but reported constraints to dedicate time as a priority for implementation. Principals shared a need to address questions and concerns about implementation, however the focus was on classroom and teacher understanding of the purpose and philosophy of Common Core, not families.

This overview of priorities served as an entry point to further explore principal decision making. Six months following this initial priority identification the second interview was completed. In the second interview, principals were asked to rank order instructional leadership priorities for Common Core implementation and describe the decision making and choice process they engaged in as leaders.

Instructional leadership priorities

Table 21 depicts reported MILF priorities for Common Core implementation from 1 (highest priority) to 8 (lowest priority) and provides a lens into instructional leadership during CCSS implementation.

Table 21

MILF Priorities: Interview #2

#	Outcome	Georgina	Jenna	Roberta	Vivian	Shirin	Barbara
1	Facilitate the Development of a School Vision	8	6	7	1	6	3
2	Align All Aspects of a School Culture to Student and Adult Learning	6	1	5	2	7	8
3	Monitor Alignment of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	4	4	3	4	1	6
4	Improve Instructional Practices Through the Purposeful Observation and Evaluation of Teachers	1	3	2	3	5	4
5	Ensure the Regular Integration of Appropriate Assessments into Daily Classroom Instruction	5	2	4	6	2	5
6	Use Technology and Multiple Sources of Data to Improve Classroom Instruction	2	8	6	7	4	2
7	Provide Staff with Focused, Sustained, Research-based Professional Development	3	5	1	5	3	1
8	Engage All Community Stakeholders in a Shared Responsibility for Student and School Success	7	7	8	8	8	7

Principals reported varied responses from the initial reflection to the rank ordered identification of priorities. During the six months from the first to second interview, principals may have evolved in their thinking about instructional leadership and CCSS implementation. The initial interviews were completed when four grade levels were

engaged in implementation. The follow-up interviews were completed when school-wide implementation was in the final stage and the remaining two grade levels (fourth and fifth) had begun work with the Common Core. It is likely that both of these variables influenced the principals' perceptions about their instructional leadership priorities.

The variability of instructional leadership priorities was notable. Additionally, there was a disconnect between the principals' numeric identification of priorities and the narrative comments shared about each instructional leadership outcome during the first interview. Although principals reported variability between stated priorities and practices, this was likely due to the influence of demands and constraints on choices in the context of Common Core implementation. Consequently, principals were asked to describe the process used to identify choice priorities, influences, decisions, and opportunities.

Principal decision-making

As principals described their thinking about instructional leadership priorities there was evidence of influence from school culture and personal beliefs. Georgina and Roberta were driven by a desire to support the building culture and encouraged teachers to persist. Roberta shared, "Staff is overwhelmed with changes and the priority is professional development [with a] focus on feedback and encouragement."

Jenna, Vivian, Shirin, and Barbara reflected strong individual beliefs about their work. Jenna did not report an influence from Common Core on her implementation priorities, but acknowledged it was a "powerful tool for enhancing performance." Vivian noted the importance of the principal's role in leading the staff and identified vision as the foundation for implementation. She shared, "To me, the success of any school begins

with the leader. The leader is responsible for carrying out and ensuring the implementation of the school vision.” Barbara noted that priorities shifted as the school context unfolded and that she thought about, “Where does most of my energy need to be and where does it need to be the least?”

No principals shared a relationship between the school system expectations and the power influences of the school community on the identification of instructional leadership priorities. This was curious given the origin of the MILF outcomes as part of the established roles and responsibilities identified by the state and district for principals.

All jobs present choices and it was not unexpected that principals spent some of their time on different tasks. The differences in choice were characterized by the amount of time dedicated to particular priorities, the nature of the work, and the emphasis on one priority over another. The process of how choices unfolded could be understood through an examination of principal perceptions and influences on actions.

Influence on choice

Principals described choices as a result of examining the needs of students, staff, and school conditions. Georgina and Shirin were influenced by school culture and the need to honor the input and feelings of staff to ensure “high quality teachers” and “reduce stress” to ensure effective instruction. Similarly, Roberta and Barbara referenced staff as an influence, but also talked about “student achievement” and “offering students the best instructional program possible.” Jenna noted the conditions of the school were the largest influence, and choices were affected by her assessment of where the school needed to grow to support CCSS implementation. Vivian was the only principal that reported

influence from the district and noted “what is required...leading, teaching, and learning are the ordered priorities of an instructional leader.”

Given the diverse work demands for principals, the varied school conditions, and nature of individuals in the organization; it was not unexpected that numerous possibilities in the selection of choice existed. Even with similar demands, constraints, and choice opportunities, how the work was executed manifested differently.

Perception of choice

Principals reported varied opportunities for choice in their work. Georgina was the only principal to describe “a great deal of autonomy” to empower teachers through establishing expectations and encouraging innovation. Jenna noted choice opportunities were balanced and that all aspects of instructional leadership “must be addressed, but the attention they will get will fluctuate throughout the year.” Roberta and Vivian reported low choice opportunities, while Shirin and Barbara indicated opportunities for choice were constrained. Roberta shared, “I don’t feel I have a ton of choice at this time” due to needs to continue with professional development, whereas Vivian shared that the absence of choice was not a concern for her because she believed in what the district expected and stated, “There isn’t much choice in this work; however, if there was, I wouldn’t see it any other way.”

The constraints on choice opportunities reported by Shirin were related to a need to address “menial things” and that, while she saw choices “about where I go and what I do,” there were frequent things that needed immediate attention and took her away from her priorities. Similarly, Barbara noted that “managing the day-to-day aspects” left little

time to reflect or examine practice or give “sufficient time or focus” on instructional leadership.

The nature of schools as organizations makes flexibility and opportunity for choice necessary in the work of instructional leaders. The findings suggest that principals prioritize their work and make choices as a result of the interaction of the various systems with their own interests and preferences. Table 22 presents a narrative matrix of the data to support the choice findings.

Table 22

Matrix of Choice Themes

Theme	Georgina	Jenna	Roberta	Vivian	Shirin	Barbara
Principal Decision Making	School Culture: Hiring and selection of staff; identification of effective team leaders; “empower the teachers and the teams to implement the curriculum and to teach students”; believes that role is to “positively support “ and provide what teachers need for implementation	Personal Beliefs: Believes Common Core is a “powerful tool for enhancing performance.” Top priorities have not shifted as a result of Common Core. “I don’t know that implementing the Common Core influenced my ranking”	School Culture: Staff is overwhelmed with changes and priority is professional development; focus on feedback and encouragement; don’t need to do vision as it is already done. Community is important, but not a priority focus.	Personal Beliefs: Strong principal leadership is required and leadership is seen through the vision; “To me, the success of any school begins with the leader. The leader is responsible for carrying out and ensuring the implementation of the school vision.”	School Culture: Examine what was already established the building as lower priority. “The other [MILF] were things we were doing, but [actions] that needed to be more at the forefront due to Common Core.	All MILF are priorities and the emphasis shifts depending on the conditions and context for implementation. Thinks about, “Where does most of my energy need to be and where does it need to be the least?”
Influence on Choice	Staff: “Due diligence” to ensure high quality staff (observe practice, review transcript, reference check); “I value the input of teaching teams, and feel the most important task in the school system is at the school level, next to being a classroom teacher, the principal’s role is the most important and one in which you can make a difference.”	Conditions: Sees influence on choice as contextualized to school conditions; “I ranked vision low, but I can easily see how I might lead another school where this would need greater emphasis”; Saw a need to shift practice and assessment, so used CCSS as a vehicle for change.	Students & Staff: “Student achievement influences” choices; high stress level of staff; need to make sure staff is comfortable with changes; “most important to focus on making sure staff are supported in learning and implementing this new curriculum/grading”	Role: Priorities of the work of a principal and what is required; “leading, teaching, and learning are the ordered priorities of an instructional leader”	Staff: Biggest driver is to “support my teachers to be able to provide the best instruction possible, so that kids can understand the content they are being given”; help make sure teacher’s don’t get stuck, “reduce the stress so that they feel comfortable with what they are teaching and that will lead to better instruction.”	Staff & Students: “What are the needs in order to ensure student success? How do we offer our students the best instructional program possible? What areas do we need to focus on to move forward?”; Can adjust priorities based on school context.
Perception of Choice	Autonomy: “I feel that I have a great deal of autonomy and in essence empower teachers as well, by establishing expectations for all after discussion and professional development within the school”; encourages innovation and sharing of expertise.	Balance: “Each of these 8 areas must be addressed, but the attention they will get will fluctuate throughout the year”; different initiatives or things outside the building can influence choice inside the building.	Low: “I don’t feel I have a ton of choice at this time.”; absence of robust county training has meant a need to do extensive school level training; “I am forced to put all my effort into professional development at this point in time.”	Low; “There isn’t much choice in this work; however, if there was, I wouldn’t see it any other way.”	Constrained: “Ultimate goal is to be [in classrooms], but because of other menial things, that takes away from where I want to be”; “choices about where I go and what I do, but there are other things that I don’t have choices about and need me immediately.”	Constrained; “Driven by test scores, student performance and managing the day-to-day aspects”; little time to reflect or examine instructional leadership practice or give any of “sufficient time or focus” to instructional leadership; working in “survival mode”

Chapter Summary

The Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework provided the backdrop for examining instructional leadership. Each principal made different choices for how they spent their time and the priorities for their work during Common Core implementation. Choices were a reflection of personal beliefs, values, ideals, perceptions, and influences from staff and community. Educational load variables did not appear to influence instructional leadership choices or the perceptions of demands and constraints as they were not referenced by any principals. Demands and constraints were similar, but influential to differing degrees on how principals thought about Common Core implementation. The perceptions and instructional leadership choices existed along a continuum, suggesting that, as constraints decreased and school conditions were favorable, principals focused on the core of instructional leadership. The varied priorities and choices principals made influenced the quality and depth of Common Core implementation. Chapter 6 will explore the conclusions and implications for these findings on the theoretical, research, practical, and policy landscapes.

Chapter 6

Introduction

This final chapter reexamines the research problem, provides a brief study overview, and summarizes the major research findings. Findings are then placed within the national conversation and linked to implications for theory, policy, and practice. The chapter concludes with recommendations for district leaders, principals, principal trainers, and suggestions for future research.

Review of the Problem

The job of the elementary principal evolved to include a range of roles including building managers, instructional leaders, change agents, professional developers, and visionaries in creating school climates that support reform (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). Standards-based reforms were consistent parts of the formula for school improvement and principals were viewed as key players in the implementation of reform at the local school level (Bottoms & Schmidt-Davis, 2010; Elmore, 2000; Heck & Hallinger, 2005; Marks & Nance, 2007). The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) were a large-scale national reform that placed demands and constraints on principals. The principals' experience through CCSS implementation was processed and experienced differently resulting in variable instructional leadership choices.

Overview of the Study

This case study focused on individual perceptions of demands, constraints, and instructional leadership choices for elementary principals during Common Core implementation in one suburban school district. It examined the principals' conception of their role, expectations, barriers, priorities, and decision making over a 12 month

period during the third year of implementation. Data were primarily collected through document review and semi-structured interviews which were transcribed, coded, analyzed, and triangulated using QSR NVivo qualitative research software.

Data were drawn from six principals within one school district who were confronted with similar demands and constraints. It is unreasonable to suggest that the findings were transferrable to all districts, schools, or principals, however the study provides important contributions to understanding the influence of demands, constraints, instructional leadership choices, and the experience of Common Core implementation. The findings also serve as a starting point to make recommendations to districts, policy makers, and practioners who are charged with supervising and leading reform initiatives.

Major Findings

The findings described in the previous two chapters have significant implications for policy, practice, and theory. In this section, I summarize the key findings that emerged from this study. The findings were guided by the integrated model of Stewart's (1982) demands, constraints, and choices with Hoy and Miskel's (2008) social systems of schools and the three research questions.

1. What are the current demands that elementary principals perceive in their work?
2. What are the constraints that impact implementation of the CCSS?
3. How does a principal make instructional leadership choices in implementing the CCSS?

As multi-participant case study, one of the major findings was a description of principal perceptions. This included the ways principals were influenced by the demands

and constraints of their role and the contextual effect of Common Core on instructional leadership choices. This was significant because of the lack of empirical research on Common Core implementation connected to principal instructional leadership at the time of this study.

