PRINCIPAL CHURN: A CASE STUDY ON PRINCIPAL TURNOVER AND STRATEGIES TO BUILD SUSTAINABILITY AND CONTINUITY

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Each year, school districts across our nation face the burden of replacing 20 percent of the principal population (Goldring & Taie, 2014); the situation may place a financial burden on school districts, affect student achievement, and impact the school community. The purpose of this case study is to investigate a high rate of principal turnover in one school district. Specifically, this study identifies factors that influence principals to transition from their positions. Additionally, this case study also seeks to discover methods that school districts can use to support and retain principals. Two questions guide the study:

1. What factors influence Loysburg principals to transition from their position?

2. What methods or tactics could the Loysburg School District implement to support principals and increase the retention rate of principals?

Primary data for this research study will be collected through one-on-one interviews with former and current school principals of the school district at hand. Each participant served as a principal in the Loysburg School District[1] for a period of time between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2016. Twelve one-on-one interviews, each 60 minutes in length, were conducted and transcribed

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[1] Loysburg School District is a pseudonym.

and analyzed to identify emerging themes across the district. I utilized a single-method approach with individual interviews and used qualitative data analysis techniques to examine the data for emerging themes.

The results of this case study may be beneficial to the Loysburg School District. Identifying the reasons for principal turnover may inform administrative teams (i.e., principals, superintendents, and school boards) for future planning. Those administrative teams could use these findings, in conjunction with other research, to improve the retention rate of principals. Given what the literature shows about the relationship between principal turnover and student achievement, financial costs school districts endure from turnover, and the impact principal turnover has on school climate and culture, addressing principal retention may yield benefits for the Loysburg School District and its stakeholders.

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PREFACE

As I reflect upon this past year, I find myself thinking about the guidance and counsel my dissertation committee provided, the principals who took time from their busy schedules to participate in my research study, the support and encouragement from friends and colleagues, and the love of my family, especially my husband, Mark.

I would like to express my gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Gerard Longo, who has consistently challenged and supported me throughout this endeavor. Your expertise and understanding helped me to reach my goals. Additionally, I would like to thank my committee members, Dr. Diane Kirk and Dr. Tracy Vitale, for providing recommendations and posing thought-provoking questions to challenge my thinking. Thank you to the twelve principals who shared their stories, making this research possible. A special thank you to my editor, Susan. In addition to being a fabulous editor, you presented thoughts and questions to make me think more deeply about the content. I appreciate your advice, kindness, and support.

To my dear friend Susan, thank you for taking my late night calls – you know when to encourage me, you know when to be my cheerleader, and you know when I need a listening ear. Our friendship is more like a bond between two sisters. Thank you for reassuring me throughout this process. Thank you to Mary Lou and Bernie for checking on me often and always having a word of encouragement. And to my school family, the continuous "honking" inspired me to keep moving forward. Thank you.

To my parents, Bill and Micki, your love and devotion to our family has allowed me to dream. Thank you. Your wisdom, counsel, and passion has inspired me to continuously improve. Thank you for loving me and teaching me that "I can". I would also like to thank my siblings, Doug and Suzy. Thank you for always wanting the best for me. To my loving husband, Mark, this journey would not have been possible without your love, encouraging words, and unending patience. My life was blessed the day we met.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Principal turnover in the Loysburg School District[2] has surpassed the annual national average of 20 percent (Goldring & Taie, 2014). Through this case study, I will seek to discover "why" principal turnover is happening in the Loysburg School District and identify methods that may be implemented to reduce principal turnover.

1.1   HISTORY OF THE LOYSBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT COMMUNITY

The Loysburg School District was once a community bustling with factories and a railroad yard, dating back to the mid 1800's, followed by a thriving factory scene in the twentieth century (M. Andrews[3], personal communication, December 13, 2016; Clark, n.d.). Over the past few decades, the once strong manufacturing and railroad community succumbed to cheap foreign labor, technology, and costly union demands. Today the largest employer is the community hospital, followed by state government, a chain of local convenience stores, and the Loysburg School District (M. Andrews, personal communication, December 13, 2016 and December 18,

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[2] Loysburg School District is a pseudonym.

[3] All personal communication names are labeled with pseudonyms.

2016; L. Hillman, personal communication, December 11, 2016 and January 7, 2017; Loysburg School District Comprehensive Plan, 2016).

According to federal census data, the city where the Loysburg School District resides had a 6.5 percent population decline from 2000 to 2010 (United States Census Bureau, 2000; United States Census Bureau, 2010). In fact, the population has declined steadily from its height in 1930 (82,054) to 2010 (46,320), averaging a loss of 4,467 individuals per decade or a 43.5 percent decline from 1930 to 2010 ("Population US," 2016). Table 1 below shows the population numbers for the city.

Table 1. Population of the Loysburg School District Area from 2000 and 2010 (United States Census Bureau, 2000; United States Census Bureau, 2010)

	2000	2010	Percentage Change
Population	49,523	46,320	6.5% decrease

As the city experiences changes in population, the Loysburg School District experiences simultaneous transitions in areas such as student enrollment and decreases in revenues and government funding.

1.2   LOYSBURG DISTRICT PROFILE

In conjunction with the changes experienced in the city where the Loysburg School District resides, the school district has also experienced shifts in its profile. Table 2 below describes the district profile in 2000, 2010, and 2016.

Table 2. Comparison of the Loysburg School District Profile from 2000 to 2016

	1999-2000	2009-2010	2015-2016
Revenues/Funding/Budget			
Local Revenue	$19,949,309	$24,654,064	$27,066,322
State Aid	$39,185,290	$55,033,831	$60,777,069
Federal Aid	$9,018,444	$8,056,825	$4,108,879
Other Funding Sources	$383,694	$615,000	$2,200,000
Fund Balance Usage	$1,979,482	$2,855,567	$5,383,446
Total Budget	$70,516,219	$90,600,287	$99,535,716
District's Fund Balance	$22,857,985	$36,946,779	$56,420,870[4]
Enrollment			
Total Enrollment	8829	7984	7797
Charter School Enrollment	N/A	N/A	192
Special Education Population		19.1% (2009-2010) 19.8% (2007-2008)[5]	19.4%
Free & Reduced Lunch	49.9% (2005-2006)[6]	55.7%	63.34%

Population

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[4] The Loysburg School District assigned the 2017-18 audited unassigned General Fund ending Fund Balance in excess of eight percent for asbestos removal, future PSERS retirement reserves, future capital improvements/renovations, medical insurance reserves, transportation reserve, and five-year capital maintenance projects at the May 15, 2017, Loysburg School Board meeting (Board of Directors Meeting Agendas and Minutes, 2017).

[5] The 2007-08 percentage data for special education population was retrieved from the Pennsylvania Department of Education Website. This data on special education population is available back to the year 2007-08.

[6] The 2005-06 percentage for free and reduced population was retrieved from the Pennsylvania Department of Education website. The data on free and reduced lunch population was available back to the year 2005-06.

S Table 2 continued	569	512	504
Ethnicity	(2008-2009)[7]		
White (non-Hispanic)	92.8%	92.8%	89.18%
Black or African American	6.2%	6%	8.45%
Hispanic	.57%	.5%	1.67%
Asian	.34%	.5%	.5%
American Indian	<.1%	<.1%	.12%

1.3   HISTORY OF STAFF TENURE IN THE LOYSBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT

Prior to 2010, the Loysburg School District had a superintendent, assistant superintendents, principals, and teachers with lengthy tenures. The superintendent, assistant superintendent for the elementary program, and assistant superintendent for the secondary program served the Loysburg School District for 29 years, 19 years, and 26 years, respectively. Most principals and teachers retired from the Loysburg School District or left due to receiving a promotion (often within the district). Occasionally, a principal or teacher left for another school district or to resign from the profession, but these departures were few (S. Frank, personal communication, November 25, 2016; M. Jones, personal communication, November 25, 2016). Since the 2009 and 2010 retirements of the assistant superintendents, followed by the retirement of the superintendent in 2013, the Loysburg School District has been in a state of continuous transition, as seen in Table 3.

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[7] The 2008-09 percentages for ethnicity was retrieved from the Loysburg School District. This data on ethnicity was readily available back to the 2008-09 school year.

Table 3. Number of Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents through the Years of Transition (2009 – 2016) in the Loysburg School District

Time Frame	Position	Number of Individuals Appointed to the Position
Spring 2013 through June 2016	Superintendent	5 (including 3 interim superintendents)
July 2010 through June 2016	Assistant Superintendent to the Elementary Program	3
July 2009 through June 2016	Assistant Superintendent to the Secondary Program	3

According to Loysburg School Board records, there were times between July 2009 and June 2016 when the district employed one assistant superintendent to oversee both elementary and secondary programs.

1.4   THE CLIMATE AND CULTURE OF THE LOYSBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT

Under the leadership of the long-standing superintendent and assistant superintendents, the Loysburg school community fostered partnerships in which parents, community members, and employees of the district worked collaboratively for the betterment of the student body. Camaraderie and pride existed beyond the schoolhouse walls as the staff had a high level of respect for the administrators who embodied and exhibited effective leadership skills. During their years of service, visits from central administrators were welcomed, as a high level of

trustworthiness existed (L. Hillman, personal communication, January 7, 2017; K. Stiver, personal communication, December 16, 2016).

Conversations[8] with current and former principals provided insight into the district's climate and culture. One principal stated:

As a former teacher, I can wholeheartedly attest to the high level of respect I had for the assistant superintendent of elementary. As part of the curriculum I enjoyed teaching broad health related topics such as drinking and driving by teaching my students how to debate the pros and cons of the topic. One year I invited the assistant superintendent to attend a debate along with the students' parents. I knew he was a "child centered" boss that would be so thrilled and excited to see the students delve deep into the topic while debating. After listening intently, [the assistant superintendent] praised the students, acknowledged a job well done to the parents, and personally rewarded me as a teacher because I preferred to teach my students in a higher order manner and in a way that would be long lasting or life changing for my students. It was a visit that filled my students with such pride and reminded me of why I loved to teach. (M. Johnson, personal communication, February 26, 2017)

Through the years of transition, school and district climate has changed. Staff members express an uneasiness in seeking support from new superintendents, assistant superintendents, and principals (M. Johnson, personal communication, February 26, 2017; K. Stiver, personal communication, December 16, 2016)

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[8] The excerpt identified on pages 5 and 6 occurred during conversations with principals after interviews were completed. The conversations pertained to the climate and culture of the school district during the years of transition – 2009-2016.

1.5   ADMINISTRATIVE TURNOVER NATIONALLY AND IN PENNSYLVANIA

1.5.1   Principal responsibilities

Principals oversee and are responsible for a school's climate and culture, the delivery of the curriculum and instruction, communication with all stakeholders, advocating for the school community, overseeing the management of the building, and providing a safe and secure location for learning (Alvoid & Black, 2014; The Wallace Foundation, 2013). Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004) conducted research that identified 21 responsibilities related to successful principals (discussed in depth in 2.2.1. Principal Responsibilities). Additionally, funded and unfunded mandates from federal and state governments, along with state standards, must be overseen and complied within every school.

The principal's role has always been demanding and time-consuming, but changes to the role have increased responsibilities and time commitments.

1.5.2   National turnover

School systems face a multitude of challenges and changes, including staff turnover. Retention rates for superintendents, principals, and teachers have plagued school systems nationwide for decades (Battle, 2010; Glass, Bjork, & Brunner, 2000; Goldring & Taie, 2014; Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014; Keigher, 2010; Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2010). Staff turnover impacts school districts and the students they serve: Research from the American Association of School Administrators found that "stability" created by long-term superintendents is a factor in the operation of a "successful" school district (American School Superintendent:

2010 Decennial Study as cited in Pascopella, 2011, p. 1). Additional research conducted by the

Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) found an affirmative connection

between "lengthy superintendent tenure and student achievement" (Mid-Continent Research for

Education and Learning as cited in Pascopella, 2011, p. 2). While the literature provides data on

the numbers and percentages of superintendents, principals, and teachers who leave the

profession, questions persist:

- Why do high rates of turnover occur?

- Where does turnover occur?

- Can it be reduced?

- What benefits may result from reducing high rates of turnover?

The next chapter provides an overview of school leadership turnover nationally.

1.5.3   State turnover

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) collects personnel data annually,

accumulating information such as; an individual's total years of service and an individual's years

of service in a Local Educational Agency (LEA), etc. (PDE, 2016a; PDE, 2016b).   In

Pennsylvania, the number of turnovers fluctuates from year to year in the superintendent's

position, principal position, and teacher positions (PDE, 2008; PDE, 2016a; PDE; 2016b).