Demands and constraints

The first research question reflected an interest in capturing principal perceptions of demands. Findings confirmed that the work of the principal included a myriad of demands (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Fostering shared beliefs, developing teams, engaging the community, developing knowledge of curriculum and instruction, securing resources, responding to system memorandums, and managing student behavior were only some of the areas that required attention. The findings supported other studies that identified working with staff and students to focus on goals, promoting high expectations, curriculum monitoring, involving stakeholders in the operation of the school and the supervision and evaluation of staff as key demands (Blase & Blase, 2000; Hallinger, 2003). In many cases, when principals described non-instructional demands, they did so through the lens of constraints, suggesting a clear sense of the instructional leadership core of the principalship.

The second research question reflected an interest in describing the constraints that impacted implementation of CCSS. All of the constraints identified in Stewart's (1982) model including time, attitude, resources, and organizational hierarchy were confirmed by this study. The elementary schools in this district were managing a number of priorities as extensions and in addition to CCSS implementation including standards based grading and reporting, technology installation, revisions to principal and teacher

evaluation, and emerging assessment models. Designed to complement one another, these various initiatives required significant time, attention, and understanding for each of the participants as they engaged in the work of leading their schools.

There was no evidence that principals felt the demands were unfair, rather they desired the time and opportunity to meet the expectations with fidelity, particularly for enacting their instructional leadership role. Principals indicated a sense that barriers were inevitable, but opportunities existed for the district to lessen constraints through targeted actions and support to schools. The demands and constraints principals described were not unusual or atypical; however the conditions of the daily school experience presented implementation challenges. Furthermore, the growing and varied aspects of demands and constraints created frustration and tension (DiPaola et al., 2003). Two principals reported dissatisfaction with their role and one chose to leave the district during the time of this study. It is unclear if the frustration was an outgrowth of limited capacity to transform demands and constraints into choices or particular aspects of the school/district context, or the result of other influences.

In his study examining the demands, constraints, and choices of high school principals, Williams (2011) found similar non-instructional demands that constrained instructional leadership including “attending meetings that take time away from other tasks; responding to complaints and issues, correcting other individuals’ mistakes, discussing job performance of non-teaching staff, working with and responding to requests from direct supervisor, maintaining visibility by attending school events and programs, and addressing school facility issues” (p. 160). Williams findings on constraints indicated that high school principals perceived policies, staffing, technology,

supervisor support, finances, and the union as constraints. The exploration of principal perceptions at the elementary level revealed the following seven findings specific to demands and constraints.

Finding #1: Attitudes and beliefs. Principals demonstrated an understanding of the relationship between school conditions, the experience of stakeholders, and Common Core implementation (Heck et al., 1996; Leithwood & Janzi, 2000; Engels, Hotton, Devos, Bouckenooghe, & Aelterman, 2008). Bowman and Deal (1991) described how attitude constrained the way leaders contemplated situations and transformed reflections into choices for work. Stewart (1982) also found attitude and perception of self and others were constraining variables. The differences in how principals viewed implementation was in relationship to principal understanding of the needs of the school and their individual attitudes, values, and beliefs (Trider & Leithwood, 1988). Even when principals felt positively about Common Core they reported challenges with bringing staff and community along in support of the curriculum, however they did not describe attitude as insurmountable, rather a constraint to be managed. Principals appeared to understand the inevitable need to address a range of viewpoints that staff held about the Common Core. The perceived degree of difficulty in addressing staff attitude related to the intentional choices to manage demands and constraints when working directly with teams. Principals that were confident in their knowledge about Common Core were more likely to push implementation and took an active role to establish expectations. The attitude of the principal drove the attitude and priorities of the staff (Coldren & Spillane, 2007).

Finding #2: Vision. Visionary leadership is critical in a climate of reform and change (Fennell, 2005; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Principals did not reference or talk specifically about their individual school vision as a demand. Principals appeared to understand vision as an instructional leadership component, but did not describe vision as a choice. Instructional leadership required a continued focus on vision, but centered on district goals. This was not surprising as even when schools had the opportunity to write a community specific vision, they were not freed from the obligations to engage in the actions the district expected. It is possible that vision was evident in the expectations, communications, or qualitative nature of how the school filtered their priorities. All schools had community specific visions, but these tended to reflect the culture of the school and were not actively referenced as priorities.

Finding #3: Data mentoring. As a demand, principals understood the expectation to monitor student achievement, report results, and prioritize school improvement efforts. The absence of assessments aligned to the CCSS and lack of data systems specific to monitoring implementation outcomes resulted in minimal reports by principals as a priority. The lack of clarity and absence of sanctions associated with the state School Performance Index made the use of data and technology for monitoring ambiguous. As technology programs emerge and principals seek clarity on the types of data necessary, it is possible this outcome would be more widely reported as a demand or constraint.

The state continued to test student learning, however the assessments and reported data were not viewed by principals as supportive models for leading CCSS implementation. The absence of commentary about assessment may have been in direct

relationship continued use of NCLB testing protocols. Transition to the Common Core PARCC assessment had not yet been piloted and as the PARCC testing rolls out in spring 2014 to all districts in Maryland, emphasis on collecting, analyzing, and using data may likely become a priority choice.

Finding #4: Organizational hierarchy. The existence of the school within the district, community, and institutional context provided inevitable demands and constraints. At the district level, school principals were required to meet the demands of the superintendent, their supervisors, and navigate the various departments directed to support schools. Principals were constrained by the political landscape that dictated how systems were activated and referenced access to information as a benefit of networks. At the local community level, principals considered how to blend the interests of the community with overarching demands. At an institutional level, the policies required schools to focus on implementation regardless of the other needs that were identified.

Finding #5: Community. One of the widely reported demands and constraints was the need to attend to the community. The expectation to engage all community stakeholders in the school was a low instructional leadership priority for all principals. Principals understood the responsibility to involve and engage community stakeholders, but viewed choices in this area as a tool for managing constraints. Choices were often reactionary and responsive to community concerns about implementation. The better the principal understood the needs of the community, the more likely they anticipated and addressed community needs. All principals adjusted the way information was shared, spent time meeting with families, felt a responsibility to educate the community, and marketed the benefits of the Common Core. This was particularly evident in navigating

the math program, which garnered the attention of all principals in the study. It is unclear whether the view of time needed to work with the community or the perception of demands or constraints related to the community increased or merely shifted focus as a result of implementation. Principals did not indicate specific changes they made to Common Core implementation from the community, but noted a need to pay attention to and honor the influential power the community possessed.

Finding #6: Resources. Resource constraints centered on the provision of technology (Murphy, Regenstein, & McNamara, 2012). The implementation of the technology initiative was cited as having a leveling effect where all schools were given access to the same tools. However, principals reflected on the impact and differences in technology resources at the onset of Common Core implementation. Interestingly, principals did not see the absence of Promethean boards as an instructional constraint, rather a tool to address the concerns of staff for access to resources. Principals understood the need to have access to technology, but did not view this access as a support to anything other than instructional delivery.

Finding #7: Time and role selection. All principals reported time constraints for attention to demands and choice (Horng, Klasik, & Loeb, 2010). The perception of a lack of time created frustration about the work principals were asked to do (DiPaola, 2003). Principals felt that attending to building management responsibilities was in conflict or a distraction from instructional leadership; however the management functions were essential tasks to ensure school efficiency and organization (Sergiovanni, 1991).

The organizational structure of the principal's role included building management and principals understood the expectation to manage the facility, ensure student safety,

attend to behavior, and adhere to policy. When faced with choice, principals often attended to operational, behavioral, or management needs at a cost of instructional leadership priorities. The findings do not suggest this choice was the result of interest or beliefs, but of the reality faced in managing the smooth operation of the school. This was seen in all principals, but prevalent in the school with a single administrator. In order for principals to increase choices aligned with instructional leadership, single administrators would have to be supported through additional staffing, and assistant principal roles clarified to include an emphasis on building management functions.

This study did not include a time analysis; however principals reported a daily need to attend to triage. This referred to the presence of unplanned issues, unrelated to the instructional program, that required immediate attention and impacted time (Spillane, Camburn, & Pareja, 2007; Horng et al., 2010). Time is a variable that is likely to always remain unchanged. If time is relative, or in relationship to how individuals view control, then it is possible that there is not a shortage of time, but a missed opportunity for choice. Efficiency is a component of time and further information is required in order to identify the frequency, quality, duration, and utility of task selection and engagement.

Instructional leadership choices

The third research question reflected an interest in capturing how principals made instructional leadership choices. The findings identified a direct path between the demands of the work environment and choices made by each individual (Demerouti, Baaker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). Principals chose instructional leadership, although at different proportions (Hallinger, 1992; Blase & Blase, 2002; Heck et al., 1990). At the time of this study principal choice was predominantly focused on school

culture and professional development. The way that principals considered resources framed thinking about constraints and influenced choices (Spillane et al., 2001; Ylimaki, 2012). Principals made choices based on perceptions of the requirements of their work and high leverage practices that would facilitate navigating the challenges of implementation.

Prior research concluded that principals in effective schools prioritized time in supervising classroom instruction, supporting teachers, coordinating the instructional program, solving instructional problems collaboratively, helping teachers secure resources, and providing staff development activities (Engels et al, 2008; Goldring & Pasternack, 1994; Marks & Printy, 2003). The evaluation or classification of schools as effective or ineffective was not part of the scope of this study. However, the findings illustrated that principals chose non-instructional leadership tasks or felt that the internal or external constraints of the environment prevented them from exercising instructional leadership with attention to all of the MILF outcomes. It is unclear why, when given the same set of demands and constraints, some principals prioritized particular tasks and others did not nor whether these influenced the quality of CCSS implementation or school effectiveness. The exploration of principal instructional leadership priorities revealed the following three findings specific to choice.

Finding #1: School culture and climate. The significant emphasis on developing a school culture suggested that principals believed it was necessary and would yield the greatest benefit for successful implementation of Common Core (Fullan, 2001). Principals referenced a need to shape the culture, develop teams, and share leadership in a way that supported change (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1991; Witzier, Bosker, & Kruger,

2003). Principals also reported a need to attend to the emotional state of staff, with particular emphasis on developing staff self-efficacy and persistence. Principals did not describe specific practices used, but referenced significant time spent attending to the well-being of teachers. It is likely that differences in how principals managed the broad spectrum of relationships existed. These differences could be as a result of experiences, beliefs, school culture, or an understanding of how to deal effectively with the affective responses of adults to change. Principals must have a clear sense of the expected potholes they will confront as reform initiatives unfold as well as transition strategies to develop, balance, and support staff.

The findings suggested that principals understood the relationship between school conditions, culture, and the experience of staff engaged in implementation. Principals focused on ensuring the conditions of the environment supported the goals of Common Core implementation (Heck et al., 1996; Leithwood & Janzi, 2000; Engels, Hotton, Devos, Bouckenooghe, & Aelterman, 2008) and focused on culture in order to ensure that teaching and learning functioned effectively (Fullan, 2001). They placed significant emphasis on the selection of team leaders, collaborative planning opportunities, and actions to build the collective capacity of the entire staff by creating a culture that supported and valued the teamwork they believed was necessary (Carmichael, Martino, Porte-Magee, & Wilson, 2010).

Leithwood and Jantzi (1991) conceptualized the role of transformational leadership as the actions a principal took to shape the culture in a way that supported change and reform. The scope of this study did not include extensive examination of the leadership styles employed by principals, nor required principals to define intentions of

or label for their leadership style. In some cases principals used a distributed model where a range of school leaders had responsibility for implementation and in other cases principals used a transformational leadership approach to create the conditions necessary to navigate through the changes required by the reform. The findings suggested that principals made deliberate or responsive changes to their leadership style as implementation rolled out in the school and demands and constraints increased.

Finding #2: Professional development. All principals reported significant emphasis on professional development. Teamwork and collaboration were viewed as non-negotiable as wide scale implementation required principals to build the collective capacity of the entire staff (Carmichael et al., 2010). Only one principal reported a structure to create additional release time for teachers, but all principals shared concerns with the time available for teachers to collaborate and learn. Contractual agreements with teachers unions were constraints on choices in who was hired, teacher assignment, and job expectations (Donaldson, 2011; Murphy, Regenstein, & McNamara, 2012).

Principals understood the need to focus on professional development, but had mixed levels of involvement, both in identifying topics or processes to examine effectiveness of training. Stein and Nelson (2003) found that principals had personal beliefs, values, and ideals about teaching, but were often weak in their knowledge about the subjects they supervised. Only one principal in this study reported uncertainty in her content knowledge, but all principals assumed responsibility for understanding teacher learning needs, arranging the opportunities for teachers to interact and learn, creating conditions that motivated individuals, and ensuring adequate resources to support adult development were available (Stein & Nelson, 2003, p. 426).

It was unclear whether leaders were able to determine the effectiveness of professional development through observable or measurable shifts in teaching practice. It is possible that principals functioned as constraints or supports to teacher professional growth through their absence or presence in training (Printy, 2008, p. 188). This same function could be said for providing useful feedback to teachers that would support their own reflections on the development of instructional pedagogy respective to Common Core. Barriers to visiting classrooms, including constraints, were seen in the relatively low references to observing teachers, visiting classrooms, attending planning, and using assessment data. It is possible that while the professional development was targeted, it was not being transferred to classroom practice as expected.

It was not surprising that so few principals referenced observation and supervision as prioritized choice. This was possibly connected to the fact that both principals and teachers were still learning about the shifts in instructional practices that were connected to Common Core. In addition, the increased emphasis on collaborative planning and constraints for time were influences on opportunities to visit classrooms and provide feedback to teachers.

Principals made choices as a manifestation of their responsibilities, but began Common Core implementation at a disadvantage. None of the principals in this study were teachers during Common Core implementation and they entered the instructional leadership role without a clear sense of what and how teaching practices must shift. They often took responsibility to provide structures for teachers to collaborate, but frequently had less than a direct role in leading the work of teacher growth delegating that responsibility to the staff development teacher or team leaders. Similarly, the demands of

the principalship did not provide adequate time for principals to engage deeply with staff. As a result, the role of professional developer and instructional leader expanded beyond the principal. All principals referenced significant reliance on the staff development teacher position to carry out tasks associated with professional development and alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Finding #3: How the choice process unfolds. The findings indicated that even with comparable demands and constraints, each principal engaged in similar tasks differentially. This was not to suggest that principals must engage in instructional leadership identically, rather a need to understand how to leverage instructional leadership choices to reach desired outcomes. Neumerski (2012) argued that researchers must rethink the approach to instructional leadership research with a focus on not only what actions principals take, but how those events unfold. As Neumerski (2013) pointed out, while instructional leadership was well defined in the literature, an understanding how principals engaged in the work was limited. She stated, “We know many of the behaviors necessary to improve instruction, but much less about how leaders enact these behaviors on a daily basis” (p. 311).

Each principal provided individual descriptions of the job demands of being a principal. However, principals did not always make choices that reflected the characteristics they defined as responsibilities. Choices were the result of the combination of cognition with actions, exchanges, and context as the work unfolded over time (Yukl, 2006; Hunter, Bedell, & Mumford, 2007). The relationship between principals and the school environment led to differences in how principals conceptualized the existence of and opportunities for choice (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Spillane, 2007).

Understanding instructional leadership choices was enhanced when the Common Core was viewed as an integral and influential component of the choice process. The urgency of practice described by Bourdieu (1981) was seen in how principals viewed the opportunities for choice. Participants descriptions of MILF priorities exemplified the diverse nature of instructional leadership. Principal thinking about choices evolved over the six months between the first and second interviews [Tables 20 & 21] Only two principals reported the same top priority (professional development) and the overall variability of priority identification was puzzling. In some cases principals reported an instructional leadership outcome as a top priority, but did not reference that same priority when narratively reflecting on choice. It was not unexpected that various rankings of priorities existed, however the variability within and across participants in what was identified suggested that further research into the choice process, including how priorities are identified and enacted, is required.

This study did not have sustained engagement from the inception of Common Core implementation through the end, however it is believed that as principals continue to engage in implementation, choices may shift. Developing culture and leading professional development were priorities in the initial stages, but it would not be unexpected that as implementation continues, principals would move toward observation of teaching and monitoring of student performance. The existence of Common Core reform at various points influenced instructional leadership priorities and may lead to choices principals may not have otherwise selected.

Systems influence

All three research questions were interpreted through exploring the influence of the organization on the individual. This process revealed four findings associated with examining the interaction of the social systems on principal perceptions for demands, constraints, and choices.

Finding #1: Cultural system. Hoy and Miskel (2008) described the cultural system as the “feeling part of the organization” that awards individuals of the school and structures values and beliefs to a group “larger than themselves” (p. 39). Each principal described a culture that was relatively distinct, but had similar reflections of the school districts vision and ideals. The cultural system of each school was a manifestation of the district at large and represented the interactional effect of the organization and the individual. It was unclear if the influence of the cultural system resulted in a shared orientation toward district goals or merely bound the principals, and subsequently the teacher’s behaviors, toward implementation.

The findings confirmed that while schools have unique characteristics and interactions, principals had to develop a commitment and belief to something beyond the individual. In some ways, principals described an influence that suggested superficial adherence to particular norms and values. This suggests that the Common Core required behaviors that were not necessarily part of the existing fabric of the school culture. Furthermore, principals described respect for, but not admiration of, the organizational culture of the district.

Finding #2: Political system. Hoy and Miskel (2008) described the political system influence as “behavior usually designed to benefit the individual or group at the

expense of the organization" (p. 39). Privilege and power can have negative effects, and in the case of Common Core implementation, principals perceived access to networks and information as benefits that supported meeting the goals of the organization.

From the perspective of politics and the larger community, principals recognized that parents were a significant force that influenced curriculum implementation, grouping practices, facility needs, and resource allocation. It is unclear if these influences were at a cost of the organization or negatively influenced choice. Hoy and Miskel (2008) noted that organizational behavior could not be isolated from external forces. They acknowledged that schools and individuals were influenced by internal and external factors including the values, resources, and politics of the community. This interactional effect was evident in how the systems influence was revealed.

Power and influence were overlapping in a nature as principals described this system. It also shifted, was formal and informal, and was used to control or direct the energy around Common Core implementation. It did not appear that principals were consciously trying to exert their influence, rather control the narrative, and manage constraints. It is unclear if principals attempted to share power or involve others in decision making as a choice due to increased demands or as a recognition that shared responsibility could make the school organization more efficient. In some cases, principals saw power as a benefit or tool to shift priorities. Principals communicated an understanding that parents and community must be considered, but appeared to engage in particular actions in order to move forward with implementation.

Finding #3: Structural system. Hoy and Miskel (2008) described the structural system as “bureaucratic expectations that are formal demands and obligations set by the

organization” (p. 25). They identified these expectations as defined and flexible where roles were outlined, hierarchy established, and regulations developed to give structure and meaning to the organization. The findings support the model assumptions that behavior is “a function of the interaction of bureaucratic role expectations and the relevant work orientations of the organizational member” (p. 26). Principals reported similar understandings of district expectations for managing the facility, responding to community needs, and adhering to policies for curriculum implementation. The variability in how principals enacted these roles supported the idea that principals are influenced differentially by organizational expectations and rules.

All principals appeared to understand the expectations and functions of their role. The transformation of those responsibilities into instructional leadership behaviors was variable. It is unclear if principals received informal or formal feedback from the organization or the environment that reinforced particular choices. It is also unclear what aspects of the structural system supported or hindered implementation as each principal was influenced differently. One aspect of principal perception that was absent was the view of district leaders and supervisors as instructional authorities.

Finding #4: Individual system. The individual system represented cognition and motivation in how individuals understood their job. Hoy and Miskel (2008) noted that “one of the most important elements in the learning process is what the individual brings to the learning situation. What we already know determines in large part what we will pay attention to, perceive, learn, remember, and forget” (p. 54). The findings confirmed the influence of the organization on how individuals viewed their work. As individuals engaged with the environment and experienced the work, they were either confirming

what they already knew and believed or integrating new information into a changed perspective about their job. However, the findings did not identify the particular opportunities leaders had to reflect during the development process.

All of the principals in this study had individual needs, beliefs, and priorities that affected how they interacted with the district and the school. It is possible that principals may also have confronted cognitive dissonance and as the goal of leading implementation became difficult, they convinced themselves it was not a worthy goal to pursue. It is also possible that varied aspects of self-efficacy were at play in how principals viewed their ability to succeed. It would not be unexpected that the novel aspects of Common Core implementation would have led to a lack of confidence or confusion given the significant changes required. In a time where accountability was both ambiguous and emerging, principals were experiencing increased confusion about what to expect in classrooms and whether their leadership would lead to the outcomes expected. Understanding how this system may have influenced effort, motivation, and persistence requires additional exploration.

The Public Conversation

The relative novelty of the CCSS as a reform initiative was contained within the national narrative. Concerns about implementation were prevalent in public forums throughout implementation and provided additional confirmation of the developing nature of CCSS and presence of implementation challenges. On February 27, 2013, Diane Ravitch, a longtime supporter of voluntary national standards wrote a blog self-titled “Why I Cannot Support the Common Core Standards.”

Such standards, I believe, should be voluntary, not imposed by the federal government; before implemented widely, they should be thoroughly tested to see

how they work in real classrooms; and they should be free of any mandates that tell teachers how to teach because there are many ways to be a good teacher, not just one. I envision standards not as a demand for compliance by teachers, but as an aspiration defining what states and districts are expected to do. They should serve as a promise that schools will provide all students the opportunity and resources to learn reading and mathematics, the sciences, the arts, history, literature, civics, geography, and physical education, taught by well-qualified teachers, in schools led by experienced and competent educators.” (p. 1)

Ravitch described her belief that the standards were being implemented without a clear understanding if they were appropriate or an upgrade to the current expectations for students and how they would be translated in to practice. The Fordham Institute, a Washington, D.C. think tank that tracked the standards, counted itself as an advocate, but its President, Chester Finn noted, “The biggest potential pothole, by far, is failed implementation...It's a huge, heavy lift if we are serious about teachers teaching it, kids learning it, curricula reflecting it, tests aligned with it, and kids passing those tests.” (Gerwetz, 2012b, p. 1). Public dialogue included discussion about the training necessary for effective implementation and the view that principals had been overlooked in the national conversation about leadership expectations for implementation. Catherine Gerwetz (2012a) in her article, “Common-Core Training for Principals on Increase” wrote:

A year ago, top officials in the school leadership world were worried. It seemed to them that principals were being overlooked in national conversations about how to get educators ready for the Common Core State Standards. But that is changing. The past six months have seen a surge of activity to acquaint principals with the new standards and teach them how to lead their staff members through the profound changes that are required to turn the new expectations into classroom instruction. (p. 1)

JoAnn Bartoletti, Executive Director of the National Association of Secondary School Principals supported this idea and stated, “There is much greater awareness now about

what we need to do to educate principals about what they should be doing for the Common Core” (Gerwetz, 2012a). She went on to state,

The National Association of Elementary School Principals is also beginning to offer common-core information to its members, as it did in a May 3, 2012 webinar with the School Improvement Network. The Alexandria, Va.- based group hired a full-time staff member devoted to the standards, compiled a “checklist” aimed at helping principals take stock of what they must do to move ahead with the new standards, and set up a Web portal to house its new stock of common-core resources. (p. 1)

Understanding the nuances of principal leadership and recognition of the need to training current and aspiring leaders was perceived to be delayed by many educators in the public forum. This may explain the frustration and confusion among principals about the expectations for their work and the ambiguity of choices that would ensure successful CCSS implementation.

The 2012 MetLife *Survey of the American Teacher: Challenges for School Leadership* report included 240 elementary principals perceptions of the challenges they experienced in their work. In the report, *Chapter 4: Implementation of Common Core State Standards* noted that 67% of principals believed that implementing the CCSS would be very challenging or challenging for school leaders. While 93% of elementary principals believed their teachers had the capacity to implement the CCSS, they believed the standards to be rigorous and were concerned about how to effectively support students that were not meeting current curriculum objectives. Furthermore, 76% of elementary principals believed the CCSS would improve overall student outcomes. In this way, effective principal leadership was an important element that contributed to successful implementation of the Common Core (MetLife, 2012).