Chapter two presents a closer view of turnover in Pennsylvania.

1.5.4   Trends and issues facing public education in Pennsylvania

To understand challenges experienced by individual school districts, including leadership turnover, it is important to understand the community and state context. In Pennsylvania, school districts are challenged by the state pension crisis, school choice, and budget limitations. These are not the only issues facing school districts, of course, but they are among the most challenging and frequently cited problems. These three topics may influence staff turnover and will be addressed in the following sections.

1.5.4.1 Pension

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA) reports that the pension crisis continues to impact school districts as employer contributions increase (Pennsylvania School Board Association, 2016). The monies allocated from a school district's budget to the retirement system are mandatory (Pennsylvania School Board Association, 2016). Table 4 shows the contribution rate Pennsylvania school districts were required to contribute from the 2004-2005 school year to the 2016-2017 school year. Additionally, Table 5 shows the projected financial obligation of Pennsylvania school districts from the 2017-2018 school year through the 2025-2026 school year.

Table 4. History of Employer Contribution Rates (Public School Employees' Retirement System, 2015)

Fiscal Year	Total Employer Contribution Percentage
2004-2005	4.23%
2005-2006	4.69%
2006-2007	6.46%
2007-2008	7.13%
2008-2009	4.76%
2009-2010	4.78%
2010-2011	5.64%
2011-2012	8.65%
2012-2013	12.36%
2013-2014	16.93%
2014-2015	21.40%
2015-2016	25.84%
2016-2017	30.03%

Table 5. Projection of Employer Contribution Rates (Public School Employees' Retirement System, 2015)

Fiscal Year	Total Employer Contribution Percentage
2017-2018	32.04%
2018-2019	33.27%
2019-2020	34.20%
2020-2021	33.51%
2021-2022	33.51%
2022-2023	33.75%
2023-2024	33.84%
2024-2025	33.94%
2025-2026	34.18%

With the pension crisis looming, school employees eligible to retire may select this option earlier than planned merely to secure their financial futures; thus, the pension crisis may inadvertently increase turnover across school systems.

1.5.4.2 School choice in Pennsylvania

A second trend facing Pennsylvania public education is the number of students enrolling in or transferring to charter schools. Most funding for charter schools in Pennsylvania comes directly from the school district in which the student resides (Pennsylvania School Boards Association, 2016). This funding process places charter public schools and traditional public schools at odds as local, state, and federal funds allocated to the public school system pass to the charter school. With the reallocation of funds and the numbers for enrollment shifting from the traditional public school to charter public schools, staff reduction and, perhaps, school closures may be inevitable. Additionally, principals may begin to look at charter schools as a possible employment option

when investigating and comparing the responsibilities between the charter and public school principalship.

1.5.4.3 State budget allocations

State budget cuts also have ramifications for school districts. In June 2015, the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA) and the Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO) reported results from their study on state budget cuts in education (Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators & Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials, 2015). The report shows the increased responsibility local school districts encounter from mandated expenses – "pension, health benefits, special education and charter schools" (Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators & Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials, 2015). Additionally, decreases in state funding have caused many school districts to offset the financial reduction by increasing local property taxes, reducing staff or eliminating programs (Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators & Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials, 2015).

School systems face budgetary issues at varying levels – micro (schools and districts), macro (state and national context), and mezzo (education as an institution) (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Essentially, forces beyond the district parameters influence what happens inside a school district, including staff departures. It is essential that the trends and issues facing public education are taken into consideration when one investigates turnover in the school system.

1.5.5 Factors influencing principal turnover

Researchers have identified multiple reasons for principal turnover (Combs, Edmonson, & Jackson, 2009; Gilman & Lanman-Givens, 2001; Norton, 2003; Whitaker, 2001). The ever-changing complexity, added pressures, amount of time needed to complete tasks, and lack of respect from parents and community members have been among the top influences for principals' decision to find employment in other fields or in other school districts (Combs et al., 2009; Gilman & Lanman-Givens, 2001; Norton, 2003; Whitaker, 2001). Furthermore, parents and community members want immediate responses and resolutions to issues they bring to a principal's desk (Norton, 2003). In addition, the media has amplified the lack of respect through negative reporting (Kennedy as cited in Whitaker, 2001, pp. 1-2). In his article, "Let's Keep Our Quality School Principals on the Job," Norton (2003), using his investigation of various studies, identified multiple factors (i.e., increased responsibilities, salary and benefits, etc.) that influence principal turnover. Norton (2003) ultimately concluded that a combination of factors hinder principals' ability to focus on their main purpose, which is to promote teaching and learning. The Norton study deduced that when principals are impeded from their main purpose, they look for other options (Norton, 2003). The following chapter will explore the literature and research that directly influences principal turnover.

1.6   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In recent years, the Loysburg School District has experienced a high turnover rate among administrators, including but not limited to principals. This case study will focus solely on

principal turnover in the Loysburg School District. Principal turnover impacts a school community in many ways, including but not limited to district finances. The Loysburg School District is dealing with a potentially deleterious phenomenon in that principal turnover has surpassed the national average of 20 percent (Goldring & Taie, 2014). Increasing the retention rate of principals in the Loysburg School District may provide this school community with stability and the district itself with financial benefits (School Leaders Network, 2014). By gathering information from current and previous principals through one-on-one interviews, this case study aims to identify why principals in the Loysburg School District are leaving or contemplating leaving their posts.

It is anticipated that principals' insight and thoughts about turnover might influence policies and procedures intended to improve principal retention. The focus of this study is to hear the personal stories of Loysburg School District principals. Collecting and analyzing individual stories may suggest both causes and solutions for principal turnover and, thus, provide support to principals. This case study also aims to pinpoint varying needs of support and mentorship for principals at differing career stages.

1.7   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is crucial that effective school principals are hired, mentored, and supported throughout their careers. Accordingly, school districts need to focus on retaining effective principals in order to build sustainable programming.

Some researchers have conducted surveys to identify why principal turnover occurs (Combs et al., 2009; Norton, 2003; Wood, Finch, & Mirecki, 2013). In this case study, I will

augment the literature by capturing authentic, in-depth stories from principals regarding the reasons for their departures from this school district.

As the principals navigate the varying stages of their careers, Loysburg school principals may benefit from hearing personal accounts (e.g. challenges, successes, needs, etc.) from current and past colleagues. Furthermore, the stories derived from the interviews may themselves become a supporting mechanism for new or veteran principals to help them navigate the principalship. As a whole, the stories the Loysburg principals share may assist in reducing the turnover rate as current principals may find support and affirmation from hearing the stories or from the policies and procedures that result.