In an Edweek teacher blog by Learning Forward titled, “School Leaders Must Embrace Change” (Killion, 2012), the author argued that states must not only think about training on the standards themselves, but also examine how leaders are purposeful in making choices. Learning Forward identified the role of the school leader to include, knowing CCSS timelines for implementation, understanding of CCSS content outcomes, and navigating change.

Most change efforts in education are short-lived, not because they aren't needed, but rather because they are poorly managed. Managing small changes within a school can be taxing; managing the implementation of college- and career-ready standards, along with new assessments and the essential revamping of instruction, is monolithic in scope. (p. 1)

Principals continued to serve as the face and voice of CCSS implementation at the school level. Education First and the Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) Research Center examined planning activities in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia by surveying state education agency (SEA) representatives in summer 2012. Their report, *Moving Forward: A National Perspective on States' Progress In Common Core State Standards Implementation* (2013) examined the changes to the teacher and principal evaluation systems, CCSS professional development, and development of curriculum and instructional materials to support implementation. While these three areas were critical to the success of CCSS implementation, it was unclear how principals were being prepared to extend these efforts.

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) and National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) offered a number of webinars, professional development institutes, reference texts, online checklists, articles, and conferences for principals, further illustrating the significant priority and need for

principals in their role as instructional leaders. The summary of mainstream media, professional websites, and online references suggested concern with and an overall urgency in identifying what and how principals could ensure the CCSS succeeded.

Larry Cuban (2013), in his blog posting titled, “*Principals as Instructional Leaders: Rhetoric and Reality*” summarized the research on principal demands and concluded that instructional leadership was the priority role in order to improve teacher performance and student achievement.

Spending time in classrooms to observe, monitor, and evaluate classroom lessons do not necessarily lead to better teaching or higher student achievement on standardized tests. Where there is a correlation between principals’ influence on teachers and student performance, it occurs when principals create and sustain an academic ethos in the school, organize instruction across the school, and align school lessons to district standards and standardized test items. There is hardly any positive association between principals walking in and out of classrooms a half-dozen times a day and conferring briefly with teaches about those five-minute visits. The reality of daily principal actions conflicts with the theory. (p. 1)

Standards reform and the associated professional development, accountability, and adjustment to teaching practices were not new elements of the school leadership experience.

Implications

This research focused on the perceptions of demands, constraints, and instructional leadership choices for elementary principals directing implementation of the Common Core State Standards. The framework of demands, constraints, and choices informed not only how we understood the work of elementary principals, but also examined the design of the principalship. This included how schools functioned and the systems influence on students, staff, and community members.

Theoretical implications

The findings on demands, constraints, and choices for individual participants, gave rise to questions about differences in principal perceptions. The underlying cognitive processes that constructed decision-making were not part of the scope of this study. The process of interacting with the environment, receiving feedback, and selecting actions is ongoing and takes time. This results in the individual influencing the organization and vice versa as they are integrated and evolving (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). The use of the Stewart (1982) and Hoy and Miskel (2008) models, in concert with the MILF, moved our understanding forward so that other researchers can use Haas (2005), Williams (2011), and this study to inform exploration of areas that have promise theoretically or reflect recommended areas of inquiry.

Utility of models

Stewart: Demands, constraints, and choices. The purpose of the study was to investigate the relationship between job demands, constraints, and instructional leadership choices in the context of CCSS implementation. Stewart's (1982) demands, constraints, and choices model [Figure 2] was intended to describe jobs and explore individual perceptions of the principalship. This included 1) Demands- what anyone in the job has to do; 2) Constraints- factors that limit what the jobholder can do; and 3) Choices- the activities a jobholder can do, but doesn't have to (Stewart, 1982).

The Stewart model was particularly useful in examining principal perceptions of their job and choice. The variability of principal conceptualizations of demands, constraints, and choices confirmed Stewart's proposal that the person in the job was able to change some of the demands and constraints through the choices they did or did not

make in action. Furthermore, the findings supported Stewart's notion that individuals in similar jobs had distinct priorities that led to differences in how the work was done.

Stewart's work was recognized in the field of management, but not widely used for educational research. She had a long career and spent many hours immersed in the environment of study resulting in thick descriptions from thousands of hours of observational data. A difference between Stewart's work and this study was that this study was not observational, rather it was perceptual. The opportunity to spend time in sustained engagement with principals as they work would be a powerful way to use Stewart's model from an observational perspective. Stewart's theoretical formulation was meaningful, but grounded from a managerial perspective. This required a link from Stewart's model to Hoy and Miskel's (2008) adaptation of systems theory and the world of schools.

Hoy and Miskel: School as a social system. The integration of the two models [Figure 4] provided a compelling way to examine the nature of individuals in schools. Hoy and Miskel's (2008) model theorized that elements of the organization affect behavior through interactions with the environment. To survive, "the organization must adapt and to adapt, it must change" (p. 20). This means that opportunities for feedback must exist in order to identify areas where the organization might adjust. The congruence postulate, as described by Hoy and Miskel, accounts for the nature of systems influence [Figure 5]. While conceived as a characteristic of system effectiveness, the postulate assumes that interactions between systems will either support or be in conflict with one another. These interactions were fluid and ongoing for each participant. Principals did not conceptualize or describe these interactions in the terms of the model, but described a

shifting systems influence in thinking about demands, constraints, and instructional leadership choices.

The findings supported the notion that opportunities for choice were flexible. Hoy and Miskel (2008) noted that individuals “use their own knowledge to monitor and regulate their cognitive processes, that is, their reasoning, comprehension, problem solving, learning, and so on” (p. 64). This includes attention to planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

Planning is deciding how much time to give to a task, what strategies to use, how to begin, what to gather, what order to follow, what to skim, what to focus on, and so on. Monitoring is the awareness of how I’m doing. Is this making sense? Am I trying to go too fast? Do I have it yet? Evaluation is making judgments about the outcomes of thinking and learning. Should I change strategies? Get help? Give up for now? Is this report finished or does it need more work? Many planning, monitoring, and evaluation processes are not conscious, especially among adults and experts. (p. 64)

Perception and choice were flexible, however shifts came from the opportunity to make meaning of the tasks and activities principals engaged in during the work. For principals, this included regular opportunities to not only identify demands and constraints, but to make connections between the thinking about the work and the potential implications of action or inaction on the organization.

In her study to examine district actions to create school-based professional learning communities, Haas (2005) utilized Hoy and Miskel’s (2008) social systems of school model. Haas’ (2005) application of the model was a useful anchor and confirmed the overlapping nature of systems influence. Haas found all four systems reflected in the way district leaders perceived their environment. Similar to Haas, this study found that perceptions were a powerful influence to capture differences in how individuals described what they perceived.

Analytic process. Principal perceptual data was nuanced in that principals often described demands, constraints, and choices simultaneously. This created analytic challenges that required attention to and honoring of the overlapping nature of systems influence on principal behavior. Principals were not provided with information or language through the interview process that described or detailed the elements of the Hoy and Miskel (2008) framework. This resulted in a need to code data from multiple points through annotations, concept mapping, and node matrices. While the hierarchical coding process was powerful, I acknowledge I may not have gotten all of the overlaps due to the perceptual nature of the model and interactional components.

The results of this study provided a strand of research that was coherent and began to build the terrain around the utility of intersecting the Stewart (1982) and Hoy and Miskel (2008) models. Hoy and Miskel had been widely used for dissertations in education and this study built on the work of others (Haas, 2005; Williams, 2012). One of the particular implications of this study was an exploration of new analytic and methodological approaches to qualitative research.

The process used to examine the data included a three tiered process for annotations, concept mapping, and coding. The use of annotations and concept mapping simultaneously was to both learn from the data and to understand the patterns and explanations of principals. The use of line by line annotations and concept mapping with propositions allowed themes, connections, and relationships to emerge naturally prior to fitting the modeling structure in to the analysis. This process accounted for multiple and overlapping interpretations by reflecting on the presence of repeated terms and descriptions at each stage of data analysis. This was helpful in looking for the

relationship between demands, constraints, choices, and instructional leadership. The challenge of coding simultaneous models was in teasing out the relevance or strength of a narrative perception to the models. This was particularly true in using Hoy and Miskel's (2008) model due to the difficulty with identifying the primary system of influence. The additional use of annotations, concept mapping, and propositions served as a source of validity and reliability to strengthen the analytic conclusions.

Policy implications

The range of instructional leadership practices in this study focused only on eight outcomes identified by the MILF. The open-systems perspective suggested that the behavior of individuals was impacted by external pressures from the environmental context. As policy makers and district leaders engage in various systemic reform initiatives, it is important to acknowledge the impact these initiatives have with the individual as they interact with one another.

In a survey of 745 teachers released on November 13, 2013, the Maryland State Education Association (MSEA) stated that "Maryland's teachers need more time, support, and resources to successfully implement new evaluation systems and Common Core State Standards. They reported that 86% of teachers believe that significant challenges remain to understanding and implementing Common Core State Standards, 9% feel that their school has the technological and physical capacity to administer the PARCC exam, and due to the rushed implementation process, curriculum has not been delivered to teachers in a timely fashion (MSEA, 2013). In a statewide summary report on the Maryland teacher and principal evaluation field test, it was noted that "The confluence of multiple new initiatives that require extensive investment of resources at all

levels, including the transition to the Maryland Common Core Curricula and the anticipation of the new assessments from the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)” were concerns for principals (Dolan, 2013, p. 6). These results should alert policy makers about the realities and opportunities for examining the CCSS implementation plans.

This study served as an influential starting point for evaluating whether or not the mandates established by Common Core and the leadership practices identified as necessary were, in fact, sufficient to achieve the desired outcomes. Principal perceptions were examined at the initial implementation stages of Common Core. Haas’ (2005) study was also situated during a time when NCLB was a relatively new reform initiative. She described the importance of feedback and flexibility in adjusting plans as an initiative unfolds. Williams’ (2011) study was not situated during a particular reform initiative and utilized a different framework to categorize principals’ actions. He completed his research at the end of the NCLB regime and it was unclear if his findings would be replicated given the fact that NCLB no longer directly guided the work in schools. As of October 30, 2013, Alabama, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Florida, and Utah withdrew from one of the two CCSS testing consortia (Bidwell, 2013). Indiana, Michigan, and Pennsylvania have paused implementation to examine the costs and standards more closely. The intent of this study was not to evaluate the reasonableness of CCSS, but it did suggest, like Haas (2005), that districts must explore the perceptions of principals to understand their experiences with demands and constraints and consider reform expectations in order to support the ability of principals to demonstrate instructional leadership.

Maryland instruction leadership framework (MILF). The use of the MILF was an entry point to explore instructional leadership choices for elementary principals. When the MILF outcomes were shared with principals, five of the six principals indicated they had not heard of the framework. Although MILF was not well known by participants, the outcomes were understood as elements of instructional leadership. The initial intent of the framework was to drive principal preparation programs, professional development, policy initiatives, and delineate the minimum expectations for principals. Principal understanding of instructional leadership outcomes was different than their enactment of these same roles. Principals described demands, constraints, and choices that touched on all of the MILF outcomes as generalities, but did not include all of the subcomponents. This does not suggest they were absent in their practice, but may not have been activated as a prevalent choice during Common Core implementation. It may have been helpful to marry the MILF with the district evaluation standards for gathering data on instructional leadership or to consider a crosswalk between the two to identify areas of similarity and difference. The MILF was a useful tool, but may not have captured all of the ways principals view the role of instructional leadership.

Williams (2011) examined the choices of four high school principals to focus on instructional leadership with MILF. He found that all principals in his study understood the instructional leadership components of their role. One difference in Williams study was a specific discussion of how the principals used distributed leadership to support their ability to focus on instruction. The outcomes of the MILF were grounded in research, however it is unclear if they painted the full portrait of the types of instructional leadership practices that were both necessary and sufficient to lead implementation. This

is particularly compelling given the emerging nature of the use of instructional leadership and student achievement data for principal evaluations, a topic that is controversial and developing.

The building level Educational Leadership Constituents Council (ELCC) standards identify the primary demands for a principal are to improve student achievement; however, building management is an embedded expectation (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2011). There are seven ELCC standards, supported by research, that emphasize the principal's role to be visionary, focused on teaching and learning, demonstrate organizational management, emphasize collaboration with stakeholders, conduct themselves with professionalism, respond to the larger political context, and complete a leadership internship. These categories are not an exhaustive list of principal roles and responsibilities, but do provide a structure for understanding the scope of demands.

Opportunities to expand understanding of the scope of a principal's role may include use of the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC) standards. As of spring 2013, the new 2011 ELCC standards went into effect for all educational leadership programs. These standards, supported by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) included content knowledge, instructional leadership, school climate, organizational management, and community relations. There is obvious overlap with the MILF, yet the standards focus on the aspiring leader and provide additional opportunities to explore the thinking and perceptions of principals.

Policy implications included consideration of how changes to the principal and teacher evaluation system are likely to influence instructional leadership. The shifting

context of accountability at the state and district level was a critical variable in examining the instructional leadership choices of principals. Principals in this study were working within a structure where the use of ongoing curriculum performance data and professional evaluation began to shift. Common Core implementation was already underway, however it is unclear how the shift to the PARCC assessment program will influence principal perceptions of demands, constraints, and instructional leadership choices in years to come. The absence of principal narrative on assessment, the emerging variable of the PARCC assessment, and inclusion of student performance data in evaluations suggests it was too soon to tell whether or not CCSS would achieve its goals.

Practical implications

Stewart described aspects of an effective organization as ones where managers “have the energy and interest to explore ways of doing [the job] better,” “believe it is possible to make changes,” and “accept the constraints as reasonable, but are not uncritical of them” (p. 115). The organization benefits from having leaders who understand their role, have a deliberate commitment to professional growth, and sense an open space where they can challenge the status quo, so that they feel responsibility for the change process.

Using Stewart’s (1982) theory, organizations must examine and understand the process of choice in order to determine the predicted readiness of an individual for their assigned work by asking:

1. How well is this individual likely to do the job? What will be his or her strengths and weaknesses in it?

2. What aspects of the job will be emphasized and developed? Which ones may be ignored?
3. What is similar and what is different in this job to those that the person has had before?
4. What training may be needed for the aspects of the job that are new to this person?
5. What can this individual contribute to the group to which he or she will belong? How well does this contribution fit in with those of other members?
6. What support may this individual need to contribute maximally?
7. What part can this job play in this individual's development? (p. 114)

These questions acknowledge the influential role of the individual in the organization.

The establishment of set outcomes for instructional leaders and roles and responsibilities were expected elements of a school system, however the organization also has an interest in retaining individuals well suited to do the job. The findings were absent conclusions that indicated whether principals felt "ready" to assume the role of leader during Common Core implementation. Readiness included the ability to be reflective and strategic in matching their leadership practice to the context and expectations.

In addition to identifying the potential readiness for leaders to assume the principalship, Stewart included a strategic view of a job over time. This study did not examine years of experience as a direct influence on perceptions, but it is likely that time spent as a principal had an impact on the perception of demands, constraints, and choice.

As Stewart described:

Being in a job some time is likely to affect the available choices. Your actions will have closed off or restrict some of the potential choices, but is worth

considering what new opportunities for choice have developed. These can come from learning how to get things done, including who is likely to be helpful and whom it is desirable to try and circumvent. There should also be more time to exploit some of the choices. There may be less need to spend time in supervision, so that more attention can be given to other aspects of the job. (p. 109)

As districts consider the expectations for novice and veteran leaders, recognition that opportunities for choice evolve over time should be developed. This includes consideration for ways in which leaders can mentor one another as well as evaluate strategies and outcomes.

The skills and experiences that make for an effective principal prior to Common Core may not necessarily be the same skills that ensure success throughout implementation. In order to succeed in leading Common Core the skills of principals must evolve. Drago-Severson (2012) pointed out:

Principals will need to develop even greater internal capacities in order to manage the tremendous amounts of complexity and ambiguity inherent in adaptive challenges. In addition, they will need to learn new approaches to address these challenges—in the process of working on them. Such processes require ongoing support, as opposed to training on specific topics and the acquisition of discrete skills only. (p. 4)

Principals need ongoing support, in real time, to collaborate, reflect, and discuss the challenges they face. This could be accomplished through opportunities for principals to talk with colleagues or participate in professional learning communities. Principals continue to be evaluated according to a wide range of leadership standards that can be exercised differently. Understanding how demands and constraints were transformed into choices provides school systems with a broad perspective on the practice of leadership and leadership effectiveness.

The qualitative nature of this study was intentionally designed in order to gather principal perceptions. Understanding how principals think about their work can lead to changes in our understanding of the knowledge and skill required to do the job (Drago-Severson, 2012).

Principals must adapt from having largely managerial role to being architects of collaborative learning organization and adult developers. Without the tools or supports to meet these sizeable challenges, many principals experience burnout or excessive stress and leave their professions for more supportive environments. (p. 4)

Principals in this study reported that support for the technical aspects of their work, managing new demands for Common Core implementation, and reexamining assessment required adaptive leadership skills. As districts consider the expectations for principals, they may simultaneously need to examine modifications to the organizational structure that allows for innovative approaches and flexible support for school leaders.

District leaders and policy makers should consider flexibility components when they establish timelines for implementation. Otherwise, they risk being viewed as fixed and critical outcomes may not be met. The principle of equifinality addresses this point.

[Equifinality] suggests that systems can reach the same end from different initial positions and through different paths. Thus, no one best way exists to organize, and likewise, there is no one best way to reach the same end....schools may select a variety of means to achieve improvements... (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 22)

School systems and policy leaders should be cautioned to establish implementation models that do not exist along a continuum. Opportunities for principals and the school district to reflect on the work, the context, and set a path to reach established targets should be adaptable to ensure outcomes are met with fidelity.

Recommendations

The implications for theory, policy, and practice above lead to a number of recommendations for future research and practices for central office administrators, principals, and principal trainers.

Central office

The research on instructional leadership emphasized the important role a principal plays, however it was unclear how district level staff and organizational structures either created or ameliorated demands and constraints. Honig (2012) used a qualitative approach to interview and observe district administrators in three urban districts as they attempted to transform the structure of central office to support instructional leadership practices in schools. Honig found that even when central office leaders attempted to shift to practices supporting instructional leadership they often lacked the skills and fell back on traditional supervisory practices that impeded implementation.

Attempts by district leaders to shift supervisors to instructional coaches are well intended, but have limitations. Like principals, district leaders face demands and constraints that equally influence their choices and the opportunities to focus on developing instructional leadership skills in principals. Similarly, principals view the district structures and supervisors from a monitoring perspective and do not see central office as joint partners in their implementation work. The nature of the supervisory role often limits the candor that principals provide in describing the demands and constraints they face or the choices for instructional leadership. In order to counterbalance this outcome, school districts should pair job-embedded support from supervisors with non-evaluative coaching that allow principals to openly discuss the barriers they face in order to prioritize and leverage leadership actions.

I offer the following three recommendations to central office administrators attempting to implement Common Core within a school district:

1. Consider how policies will impact schools and develop plans that can be integrated in to work, not viewed as an additional set of demands or constraints. Where opportunities exist, seek feedback on principal perceptions of demands and constraints and clarify or remove barriers to instructional leadership choices.
2. Implementation plans should be flexible, but begin with the provision of resources that support curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This includes simultaneous delivery of curriculum, technology resources, and paired assessment at the initiation of implementation.
3. Craft regular opportunities to examine how principals make sense of policy changes. This includes meeting with principals after introducing a new policy or reform initiative in order to capture questions and concerns and provide matched training and support.

Principals

I offer the following two recommendations for principals leading Common Core implementation and struggling with prioritizing instructional leadership choices:

1. Develop professional networks. This includes accessing the knowledge and expertise within the building and of colleagues across the district or nation. Identify schools with similar contexts and whose principals feel they are able to prioritize instructional leadership and seek out opportunities to dialogue and learn best practices.

2. Intentionally develop and leverage teacher leadership. This includes exploration of distributed leadership models and calibration of the core leadership team in order to identify areas of need, brainstorm strategies, and navigate challenges effectively.

Principal trainers

Hess and Kelly (2012) examined principal preparation programs to examine the content and skills expected of aspiring leaders. They stated, “Principals [have] new opportunities to exercise discretion and operate with previously unimagined leeway. In this environment, school improvement rest to an unprecedented degree on the quality of school leadership” (p. 245). All of the principals in this study were trained at a time where traditional approaches to preparing principals were viewed as sufficient. The findings in this study can be used as a starting point to explore the alignment between the skills taught to aspiring leaders and the reality of principals in practice. It is unclear if principals received the depth of exposure to management and instructional leadership practice through their coursework or in-district training programs.

I offer the following two recommendations for trainers of current or aspiring principals:

1. Include opportunities for leaders to develop adaptive and relational leadership skills. This includes understanding the change process, how to bring groups together to maximize functionality, and strategies to develop or maintain positive school culture and climate.
2. Training should include understanding of building management, instructional leadership, as well as examinations of common demands and constraints faced

by principals. This includes identifying expectations and barriers as well as strategies to prioritize and evaluate instructional leadership choices.

Future research

My unit of analysis focused on the individual, not on how they enacted instructional leadership in practice. Principals directed implementation, but the manifestation of Common Core was activated at the teacher and classroom level. Future research should explore how teachers view demands, constraints, and choices in the environment of Common Core implementation. This includes perceptions on implementation, as well as specific leadership practices that support or distract teachers from carrying out the expectations of principals or districts.

This study explored the actions or behaviors of principals, but did not uncover the interactions among principals and teachers. It is critical to consider the nature and duration of these interactions within context (Neumerski, 2012). Rather than listing specific choices or leadership actions, research to unpack the process of decision making will provide critical information on the pathway of choice and whether choices lead to desired outcomes. While all of the principals in this study identified the types of choices made, it is too soon to tell if those choices led to effective Common Core implementation.

Leithwood and Sun (2012) reflected that research on school leadership centered on styles of leadership with less attention to examining particular leadership practices and effects on school conditions. Instructional leadership practices are embedded into a variety of leadership models including shared, distributed, transactional, and transformational leadership theories and include:

- Creating a shared sense of purpose.
- Developing a climate of high expectations and a culture focused on the improvement of teaching and learning.
- Shaping the reward structure to reflect the goals set for staff and students.
- Providing a wide range of activities aimed at intellectual stimulation and development of staff.
- Visibly modeling the values that are being fostered in the school (p. 410).

As Leithwood and Sun suggested, and this study validates, future research should examine the instructional leadership themes noted above as well as constructs like the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework (MILF). For example, inquiry might include the association between specific instructional leadership practices, staff perceptions for curriculum reform, or changes to teaching practice. Williams (2011) suggested areas of future research to examine district support for instructional leadership, the influence of background and experience on leadership style, a comparison across districts, and the usefulness of the MILF to evaluate principal effectiveness. These are additional areas that would provide an anchor for exploring the principalship and choice process within, or outside of, Common Core implementation.

The following topics are potential areas of future research and examination with respect to Common Core implementation and instructional leadership:

1. Examine the impact of student achievement data and the principal evaluation system on instructional leadership priorities.

2. Compare perceptions of demands, constraints, and instructional leadership choices for principals at various stages of experience (novice, experienced, veteran).
3. Identify shifts in instructional leadership priorities following implementation of the PARCC assessment.
4. Examine professional development models (Third party vs. district vs. school based) that are high leverage and support implementation.
5. Examine possible correlations between prioritized instructional leadership practices and the potential connection to school effectiveness or efficiency.
6. Explore all members of the school leadership team to identify how demands, constraints, choices, and instructional leadership are perceived.
7. Conduct a time analysis for principals including identified versus actual tasks in order to examine efficiency through the frequency, quality, and duration of task engagement.

Delimitations

This study focused on a purposeful sample of six elementary school principals in one district. The principals had similar school variables and were of the same sex, however they differed by race, skills, and years of experience. The similarity among schools as medium sized within one district allowed the opportunity to examine how principals perceived the demands and constraints of their role, but the findings do not represent any principals outside of the sample or this district.