This case study will be beneficial to other district personnel as well. The first benefit from this case study will be the identification of the influencers contributing to principal departures. The superintendent and school board can utilize that information in order to inform their interactions with principals. Second, the superintendent and school board may be able to identify and utilize helpful forms of support and mentorship identified by this research. This information, combined with past research, can aid in the development of tools to support principals and reduce the rate of turnover. Monetary savings is another potential benefit to the district. The School Leaders Network (2014) has written about the financial burden school districts face each time principal turnover occurs. The retention of principals could save the Loysburg School District funds by reducing costs associated with recruitment and training of new or replacement principals.

The communities of the Loysburg School District will benefit from a reduction in principal turnover as well. Principal longevity would provide stability within the school community as relationships among stakeholders grow. Students, parents, and teachers will enjoy

better continuity of experience with consistent leadership to turn to when challenges and problems occur. Finally, this case study may complement current literature and give future researchers a springboard into investigating additional factors of and potential solutions for principal turnover.

1.8   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In researching this problem of practice, the following questions guide my inquiry:

1. What factors influence Loysburg principals to transition from their position?
2. What methods or tactics could the Loysburg School District implement to support and increase the retention of principals?

1.9   ASSUMPTIONS, LIMITATIONS AND BIAS

1.9.1   Assumptions

Four assumptions were identified at the onset of the case study:

1. Subjects participating in the one-on-one interviews will share their stories, providing their knowledge and expertise in an honest, forthright manner.
2. Collecting information from the key stakeholders (principals) will produce beneficial information for reducing principal turnover.

3. The superintendent and school board of the Loysburg School District have a desire to reduce the high rate of principal turnover.

4. There are methods and techniques superintendents and school boards can implement to reduce principal turnover.

1.9.2 Methodology limitations, advantages, and disadvantages

This case study investigates the reasons for a high rate of principal turnover and seeks potential methods that could reduce principal turnover. A limitation exists with one-on-one interviews, as the validity of the study resides with each interviewee providing authentic stories about the principalship, being honest about relationships among stakeholders, and sharing the needs and supports that exist for them as individuals. Conversely, with each additional interview the validity of the study improves as I seek patterns and emerging themes from multiple interviews. Table 6 summarizes the advantages and disadvantages of conducting one-on-one interviews.

Table 6. Advantages and Disadvantages with the Two Methods – interviews and secondary data analysis (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014)

Methods	Advantages	Disadvantages
One-on-one interviews	- Capture and hear the authentic stories first hand - Audio recordings provide accurate data - Interviewer may inquire for more detail or ask the interviewee to explain further - An answer provided may elicit the interviewee to ask follow-up questions - Potential change for the organization experiencing the problem	- The number of subjects will be limited - Biases can emerge - Time required to meet with each person - Time to transcribe, read, code, and analyze the data - Generalizability - Insight and knowledge retrieved from the subjects may be a result of context and therefore non-transferrable - Commitment of time by each interviewee

1.9.3   Researcher bias

As I prepared to conduct one-on-one interviews, it was essential to identify the biases that pertain to the research topic. In this case, bias was minimized through the preparation process utilized to conduct interviews. Bias may appear in multiple ways in a research project (Boyce & Neale, 2006; Yin, 2014). Each stakeholder participating in the study may provide biased responses and the researcher may be attempting to "prove" a particular outcome (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p. 3). Overall, a researcher needs to be receptive to hearing differing points of view as each participant shares experiences and stories (Yin, 2014). After examining the process and development of case study research, I conducted a pilot study that resulted in revisions to the interview process.

In addition to being the researcher of this case study, I am also an elementary school principal. Identifying my biases prior to conducting the research was important to safeguard the legitimacy of this project. Ultimately, as the researcher, I sought to listen to, gather, and document each story. In preparation for the case study interview process, I dialogued with other principals (excluding case study principals) prior to starting the research. I identified my perceptions about why principal turnover was occurring. I asked that they challenge my thoughts so that I would be open to "contrary evidence" (Yin, 2014). Additionally, I prepared open-ended questions to allow participants' stories to unfold from the perspective of each interviewee. Although I had preconceived notions about why principal turnover was occurring, and I also had envisioned potential solutions, my desire to hear the authentic stories prevailed over my bias. To that end, I will share the information emerging from the case study so as to provide the district with potential solutions to abnormal rates of principal turnover among Loysburg principals.

1.10 CONCLUSION

Learning more about the factors influencing a high rate of principal turnover will provide the superintendent and school board at the Loysburg School District with a starting point and rationale for increased principal retention. In addition to the factors influencing principal turnover, this case study will identify potential methods that the Loysburg School District may implement to increase the principal retention rate.

2.0   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   INTRODUCTION

Imagine standing in a wind tunnel while the wind is spinning around you. With each fleeting second, something changes without warning: The speed increases or decreases, the temperature fluctuates, the wind shifts, or all three occur simultaneously and alter rapidly.

Welcome to school leadership.

If everyone knew the truth about the principalship, would they still seek the role? If yes, how long will they stay in the principalship?

Across this country, one in five principals turn over every year (Goldring & Taie, 2014), affecting school communities, student achievement (Wood et al., 2013), and school budgets (School Leaders Network, 2014). Is this 20 percent turnover a result of:

- Salaries and benefits?

- Preparation programs?

- Long hours creating an imbalance between an individual's personal and professional life?

- Amount and degree of work responsibilities?

- Missing support mechanisms?

To lessen the impact on school budgets, to provide momentum for student achievement, and to build positive school climates and cultures, school systems need solutions to reduce the turnover rate of principals. Continued research in the area of principal retention may assist future principals, school districts, school boards, and communities as they navigate the process of supporting and mentoring principals in order to build capacity and provide longevity for leadership teams. Discovering the challenges, pitfalls, and supports that affect leaders may help to provide a more stable collective principal work force. In order to address the problem of principal turnover, the following topics are examined in this literature review: (a) principal leadership roles and responsibilities, (b) turnover in schools, (c) causes and effects of principal turnover, and (d) retention strategies.

2.2   LEADERSHIP ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Lee Cockerell, former Executive Vice President of Operations at Walt Disney World Resorts, spent decades of his life in leadership roles. In his book, *Creating Magic,* he describes the challenges, pitfalls, successes, and joys of leadership through examples that connect across professional lines.