The small sample size and the relatively limited scope of data collection posed additional delimitations to the study. A qualitative case study design was selected for this

inquiry because it provided a unique mechanism for exploring how elementary principals transformed demands and constraints into leadership choices. Stake (1995) and Yin (2003) emphasized that truth is relative and dependent on the perspective of the individual. The case study approach provided opportunities to closely collaborate with participants and become aware of their experiences, but may have provided an incomplete picture of the nuanced interactions and processes that influenced instructional leadership choices.

The perception of demands, constraints, and choice is ongoing as the individual is continually being influenced and receiving feedback from their environment (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Therefore, the findings are merely a snapshot of how each principal considered their work at a specific point in time. Those individual perceptions were likely to have changed following the conclusion of the data collection process. Principals were the sole unit of analysis and central office leaders, teachers, parents, and students were not included. The perspectives of these additional members of the larger school community may have influenced the analysis and findings.

Finally, this study was limited by my involvement. My interest in this topic was grounded in personal experience as an elementary principal whom experienced Common Core implementation and as a consultant supporting novice principals. It is possible that my perspective had unintentional influences in how the data was interpreted and reflected confirmation of my own perspective instead of what existed. This is framed by my own cognitive limitations, the evolution of my conceptual understanding, my experiences as a researcher, and my role as an insider in the school district. While I attempted to address

the validity challenges as noted in Chapter 3, I acknowledge that my best efforts to remain impartial may have limited, but not removed my bias.

Closing Remarks

This study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the current demands that elementary principals perceive in their work?
2. What are the constraints that impact implementation of the CCSS?
3. How does a principal make instructional leadership choices in implementing the CCSS?

In this study, principals revealed their individual perceptions of the experience of leading a school. In some instances principals felt positive about the Common Core and their ability to navigate implementation through instructional leadership choices. However, not all principals felt successful in their role. Principals acknowledged the challenges they faced each day, elements of self-doubt, and areas where they fell short as instructional leaders. The principals painted portraits of themselves, their schools and while many highlighted strengths, they also revealed imperfections or areas of need.

This study was intended to examine demands, constraints, and how principals made instructional leadership choices. I am indebted to each of my principal colleagues for opening up their schools and their experiences for the purpose of informing my research. They demonstrated incredible dedication to their role and candid reflections on their experiences. I continually felt they were not only supportive, but committed to helping me explore this topic in a robust manner. I hope the principals, and all readers of

this dissertation, see their actions as courageous, refrain from judgment, and understand the significant challenges and gifts that school leadership provides.

Appendix

Appendix A: Schedule of Data Collection and Analysis

Date	Phase	Comments
February 5, 2013	Study approved by district	
February 11, 2013	22 possible participants contacted via to solicit study participation; email included an attachment with the consent form and instructions to return the consent form	1 possible participant left the principalship prior to the initiation of the study
February 19, 2013	Deadline for voluntary participation interest	11 of 22 possible participants identified; 1 “no” and 10 “no reply”
February 20, 2013	Verified possible participants received consent form via email	
February 21, 2013	Set up interview with 1 st participant	Pre-interview questionnaire provided
February 22, 2013	Pre-interview questionnaire send to five additional participants upon receipt of the consent form	
February 28 through April 16, 2013	Interview Protocol #1	
March 1, 2013 through October 30, 2013	Coding and Analysis	
September 30 through October 10, 2013	Interview Protocol #2	

Appendix B: Population Sample Set

School Code	Principal Sex	Race/Ethnicity	Student Population Size	FARMS Percentage	2012 AYP Status
School A	F	W	411	<=5.0	Met
School B	F	W	430	8.4	Met
School C	F	B	440	14.5	Met
School D	F	W	441	23.4	Met
School E	F	W	457	19.0	Met
School F	F	W	518	<=5.0	Met
School G	F	W	523	<=5.0	Met
School H	F	W	531	14.7	Met
School I	F	B	534	5.4	Met
School J	F	W	550	7.5	Met
School K	F	W	557	15.6	Met
School L	F	W	560	11.8	Met
School M	F	A	563	14.0	Met
School N	F	W	567	<=5.0	Met
School O	F	W	571	15.8	Met
School P	F	A	576	<=5.0	Met
School Q	F	W	585	<=5.0	Met
School R	F	W	587	10.9	Met
School S	F	W	598	10.4	Met
School T	F	W	622	22.8	Met
School U	F	W	660	8.5	Met
School V	F	W	683	7.5	Met
School W	F	W	694	<=5.0	Met

Appendix C: Request for Participation Email Script

Dear X,

Hello. My name is Sarah Sirgo, and I am an elementary school principal colleague in your school district.

I am currently pursuing my doctorate at the University of Maryland and beginning the work on my research study. The topic would like to explore is designed to examine principal perceptions of demands and constraints during Common Core State Standards implementation as seen by the instructional leadership choices principals make in their work.

Your participation would be voluntary and confidential. The information you provide would help me understand more about how the school environment may interact with the demands and constraints you face and lead you to decide how to spend your time, choose to lead, and make choices overall as a leader.

I am contacting you to inquire as to whether you would be interested in being a voluntary participant. If you are interested in participating and learning more about the study requirements, please let me know. I will provide you with a written letter of informed consent that outlines all of the study requirements. I greatly appreciate your assistance and participation in this important work.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Sarah Sirgo

Appendix D1: Initial Participant Contact Script

Dear X,

Hello. Thank you for agreeing to participate in my doctoral research study to examine principal perceptions of demands and constraints during Common Core State Standards implementation as seen by the instructional leadership choices principals make in their work.

Your participation is voluntary and confidential. The information you provide will help me understand more about how the school environment may interact with the demands and constraints you face and lead you to decide how to spend your time, choose to lead, and make choices overall as a leader.

Attached is a letter of informed consent that outlines all of the study requirements. Please review the information, sign, date, and return to me. If you have questions about any of the information in the letter of consent, please let me know so that I may address them promptly.

Once I receive your signed letter of consent, I will provide you with a pre-interview questionnaire in order to collect background data about you and your school. Your identity and that of your school will be anonymous and confidential, only known to me as the researcher.

When the background questionnaire is completed, I will set up a time to meet with you in person so that I may interview you about the demands, constraints, and choices in your work. This interview will take approximately one hour and can be conducted either at your school or a location of your choice.

Following the interview you will have an opportunity to review all of your responses to confirm the accuracy of my notes and make any corrections necessary. Additional interview questions or contact time will be determined after our initial meeting.

Thank you again for your participation and I look forward to learning from you.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Sarah Sirgo

Appendix D2: Preinterview Questionnaire

Please provide information on the following:

Full Name			
Years of Experience as a Principal			
Educational Background			
Certifications			
School Name			
Years at Current School			
Current Total School Enrollment			
Number of Staff (full and part time)			
How many years has your school implemented the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)?			
Phone			
Email			
Preferred method of contact	Email		Phone
Preferred time of day to be contacted	Morning (7 am-11 am)	Afternoon (11 am-4 pm)	Evening (5 pm-10 pm)
Preferred location for interview	School	Home	Other
Please list three possible dates for an in-person interview			

Appendix E: Consent Form to Participate

Project Title	THE DEMANDS, CONSTRAINTS, AND INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP CHOICES OF ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS IMPLEMENTING THE COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS
Purpose of the Study	<i>This research is being conducted by Dr. Hanne Mawhinney and Mrs. Sarah Sirgo the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are an elementary principal that has experienced present demands and constraints that face leaders. The purpose of this research project is to examine the demands and constraints that elementary principals work under and how those are transformed by the school context into leadership choices. We are seeking this information in order to better understand how leaders make instructional leadership choices during Common Core State Standards implementation.</i>
Procedures	<p><i>The procedures involve an initial email or phone consultation (10 minutes), the completion of a pre-interview questionnaire (20 minutes), 1 semi-structured in person interview at your work location or a location of your choosing (60-90 minutes) and a follow-up interview by phone and email (15-20 minutes).</i></p> <p><i>The initial email or phone consultation will be to describe the research, answer any questions, and describe the need to obtain written informed consent. The interview will ask you to describe the demands and constraints you face in your work. We will also explore the aspects of the organization or environment that influence the choices you make as a leader. Based on your responses, you may be asked to participate in other interview sessions with the researcher to describe your choices fully and provide any documents, portfolios, and memos that support your responses. These interviews will be recorded and later transcribed. The estimated number of sessions are two. These follow-up questions will be asked via email or in person (15-20 minutes).</i></p> <p><i>Sample interview questions are:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. What are the instructional leadership demands of your role?</i> <i>2. What type of demands does the CCSS place on your instructional leadership role?</i> <i>3. What are the things you believe support your ability to implement the CCSS?</i> <i>4. What are the things you believe hinder your implementation?</i> <i>5. What are the organizational policies and procedures that cause constraints?</i> <i>6. What are the decisions you feel you have the most control over?</i>

	<p>7. <i>What actions do you think are essential for you to do as an instructional leader for CCSS implementation?</i></p> <p>8. <i>Who determines the roles and responsibilities of your work?</i></p> <p>9. <i>How do you feel about CCSS? Do your feelings impact the instructional leadership actions you take to support implementation?</i></p> <p>10. <i>Describe the culture of your building around CCSS implementation?</i></p> <p>11. <i>What does the staff expect from you with regards to instructional leadership?</i></p> <p>12. <i>How is decision making power distributed in your building?</i></p> <p>13. <i>Describe any conflicts surrounding CCSS implementation.</i></p>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	<i>The only known risk is that of participants being identified due to their positions. This risk will be minimized by the use of aliases for all schools, the district, and participants. Information will be kept on a password protected computer and file that is only accessible by the researcher.</i>
Potential Benefits	<i>This research is not designed to help you personally, but the information you share will assist the investigator in understanding how principals make leadership choices. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of application of policy, reform, and the way in which demands and constraints are influenced by the experience of working in a public elementary school.</i>
Confidentiality	<i>Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by the use of aliases, and storing data in a password protected computer. Your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. For coded identifiable information, your name will not be included. A code will be placed on collected data through the use of an identification key. Only the researcher will have access to the identification key. <i>Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</i></i>
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<i>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. However, if you decide to withdraw from the research after the quick survey, then this will prolong the data collection process for the researcher. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator: Dr. Hanne Mawhinney at 301-405-4546 or hmawhinn@umd.edu</i>

Participant Rights	<p><i>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678</p> <p><i>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</i></p>	
Statement of Consent	<p><i>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</i></p> <p><i>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</i></p>	
Signature and Date	NAME OF SUBJECT [Please Print]	
	SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT	
	DATE	

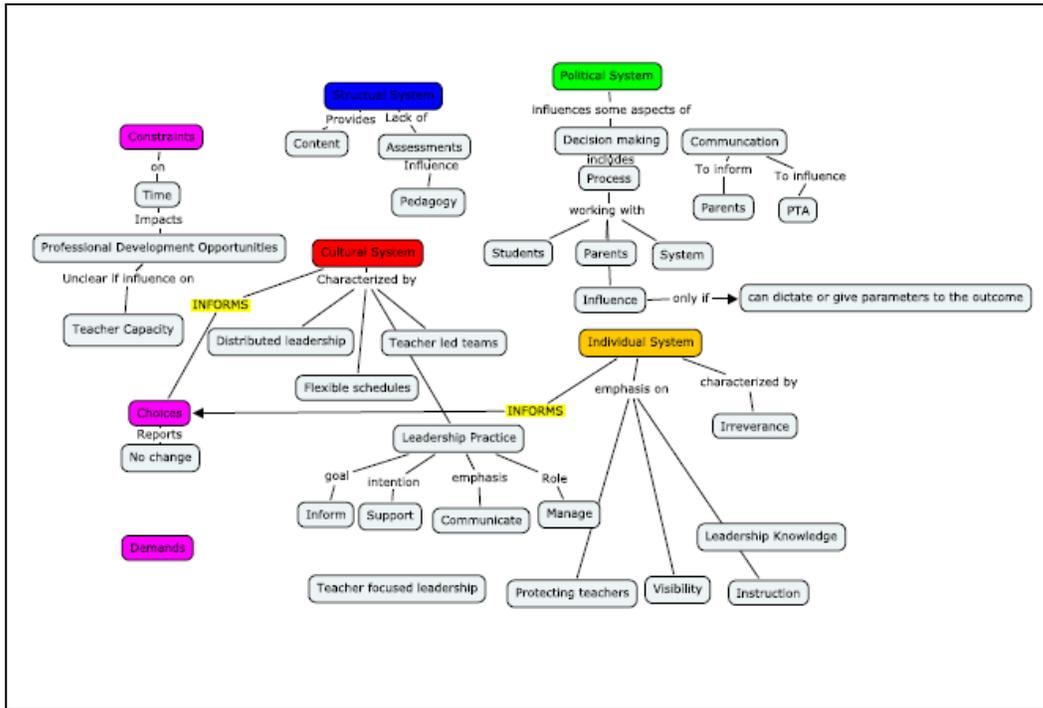
Appendix F: Interview Protocol and Concept Analysis

Interview Question and Prompts	Research question	Concepts Explanations
DEMANDS		
How would you describe the job of principal?	1	Demands Roles and Responsibilities
If you were to list the “demands” placed upon you as a principal, what would you say they are?	1	Demands
Has the way you think about these demands changed as a result of CCSS implementation? If so, how?	1	Individual System
When considering the instructional leadership demands of your role, what would you say are the key components that demand your attention?	1	Roles and responsibilities
Are these demands new or different? If so, how?	1	Roles and responsibilities
The follow are a list of the instructional leadership outcomes from the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework (MILF). Of these, can you identify the emphasis in your work with respect to CCSS implementation? Meaning, what is the level of priority; high, medium, or low? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Facilitate the development of a school vision ◦ Align all aspects of a school culture to student and adult learning ◦ Monitor the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment ◦ Improve instructional practices through the purposeful observation and evaluation of teachers ◦ Ensure the regular integration of appropriate assessments into daily classroom instruction ◦ Use technology and multiple sources of data to improve classroom instruction ◦ Provide staff with focused, sustained, research-based professional development. ◦ Engage all community stakeholders in a shared responsibility for student and school success 	1	Instructional Leadership Choices
Consider each of the following additional job demands. Have any of these roles been impacted by CCSS implementation? If so, how? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Building manager ◦ Professional developer ◦ Vision setter ◦ Culture shaper 	1	Demands

CONSTRAINTS		
What are the things you believe support your ability to implement the CCSS?	2	Constraints
What are the things you believe hinder your implementation?	2	Constraints
When considering the following constraints, what do you perceive to be the impact on your CCSS implementation?	2	Constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Time ◦ Attitude of staff toward CCSS ◦ Financial resources (materials) ◦ Human resources (staffing) ◦ Organizational hierarchy of the district 		
What, if any, levels of the organization directly constrains your work? How do these influence the choices you make as a principal?	2	Constraints Political System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Institutional level (policies) ◦ Local Community Level (demographics, norms) ◦ District Level (system priorities) 		
What, if any, are the organizational policies and procedures that cause constraints?	2	Constraints Political System
Common constraints that limit a manager's choices are below. Describe how each constraint supports or challenges your instructional leadership for CCSS implementation. Meaning, what is the level of constraint; high, medium, or low?	2	Constraints Choices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Resource constraints, including buildings ◦ Legal and trade union constraints ◦ Technological limitations of equipment and process ◦ Physical location ◦ Organizational policies and procedures; roles and responsibilities of administrators; standard operating procedures ◦ Attitudes that influence what actions other people will accept or tolerate 		
CHOICES		
What are the decisions you feel you have the most control over?	3	Choices Individual System
Consider how you spend your day.	3	Choices Structural System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ How do you spend your time? ◦ What are your “must do” tasks? ◦ How did you decide what these tasks would be? ◦ Do these tasks support CCSS implementation? 		

What actions do you think are essential for you to do as an instructional leader for CCSS implementation?	3	Choices Structural System
Do you choose to do these actions? If not, why?	3	Choices Individual System
Describe your actions to focus on instructional leadership for CCSS implementation and what impacts these decisions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Who impacts these decisions? ◦ What do you choose to do and what is delegated? ◦ What emphasis is place on different aspects of the job? ◦ What are the changes in the nature of the work? ◦ If there are things that are done less, describe what they are and the potential impact of those choices. 	3	Choices Systems
SYSTEMS		
Structural <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Do the demands influence your instructional leadership choices? ◦ Are these expectations flexible? 	1	Demands Structural system
Cultural <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Describe the culture of your building around CCSS implementation? ◦ What does the staff expect from you with regards to instructional leadership? ◦ Has the culture of your school building changed since CCSS implementation began? If so, how? 	2	Cultural System Constraints (Attitude)
Individual <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ How do you feel about CCSS? ◦ Do your feelings impact the instructional leadership actions you take to support implementation? 	3	Individual System Beliefs Choices
Political <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ How is decision making power distributed in your building? ◦ What influence do the following power sources play on your instructional leadership choices? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. District 2. State 3. Federal 4. Union 5. Parents/Community 6. Staff 7. Students 	3	Political System Organizational Hierarchy Constraints Choices

Appendix G: Sample Concept Map

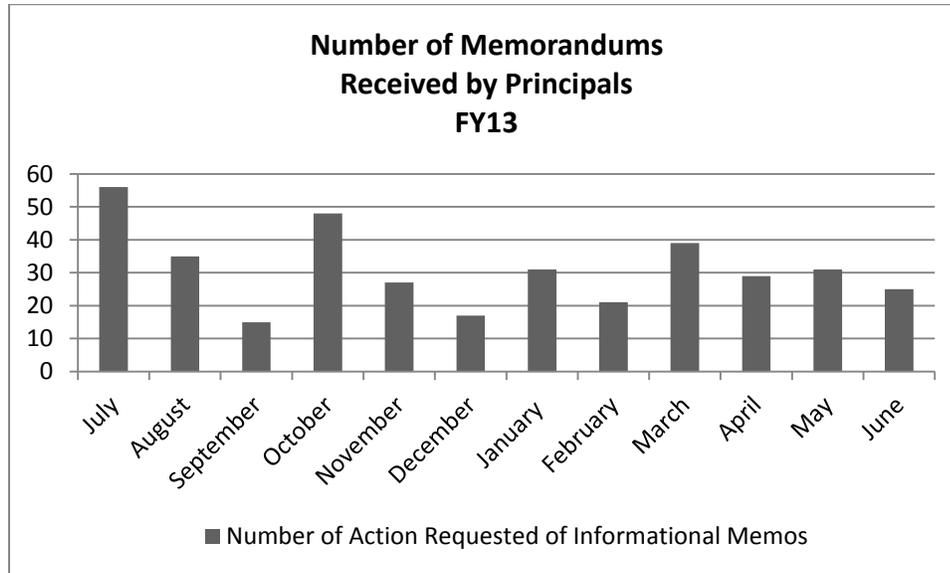


Appendix H: Sample Proposition Map

Concept	Linking Phrase	Concept
Access to information	to address	Concerns
Ambiguity	impacts	Understanding of demands
Ambiguity	impacts	Understanding of vision
Building manager	for	Discipline
Building manager	for	Paperwork/Memos
Building manager	for	Communication
Building manager	constrains	Instructional leadership
Building manager	for	Facility needs
CCSS	for	Concerns
CCSS	positives	Writing
Choices	for	Staff development
Choices	focus on	Cultural System
Choices	focus on	Visibility
Communication	with	Students
Communication	with	Parents
Community norms	impacted	Time
Community norms	wanting	Access to information
Concerns	in	Math
Constraints	from	Time
Constraints	for	Union contracts
Constraints	from	Building manager
Constraints	for	Staffing
Cultural System	influenced by	Team dynamics/personalities
Demands	reduce time for	Classroom visits
Demands	of	Professional developer

Appendix I: Memorandums for FY 2013

The figure below reflects the number of action requested or informational memos received by principals from July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013



Appendix J: Interview Protocol #1

How would you describe the job of principal?

On a typical day, if you were to list the “demands” that are placed upon you by the system, as a principal, what would you say they are?

Has the way you think about these demands changed as a result of CCSS implementation? If so, how?

When considering the instructional leadership demands of your role, what would you say are the key components that demand your attention?

Are these demands new or different in light of CC implementation? If so, how?

The follow are a list of the instructional leadership outcomes from the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework (MILF). Of these, can you identify the emphasis in your work with respect to CCSS implementation? Meaning, what is the level of priority; high, medium, or low?

1. Facilitate the development of a school vision
2. Align all aspects of a school culture to student and adult learning
3. Monitor the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment
4. Improve instructional practices through the purposeful observation and evaluation of teachers
5. Ensure the regular integration of appropriate assessments into daily classroom instruction
6. Use technology and multiple sources of data to improve classroom instruction
7. Provide staff with focused, sustained, research-based professional development.
8. Engage all community stakeholders in a shared responsibility for student and school success

Of these priorities, have any of them changed? Were they not the same level of priority before CC implementation?

Consider each of the following additional job demands. Have any of these roles been impacted by CCSS implementation? If so, how?

1. Building manager
2. Professional developer
3. Vision setter
4. Culture shaper

-
1. Can you describe the culture of your building around CCSS implementation?
 2. What does the staff expect from you with regards to instructional leadership?
 3. Has the culture of your school building changed since CCSS implementation began? If so, how?

-
1. Do the demands influence your instructional leadership choices?
 2. Are these expectations flexible?

-
1. How do you feel about CCSS?
 2. Do your feelings impact the instructional leadership actions you take to support implementation?
-

What are the decisions you feel you have the most control over as an instructional leader?

What actions do you think are essential for you to do as an instructional leader for CCSS implementation?

Consider your typical day.

1. How do you spend your time?
 2. What are your “must do” tasks?
 3. How did you decide what these tasks would be?
 4. Do these tasks support CCSS implementation?
-

Describe your actions to focus on instructional leadership for CCSS implementation. What are the three critical tasks you believe you must do?

If you don’t get to these tasks, what gets in the way?

What kinds of things impact the ability to focus on the tasks you identified? What or whom?

Are there things that are done less now as an instructional leader that you did more of before CC?

What do you think of the potential impact of that choice?

What do you choose to do and what do you choose to delegate?

Are there things that you have had to delegate because of CC that you perhaps didn’t want to, but now you are?

What do you think of the potential impact of that choice?

When you think about the organization, what if any, levels of the organization directly constrains your work? Is the constraint high, medium, or low?

1. Institutional level (policies)
 2. Local Community Level (demographics, norms)
 3. District Level (system priorities)
-

When considering the following, what do you perceive to be the impact on your CCSS implementation?

1. Time
 2. Attitude of staff toward CCSS
 3. Financial resources (materials)
 4. Human resources (staffing)
 5. Organizational hierarchy of the district
-

What level of constraint; high, medium, or low do the following have on your instructional leadership?

1. Resource constraints, including buildings
 2. Legal and trade union constraints
 3. Technological limitations of equipment and process
 4. Physical location
 5. Organizational policies and procedures; roles and responsibilities of administrators; standard operating procedures
 6. Attitudes that influence what actions other people will accept or tolerate
-

What are the things you believe support your ability to implement the CCSS

What are the things you believe hinder your implementation?

What, if any, are the organizational policies and procedures that cause constraints?

Political

1. How is decision making power distributed in your building?
 2. What influence do the following power sources play on your instructional leadership choices? District? State? Federal? Union? Parents/Community? Staff? Students?
-

Appendix K: Interview Protocol #2

The following are the 8 job outcomes an instructional leader must demonstrate according to the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework (MILF). As you look at the list below, please identify your priorities for Common Core implementation from 1-8. 1=top priority to 8=Low priority.

- Facilitate the development of a school vision
 - Align all aspects of a school culture to student and adult learning
 - Monitor alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment
 - Improve instructional practices through the purposeful observation and evaluation of teachers
 - Ensure the regular integration of appropriate assessments into daily classroom instruction
 - Use technology and multiple sources of data to improve classroom instruction
 - Provide staff with focused, sustained, research-based professional development
 - Engage all community stakeholders in a shared responsibility for student and school success
-

1. Please describe your thinking. Meaning, how did you decide that these were the things that need your attention and were your top or low priorities?
2. What drives or influences your choices?
3. How much choice do you see in your work?