> One of the great misconceptions about leadership is that it's an innate gift that can't be taught. People assume that leaders are born, not made. Another misconception is that leadership is synonymous with titles, job descriptions, and salary grades. It's not. Leadership is more than a role; it's a responsibility. (2008, p. 15)

Cockerell's conviction encapsulates the vast spectrum of leadership that occurs in all aspects of professional life, including school leadership. Furthermore, it captures the depth leaders must embody to support others with fortitude and trustworthiness. Like business leaders, school principals must be prepared for multiple responsibilities, along with growing professionally and creating positive work environments.

2.2.1 Principal responsibilities

Several qualities are needed for a school leader to make significant impact. Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004) utilized 70 studies that met the defined criteria, from a collection of 5,000 studies. The researchers analyzed the studies to determine a principal's effect on student achievement (Waters et al., 2004). The researchers identified three aspects of leadership, quoted below:

- *Leadership matters.* McREL[9] found a significant, positive correlation between effective school leadership and student achievement.

- *We can empirically define effective leadership.* McREL identified 21 key areas of leadership responsibility [described below] that are significantly correlated with student achievement.

- *Effective leaders not only know what to do, but how, when, and why to do it.* McREL researchers concluded that effective leaders understand which school changes are most likely to improve student achievement, what these changes

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[9] Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning

imply for both staff and community, and how to tailor their leadership practices

accordingly (p. 49)

Embedded in the complexity of leadership are abilities, courage, and responsibilities. In the article, "Leadership that Sparks Learning," Waters et al. (2004) acknowledged 21 effective leadership responsibilities that revolve around four topics – school culture, curriculum, communication, and advocacy (pp. 49-50). Effective leaders who employ the 21 responsibilities significantly influence the schools they lead (Waters et al., 2004). As the responsibilities provide perspective into the complexity of the principalship, they also provide a view into the enormity of the job. The 21 responsibilities encompass the roles and knowledge a school principal must embody to lead effectively. Future principals and preparation programs could utilize the 21 responsibilities as a guide in the preparation necessary for principals. Once in the role, principals may find that they are unprepared and need to seek out support in order to handle these responsibilities. Additionally, if these 21 responsibilities are incorporated into collaborative meetings, mentoring programs, and other forums, principals may feel more supported.

Adding to the complexities of the modern principalship are numerous federal and state mandates of the last few decades. These mandates include the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004, and constant revisions of state standards, all of which place immense pressure on school principals. In addition to these mandates, school principals are responsible for the safety and security of the students and staff on their campuses along with overseeing curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The role of a school principal, in conjunction with the aforementioned list of mandates and responsibilities, heightens the complexity of the position. These added pressures and accountability could

significantly impact upon the stress principals feel, causing them to investigate alternative options for employment (Combs et al., 2009; Whitaker, 2001; Wood et al., 2013).

2.2.2   Principals as managers and instructional leadership

The role of the school principal has changed over time as "instructional leadership has overtaken management" (Hoyle & Wallace as cited in Lemoine, McCormak, & Richardson, 2014, p. 17). Instructional leaders have knowledge about curriculum, instruction, and assessment along with the ability to provide professional development to teachers (Backor & Gordon, 2015; Hoerr, 1996; Lemoine et al., 2014). Lemoine et al. (2014) studied the obstacles school principals must surmount in order to lead instruction, including "societal factors, the dichotomy of principal roles, expectations of the principalship, knowledge of curriculum and instruction, and human relations" (p. 18).

According to Lemoine et al., principals must have a solid foundation of knowledge and understanding of the difficulties students face beyond the school building. The principal role has two branches – manager and instructional leader. The authors outlined the two roles as separate entities that work synchronously. Today's principals must oversee and supervise the management of the building as well as lead educators in an instructional manner. Expectations for school principals come from all stakeholders, and the demands are high as responsibilities encompass everything from traffic flow in the parking lot to achievement on all assessments. Lemoine et al. stress the importance of comprehensive knowledge and understanding of curriculum, instruction, and assessment as well as the ability to deliver professional development that enhances the learning environment. Furthermore, principals need interpersonal skills to build relationships and make connections with students, teachers, staff, and families. Principals

who create a climate and culture that is supportive and encouraging will empower a school to grow and flourish interdependently (Lemoine et al., 2014).

2.3 TURNOVER IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Personnel roles within school systems are intertwined; even though this case study is focused on principal turnover, the information related to tenure and turnover of school personnel is relevant for stakeholders within a school community. More particularly, turnover in one job category (teachers, superintendents, and/or principals) could influence turnover in other areas. Because the possibility exists, decision makers should stay abreast of data about turnover among personnel roles within a school building.

2.3.1 Teacher turnover

The National Center for Education Statistics Institute of Education Sciences (NCES) conducted surveys in 2008-09 and subsequently in 2012-13 to measure the movement and transitioning of teachers nationwide (Goldring et al., 2014; Keigher, 2010). Table 7 shows the national percentages of teachers who continue in their current positions, who transition from one teaching position to another, and who left their positions.

Table 7. Teacher Turnover Nationwide from 2008-09 and 2012-13 **(Goldring et al., 2014; Keigher, 2010)**

	2008-09	2012-13
Percentage remaining in the same teaching positions	84.5%	84.3%
Percentage who transferred from one teaching position to another	7.6%	8.1%
Percent who left their teaching positions	8%	7.7%

Although the percentage of teachers who remained on the job remained steady, it is worth noting that teacher turnover nationally is above 15 percent.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education collects data pertaining to teaching positions. Table 8 shows the percentage of teachers in the first year of their teaching contract and the percentage of teachers with three or fewer years of service in a school district (PDE, 2008; PDE, 2016a).

Table 8. New Teachers in Pennsylvania (PDE, 2008; PDE, 2016a)

	2007-08	2015-16
Percentage of teachers in the first year of their contract	9.5%	7%
Teachers with three years or fewer	23.9%	17.5%

The decrease in new teaching staff indicates that teacher turnover declined from the 2007-08 school year to the 2015-16 school year in Pennsylvania. The data did not indicate, however, whether the decline was a result of tenured teachers remaining in the system or if there were fewer positions available in the state of Pennsylvania.

2.3.2   Turnover in the superintendency position

The American Association of School Administrators (AASA) conducted a study in 2000, *The AASA 2000 Study of the American School Superintendent*. They found that superintendents averaged a tenure of five and one-half years per school district, a tenure marginally lower than it had been eight years prior (Glass et al., 2000). Furthermore, a later AASA report, *The American School Superintendent: 2010 Decennial Study,* found that 51 percent of the superintendents who participated in the 2010 study acknowledged that they planned to remain in the superintendency in 2015 (Kowalski et al., 2010). Finally, AASA's 2015 report, *Study of the American Superintendent: 2015 Mid-Decade Update*, cited the average tenure of a superintendent to be the

same as that of the 2000 study: five and one-half years per school district, nationally (Finnan, McCord, Stream, Mattocks, Petersen, & Ellerson, 2015).

The Pennsylvania Department of Education collects data relating to superintendent positions. Table 9 shows the percent of superintendents serving in the first year of their contract and the percentage of superintendents serving a school district for three years or fewer (PDE, 2008; PDE, 2016).

Table 9. New Superintendents Serving Pennsylvania Schools (PDE, 2008; PDE, 2016b)

	2007-08	2015-16
Percentage of superintendents in the first year of their contract	10.8%	9.6%
Superintendents with three years or fewer in their current contract	27%	27.8%

Additionally, in the 2016 report 46.4 percent had been serving their school districts for six years or fewer (PDE, 2016b). While the percentages remain comparable over time, the length of tenure is concerning for school systems working toward building sustainability and continuity.

2.3.3 Turnover in the principalship

NCES conducted surveys in 2008-09 and subsequently in 2012-13 to measure the movement, turnover, and transitions of school principals nationwide (Battle, 2010; Goldring & Taie, 2014). Table 10 shows the percentages of principals who remained in their current positions, who

transitioned from one principal position to another, who left the principalship altogether, who left

their positions without identifying their next positions (Battle, 2010; Goldring & Taie, 2014).

Table 10. Movement of Principals Nationwide (Battle, 2010; Goldring & Taie, 2014)

	2008-09	2012-13
Percentage of principals remaining in the same position	79.5%	77.4%
Percentage of principals who transferred from one principal position to another	6.9%	7%
Percentage of principals who left the principalship	11.9%	11.5%
Percentage of principals who left without identifying next position	1.8%	4.1%

Although principal turnover remained at approximately 20 percent, the percentage of

principals who remained on the job decreased from 79.5 percent to 77.4 percent from the 2008-

09 survey to the 2012-13 survey (Goldring & Taie, 2014). Principal turnover in Pennsylvania is

lower than the national average. Table 11 shows data retrieved from PDE *Professional

Personnel Individual Staff Reports*. While both statewide turnover is less that the national

average, the school district in this study exceeded both state and national averages.

Table 11. New Principals in Pennsylvania Schools (PDE, 2008; PDE, 2016b)

	2007-08	2015-16
Percentage of principals in the first year of their contract	7.7% [10]	6.3%
Principals with three years or fewer in their current contract	20.3%	17.7%

2.3.3.1 Annual turnover of principals

The United States Department of Education (2014) calls attention to the number of principals leaving the profession. The NCES "Principal Follow-up Study" collected data about principals remaining in their positions as well as those leaving. The study surveyed 89,920 principals in the 2008-09 school year and 89,530 principals in the 2012-13 school year (Goldring et al., 2014). Table 12 shows the numbers of principals who remained in their current positions, who transitioned as principals to other buildings within or outside of their districts, who left the principalship, and who left the profession with no follow-up. These transitions may have been positive or negative (i.e. retirement, termination, promotion, relocating for a spouse, etc.). It is important to note that the category "Left the Principalship" could involve a variety of transitions – moved back to the classroom, moved into central administration, retired, resigned, etc.

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[10] The percentage refers to new principals serving in a school district for the first time; the number does not account for principals who have shifted within the same district and are serving new schools.

Table 12. Data from the Principal Follow-up Study Conducted by National Center for Education Statistics

	Number of Participating Principals in 2008-09	Percentage of Principals in 2008-09	Number of Participating Principals in 2012-13	Percentage of Principals in 2012-13
Total Number of Participants	89,920	100%	89,530	100%
Remained in their original positions	71,440	79%	69, 320	77.5%
Transferred to other principal positions within or out of the district	6,210	7%	6,230	7%
Left the Profession	10,690	12%	10,270	11.5%
Unknown	1,570	2%	3,710	4%
Total Number of Principal Turnover	18,470	21%	20,210	22.5%

The retention rate, shown in the second row of the table, decreased slightly from the 2008-09 survey to the 2012-13 survey; 79 percent of principals stayed in their positions at the end of the 2008-09 school year while 77.5 percent of principals stayed in their positions at the end of the 2012-13 school year. The 1.5 percent decrease equates to an additional 1,342 principals who left the principalship in the 2012-13 school year in contrast to the 2008-09 school year. Each principal turnover affects the school community served by that principal. As data

continues to be collected on principal turnover, school districts should stay apprised of principal departure patterns for future planning.

Although there is only a slight change from the 2008-09 study to the 2012-13 study, it is staggering to see the total number of school principals moving within the profession and those leaving the profession on a yearly basis (Goldring & Taie, 2014). More than 20 percent of the schools that participated in the study started with a new principal the following year (Goldring & Taie, 2014). The fact remains that the number of principals leaving the profession is increasing and that principals leaving the profession are doing so both by choice and for unknown reasons (Goldring & Taie, 2014).

2.3.4   Turnover across the system

School systems are dealing with turnover throughout the nation as well as in the state of Pennsylvania. Moreover, turnover is happening at all levels, affecting teachers, superintendents, and principals collectively. School leaders work interdependently; even though this case study is focused on principal turnover, information regarding tenure and turnover of superintendents and teachers as well as principals is important in understanding the environment in which principal attrition occurs. According to the data, the turnover rate among teachers, superintendents and principals has remained steady across time within each category, but the highest turnover rate within the system is associated with the superintendent position, while the lowest turnover rate is connected to teachers. Overall, systemic and local pressures have influenced the profession of education and retention of personnel at multiple levels.

2.4   CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF PRINCIPAL TURNOVER

School systems endure the cost of searching, recruiting, hiring, and mentoring new principals (School Leaders Network, 2014). Besides having an impact on the district's budget each year (School Leaders Network, 2014), principal turnover affects school climate and student achievement (Kelley, Thornton, & Daugherty, 2005; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Miller, 2013; Pepper & Thomas, 2002; Waters et al., 2003).