Appendix L: Analytic Framework

Concept (Primary Node)	Definition	Secondary Node	Dimension or Aspect of
Structural System	Structural System: Formal demands and obligations that are set by the organization and exercised by specific positions and offices. This includes expectations for behaviors and responsibilities of each position, either formally or flexibly, that are reasonably consistent with the goals of the organization. This includes descriptions of particular jobs, a hierarchy of positions, specialization, and authority relative to job power and status. (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 25)	Roles and Responsibilities Bureaucratic Expectations	Demands Opportunities for choice
Cultural System	Cultural System: The outgrowth of the interactions between organizational members' beliefs, norms, and values. The shared orientations that develop provide individuals with a sense of identity to the group through a commitment to beliefs beyond themselves. This system reflects the part of the organization that is felt by members and influences cohesiveness, sense of belonging, all while allowing the member to keep their personality. (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 28)	Interactions between and among individuals	Shared beliefs Informal norms Practices for communication [formal or informal]
Demand	Refers to the description of the roles and responsibilities of jobs. "What anyone in the job has to do. There are many things that managers ought to do, because they are in the job description or because their boss thinks they are important, but demand is a narrower term. Demands are only what must be done" (p. 9). Demands refer either to the type of work or to meeting the established criteria of a job. (Stewart, 1982, p. 9)	Instructional leadership Building management Professional developer Vision and Culture Shaper	Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework [MILF]

Constraint	<p>“Constraints are the factors, internal or external to the organization, that limit what the jobholder can do” (p. 9). Intangible constraints to the organization include resources, trade unions, technology, and facilities. Intangible constraints include the extent of how the work is defined, attitudes of others people toward the organization or initiatives, changes to the organizational product or work outside of the organization. (Stewart, 1982)</p>	<p>Time</p> <p>Attitude</p> <p>Resources</p> <p>Organizational Hierarchy</p>	<p>Individual System</p> <p>Cultural System</p> <p>Structural System</p> <p>Political System</p>
Choice	<p>“Choices are the activities that the jobholder can do, but does not have to do. They are the opportunities for one jobholder to do different work from another and to do it in different ways” (p. 9). Choices are in relationship to how or what work is done. This includes decisions to emphasize certain aspects of a job, select certain tasks and ignore others, change the focus of work, share work, or take part in organizational activities. (Stewart, 1982)</p>	<p>Flexibility in the content and style of work</p>	<p>Systems</p>
Individual System	<p>Reflects the cognitive processes that allows an individual to “understand the job in terms of perception, knowledge, and expected behavior” (p. 26). The needs, beliefs, goals, values, and previous experience of an individual serves as the framework for understanding and interpreting their work role. This process of perception is influenced by beliefs about themselves, the organization, motivation, and personal expectations. (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 26)</p>	<p>Beliefs</p> <p>Values</p> <p>Expectations</p>	<p>Choice</p>

Instructional Leadership	A role enacted by school principals that is focused on three main dimensions of defining the schools mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate. These dimensions are demonstrated by ten functions including framing the school's goals, communicating goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining visibility, providing incentives for teachers, and providing incentives for learning. (Hallinger, 2003)	Defining the mission	Structural System
		Managing the instructional program	Structural System
		Promoting positive climate	Cultural System
Political System	Guides the power relationships that exist in an organization to benefit the individual or group. This is often seen as an expected element of an organization, but it can work in contrast to organizational goals. Power relations are played out through bargaining, games, conflict resolution, and exercising skill to gain advantage. (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 29)	Power	Constraint
		Position	
		Aspiration	Choice

Appendix M: Principal Demographic Data

Pseudonym	School	Age	Race	Years of Experience as Principal (at current school)	Years of Experience as Principal (in total)	Years of Experience in School System
Georgina	Ace	61-70	W	26	30	26-30
Jenna	Birchtree	41-50	W	3	3	26-30
Roberta	Carson	41-50	W	4	6	16-20
Vivian	Darren	31-40	B	6	6	11-15
Shirin	Lee	41-50	W	7	7	11-15
Barbara	Frederick	41-50	W	5	8	16-20

Note: The information above provides descriptive and demographic information for participants.

Appendix N: Principal Category Descriptors

Variable	Range	Descriptor
Person	30-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70	Principals typically aren't appointed until at least age 30 and, with upwards of 30 years of experience, would not likely be higher than age 70. The age range categories were grouped by 10 years as a way of looking at possible generational differences among participants. While 20-30 years is typically used to define a generation, 10 year increments better reflected the influence of the emergence of various technology and educational reform changes.
Years of Experience	3-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, 21-30	Principals with less than two years are considered novice in the district. Principals in years 6-10 would have had experience leading implementation prior to and through the CCSS implementation. Principals with 11+ years of experience would have also worked through more than two superintendents and those with 15+ years would have been through three superintendents, as well as the changes from new curriculum twice (2001 and 2010) including accountability revisions from NCLB (2003).

Note: The information above describes the categorical descriptions and rationale for each participant level variable.

Appendix O: School Demographic Data

School Pseudonym	School Size*	# of Staff	ESOL %	FARMS %	SPED %
Ace	700-749	40-55	0-10	0-10	0-10
Birchtree	500-549	40-55	11-20	11-20	0-10
Carson	600-649	56-70	0-10	11-20	11-20
Darren	450-499	56-70	11-20	11-20	11-20
Lee	550-599	56-70	11-20	21-30	11-20
Frederick	400-449	40-55	0-10	0-10	0-10

Note: The table above includes school size and population percentages for impacted students groups.

Appendix P: School Variable Descriptors

Variable	Range	Descriptor
ESOL %	0-10, 11-20, 21-30	The district staffing ratio for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL/ESL) is one teacher for every 44.5 students. As a portion of the school population this may have implications for instructional foci and is considered in terms of three general categories of % impact.
FARMS %:	0-10, 11-20, 21-30	The percentage of students in poverty as a portion of the population of a medium sized school would have implications for the potential impact and/or priority with respect to the school. This could be considered in terms of three general categories of % impact.
SPED %:	0-10, 11-20	These percentages often identify schools with various levels of program (resource, cluster programs, special services).
School Size	400-449, 450-499, 500-549, 550-599, 600-649, 650-699, 700-749	School size was parsed into groups by every 49 students as it connects with the thresholds for additional staffing and staffing ratios.
Number of Staff (full time equivalent):	40-55, 56-70, 71-85, 86-100	The total number of staff is related to school size, but also can inform expectations and implications for demands managing the school culture, observation/evaluation process, professional development and other instructional leadership responsibilities.

Note: The table above describes the categorical descriptions used for school level variables and the rationale.

Appendix Q: Racial and Ethnic Composition of Schools

The table below provides racial and ethnic population data for each school

School	AM	AS	BL	HI	PI	WH	MU
Ace	≤5.0	8	≤5.0	9	≤5.0	72	8
Birchtree	≤5.0	21	10	16	≤5.0	48	≤5.0
Carson	≤5.0	14	12	19	≤5.0	48	7
Darren	≤5.0	16	20	19	≤5.0	39	7
Lee	≤5.0	7	13	27	≤5.0	38	5
Frederick	≤5.0	≤5.0	≤5.0	8	≤5.0	81	7

*Racial/ethnic composition figures reflect MSDE abbreviations: American Indian or Alaskan Native (AM); Asian (AS); Black or African American (BL); Hispanic/Latino (HI); Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (PI); White (WH); Two or More Races (MU)

**Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number

Appendix R: Percentage of Special Populations for Each School

School	ESOL	FARMS	SPED
Ace	9	≤5.0	7
Birchtree	13	16	7
Carson	9	20	12
Darren	13	17	20
Lee	17	27	13
Frederick	5	≤5.0	9

**Percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number

Appendix S: Within Case Coding of Demands, Constraints, and Choices

Category	Construct
Demands	Instructional Leader
	Building Manager
	Professional Developer
	Vision setter
	Culture shaper
Constraints	Time
	Attitude
	Resources
	Organizational Hierarchy
Choices	Structural
	Individual
	Cultural
	Political

Appendix T: Cross Case Coding for Principal Instructional Leadership & Choice

Instructional Leadership Demands	Construct
Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework	Vision Student Adult Learning Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Instructional Practices Appropriate Assessments Technology and Multiple Use of Data Professional Development Community Stakeholders
Choices	Systems Structural System Individual System Political System Cultural System

Glossary

Choice: “Choices are the activities that the jobholder can do, but does not have to do. They are the opportunities for one jobholder to do different work from another and to do it in different ways” (p. 9). Choices are in relationship to how or what work is done. This includes decisions to emphasize certain aspects of a job, select certain tasks and ignore others, change the focus of work, share work, or take part in organizational activities (Stewart, 1982).

Common Core State Standards: State-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to provide a clear and consistent framework of learning standards for students in the United States. The standards are internationally benchmarked, aligned with college and career readiness expectations, and exist for reading language arts and math (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2009).

Constraint: “Constraints are the factors, internal or external to the organization, that limit what the jobholder can do” (p. 9). Intangible constraints to the organization include resources, trade unions, technology, and facilities. Intangible constraints include the extent of how the work is defined, attitudes of others people toward the organization or initiatives, changes to the organizational product or work outside of the organization (Stewart, 1982).

Cultural system: The outgrowth of the interactions between organizational members’ beliefs, norms, and values. The shared orientations that develop provide individuals with a sense of identity to the group through a commitment to beliefs beyond themselves. This system reflects the part of the organization that is felt by members and influences cohesiveness, sense of belonging, all while allowing the member to keep their personality (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 28).

Demand: Refers to the description of the roles and responsibilities of jobs. “What anyone in the job has to do. There are many things that managers ought to do, because they are in the job description or because their boss thinks they are important, but demand is a narrower term. Demands are only what must be done” (p. 9). Demands refer either to the type of work or to meeting the established criteria of a job (Stewart, 1982, p. 9).

Environment: Includes everything outside an organization including larger social or policy trends, communities, constituencies, and other influences. The environment can also place demands and constraints on individuals in an organization and act as an external force that requires a reaction or response from schools (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 30).

Individual system: Reflects the cognitive processes that allows an individual to “understand the job in terms of perception, knowledge, and expected behavior” (p. 26). The needs, beliefs, goals, values, and previous experience of an individual serves as the

framework for understanding and interpreting their work role. This process of perception is influenced by beliefs about themselves, the organization, motivation, and personal expectations (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 26).

Instructional leadership: A role enacted by school principals that is focused on three main dimensions of defining the schools mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate. These dimensions are demonstrated by ten functions including framing the school's goals, communicating goals, supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, protecting instructional time, promoting professional development, maintaining visibility, providing incentives for teachers, and providing incentives for learning (Hallinger, 2003).

Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework (MILF): Created by the Division for Leadership Development, it was a tool to drive principal preparation programs in higher education, professional development, and policy initiatives. It includes eight outcomes describing the key components of instructional leadership (MSDE, 2005)

Partnership for Assessment of College and Career Readiness (PARCC): A consortium of 20 states that united to develop a common set of K-12 assessments in English and Math.

Open system: Includes both structure and process with dynamic relationships. Emphasizes the reciprocity of the elements that surround and are included within the organization. "An open system is a set of interacting elements that acquires inputs from the outside, transforms them, and produces outputs for the environment" (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 21).

Political system: Guides the power relationships that exist in an organization to benefit the individual or group. This is often seen as an expected element of an organization, but it can work in contrast to organizational goals. Power relations are played out through bargaining, games, conflict resolution, and exercising skill to gain advantage (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 29).

Principal: Formally designated leaders with an assigned position and associated roles and responsibilities (Spillaine & Healy, 2010).

School Performance Index (SPI): Developed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) as an accountability system for student proficiency, reduction of gaps between the highest and lowest students, and overall growth. The design included a goal for all schools to reduce in half in six years the portion of students not achieving proficiency, with annual improvement targets set for every school and every subgroup individually (MSDE, 2012d).

Social system: A term used to define a system of interaction where interacting personalities are tied together. Schools are social systems characterized by, "an interdependence of parts, a clearly defined population, differentiation from its

environment, a complex network of social relationships, and its own unique culture” (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 23).

Structural system: Formal demands and obligations that are set by the organization and exercised by specific positions and offices. This includes expectations for behaviors and responsibilities of each position, either formally or flexibly, that are reasonably consistent with the goals of the organization. This includes descriptions of particular jobs, a hierarchy of positions, specialization, and authority relative to job power and status (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 25).

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