2.4.1   Generational differences in the workplace

One contributing factor to principal turnover could be generational differences, a possibility that has not been fully studied in regard to the principalship. Today's workforce includes four distinct generations (Traditionalists, born between 1900 and 1945; Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964; Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980; and Millennials, born between 1981 and 2000). Each generation has its own mindset about work and the organizations they work for (Bennett, Pitt, & Price, 2012; Bresman, 2015; Eversole, Venneberg & Crowder, 2012). The diversity among the four generations presents a challenge for leadership within any organization (Bennett et al., 2012), including educational organizations. Two notable differences among the generations include the length of time an employee remains with an employer and employee reasons for changing employers (Bresman, 2015; Downing, 2006; Eversole et al., 2012). Younger generations tend to change jobs more, and each generation has unique characteristics (Table 13: Generational Characteristics in the Office) as well as unique working styles (Table 14: Generational "Workplace Style" in the Office). Given the possibility of generational differences

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contributing to principal turnover, it is worthwhile to explore these differences in the context of this study.

Table 13. Generational Characteristics in the Office (Business Interiors, 2009)

Traditionalists 1900-1945	Baby Boomers 1946-1964	Gen X'ers 1965-1980	Millennials 1981-2000
Dedication	Optimistic	Independent	Optimism
Sacrifice	Team orientated	Diverse	Civic duty
Conformity	Personal gratification	Global thinkers	Confident
Respect	Health and well-being	Technological	Easily bored
Hierarchy	Personal growth	Fun	Sociable
Patience	Work involvement	Informal	Moral
Duty before pleasure	Forever young	Self-reliant	Streetwise
		Pragmatic	Environmental
		Detached	Nurtured
		Entrepreneurial	

(Business Interiors, 2009, p. 3)

Table 14. Generational "Workplace Style" in the Office (Business Interiors, 2009)

Traditionalists 1900-1945	Baby Boomers 1946-1964	Generation X 1965-1980	Millennials 1982-2000
Derive identity from place	Importance of corporate culture and feeling part of the whole	Look and quality are important	They can work anywhere
Space reflects accomplishment and position	Private office	Enjoy the extras	Informal and fluid use of space
Hierarchy	Break away private enclaves	Support expression in individual space	Space for mentoring
Boundaries	Collaboration spaces	Personal, flexible workstations	Fun open collaborative spaces
	Centralized knowledge center	Alternative offices	Plug and play tech environment
		Open accessible leadership team areas	No boundaries or hierarchy

(Business Interiors, 2009, p. 3)

This study distinguishes the different characteristics and "workplace styles" that span four generations. Business Interiors (2009) argues, "The implications and consequences of the four generational workplace must be realized and understood" (p. 8). Furthermore, the study revealed that an organization can "…apply certain principles …which attracts new staff and retains existing staff in equal measure" (p. 8).

Given the changing demographics and the differing characteristics of each generation, it may be beneficial for school systems to address the needs and expectations of Millennials and Generation X employees in hopes of retaining employees and reducing turnover. While generational differences have not been highlighted in research on administrative turnover, the literature consistently identifies lack of work-life balance as an issue for principal departure. Millennials, whose workforce numbers are growing, cite the need for life balance, including time with family and friends (Bresman, 2015).

Principal turnover may be affected by generational shifts within the workplace as more Generation X and Millennials take on the role and look for balance between their personal and professional lives. Downing (2006) discusses the work preferences of typical Millennials and discusses how organizations might meet those preferences. For example, leaders can "set direction" and "create alignment" for and "gain commitment" from Millennials (Downing, 2006, p. 6). "Setting direction" for Millennials requires looking beyond the goals of the organization and thinking about connections to the greater good. "Creating alignment" for Millennials indicates blurring boundaries within an organization – utilizing knowledge and expertise from all sources to solve problems. "Gaining commitment" from Millennials implies flexibility in the work setting. Downing concludes, "The leader's challenge will be not only to understand these differences but also to embrace the different perspectives and find ways to bring out the best in everyone" (p. 6). Ultimately, Millennials will leave a position in order for their expectations to be met. Synthesizing this information with literature about "causes of principal turnover" provides a connection that decision makers may find useful when working toward increasing retention numbers.

2.4.2 Why is turnover happening?

Principals are moving within the profession or leaving the profession in staggering numbers. This section explores principal attrition in different environments in order to explore whether principals' reasons for leaving vary according to the type of work environment.

2.4.2.1 Elementary schools

Combs et al. (2009) studied elementary principal burnout, specifically focusing on characteristics of gender, age, and number of years in education both in teaching and in the principalship. The authors did not find a correlation between those characteristics (gender, age, and/or length of service) and turnover. Instead, they found that principals leave because of the high levels of stress imposed by increased responsibility for student achievement on standardized assessments. Additionally, they found that principals leave due to the inability to do it all (e.g., support teachers, respond to parents, oversee curriculum, provide training, discipline students, etc.). The increased time demands on principals creates imbalance for school leaders' personal and professional lives. The authors cite the need for more attention to be placed on or with those supporting principals in order to increase principal longevity.

2.4.2.2 Regional location

The case study school district is classified as an urban school district. The literature exposes a slight difference related to principal turnover and regional location, but nothing significant from one region to another. Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Guarino, Ghosh-Dastidar, and Brown (2006) conducted a longitudinal study in Illinois and North Carolina on principal turnover. A component of the study compared principal turnover to regional location (urban, suburban, or rural) of the school districts. The study found no connection between principal turnover across the state of Illinois in urban and rural school districts, with the exception of the city of Chicago. There was a higher percentage of principal turnover in urban schools within the city of Chicago in comparison to principals in suburban schools within the city of Chicago. The authors found a slight difference in the state of North Carolina. Principals were more likely to turnover in urban schools than in rural schools.

Studies about principal turnover in urban (Tyre, 2015) as well as suburban (Schimel, 2014) areas yield similar findings: Principals note a great deal of stress from their daily responsibilities and from stakeholder expectations. A broader sample of respondents at a national conference noted similar themes, but also added concerns about salary, time demands, and negative media coverage (Kennedy as cited in Whitaker, 2001, pp. 1-2).

Collectively these studies reveal commonalities as to why principal turnover is occurring in multiple environments – lack of support, increased stressful demands, and time constraints. The literature about principal turnover is copious; school districts, including but not limited to Loysburg, may utilize the research to implement changes within their school systems to increase retention rates and build sustainability. Knowing the potential reasons influencing principal turnover may provide helpful points for decision makers to begin discussion in an effort to reduce turnover.

2.4.3   Effects of principal turnover

The literature on the effects of principal turnover shows that principals affect school climate and culture and student achievement (Deal & Peterson, 2016; Kelley et al., 2005) and that poor retention negatively affects district budgets (School Leaders Network, 2014).

2.4.3.1 Climate and culture

The literature on educational leadership, including history, theories, leadership styles, and teachers' perceptions, provides discussion on how the components of each combine to impact a school's climate and culture. "School climate is a broad concept that includes the perception of the teachers regarding the working environment of the school, its formal and informal

organization, and the leadership of the organization" (Hoy & Miskel as cited in Gulsen & Gulenay, 2014, p. 94). School culture "is the glue, the hope, and the faith that holds people together" (Deal & Peterson, 2016, p. 6). As the face of leadership in each school building, principals hold the "power" to influence school climate (Kelley et al., 2005, p. 23).

Pepper and Thomas (2002) combine auto-ethnography and literature review to share an authentic story about a first-year principal transitioning a school from an authoritarian (i.e., strict obedience to the rules, extreme order, and inflexibility) climate and culture to a transformational (i.e., sharing leadership to empower others, leading for positive change to improve the organization, and collaborating at all levels) climate and culture. The principal shared the pitfalls, challenges, and successes when changing the leadership style and the positive outcome the change eventually had on the school community. All stakeholders should feel "comfortable, valued and secure" in a school setting (Brophy as cited in Pepper & Thomas, 2002, p. 156). This powerful auto-ethnography demonstrates the influence a principal had on the school climate and culture. At the conclusion of the study, the authors support the results through current scholarship, explaining that – "positive school climate" occurs in schools led by principals with a transformational style (Pepper & Thomas, 2002, p. 165). Additionally, Pepper and Thomas's account "leads the reader through the process of change within a school setting and provides insights into obstacles and possible solutions for meeting challenges" (p. 165).

Other research cites the importance not only of leadership style, but of leadership continuity. School Leaders Network (2014) identified the impact a school principal has on the climate and culture of a school as well as the quality of instruction delivered in each classroom. They explain that "highly effective principals" consistently work to make progress in schools on a yearly basis, but *the depth of change needed within organizations takes years* (p. 3). The

continuity provided by an effective leader who remains at the helm continuously builds relationships and makes connections with students, staff, families, and the community. With an effective leader working in conjunction with a committed team of teachers over multiple years, a positive school climate would ensue along with academic growth.

2.4.4 Principals and student achievement

Invariably, school communities hold principals accountable for success or failure in regard to student achievement (Wood et al., 2013). School leadership impacts student achievement in a variety of ways (Leithwood et al., 2004; Miller, 2013; Waters et al., 2003), second only to the influence of classroom teachers (Leithwood et al., 2004).

In the study *Balanced Leadership: What 30 Years of Research Tells Us About the Effect of Leadership on Student Achievement,* Waters, et al. (2003) reviewed data from multiple studies and found a significant correlation between school leaders and student achievement. School leaders who utilize "effective leadership responsibilities" have a positive impact on school achievement; likewise, school leaders can also negatively impact achievement (Waters et al., 2003). Additionally, the authors identify several components of student achievement that are influenced by principals:

- Guaranteed and viable curriculum
- Challenging goals and effective feedback
- Parent and community involvement
- Safe and orderly environment
- Collegiality and professionalism (p. 6)

When all organization stakeholders work collectively and collaboratively, schools thrive. Principals play a key role in developing collaborative work environments. For example, a principal who shares leadership by providing teachers with leadership opportunities continuously builds relationships and encourages teamwork and ownership. Leithwood et al. (2004) define effective leaders as those who "set directions, develop people, and redesign the organization" (pp. 8-9). School leaders who "set direction" collaborate with stakeholders and develop common goals that represent a vision for the team to work toward collectively. "Developing people" is a multi-faceted process requiring a school leader to utilize a differentiated process providing support based upon individualized needs. Often school buildings are seen as silos within a school district, and classrooms can become silos within a school building. Effective leaders "redesign the organization" by nurturing an interdependent team focused on the vision.

Several longitudinal studies have addressed the impact of principals on student achievement. Beteille, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2012) studied the impact principal turnover had on student achievement for six years in the fourth largest public school district in the United States. The researchers found that principal turnover has a negative impact on student achievement. The data was disaggregated into categories – schools with new principals, new principals without experience, new principals with experience, an acting principal, and principal with experience. The correlation between having a new principal with or without experience had a negative effect on reading scores. In math, schools with new principals made less progress than schools with a new principal with previous experience. Schools with experienced principals made the most gains on math assessments.

In another longitudinal study, Miller (2013) sought to determine the consequence of principal turnover on student achievement. Miller utilized twelve years of data from public

schools in North Carolina and found that principal turnover typically occurs *after* student achievement begins to decline. Additionally, school achievement typically continues to decline for two years when a school is under the direction of a new principal; however, improvement typically follows. Overall, principal turnover has consistently been shown to correlate with student achievement.

2.4.5 Financial costs of turnover

In addition to the effect of principal turnover on school climate and culture and student achievement, principal turnover also costs money. School Leaders Network (2014) estimates the average cost of replacing a school principal to be $75,000 (p. 4). This cost is all-encompassing and includes searching, recruiting, hiring, and mentoring new principals. School districts across the nation are spending more than $1 billion annually in replacement of school principals (School Leaders Network, 2014).

A school budget should reflect educational program goals and delivery. If school districts increase principal retention rates, then funds allocated for "churn" (the loss and replacement of principals, explained in the next section) could be reallocated to programming. School Leaders Network (2014) collected national data on the "churn" of school principals. Table 15 identifies the categories and the expenses district incur in each category. "Preparation" includes funds school districts spend on an employee acquiring principal certification. "Hiring" involves resources that school districts utilize to recruit, interview, and hire. "Signing" refers to the average amount school districts offer for relocating expenses. "Mentoring" refers to the funding school districts spend on mentoring new principals. "Continuing education" funds are monies spent on principals in quest of another certification while employed with the school

district. School districts face economic impacts each time principal turnover occurs (School Leaders Network, 2014).

Table 15. Churn: The High Cost of Principal Turnover (School Leaders Network, 2014, p. 4)

	Lower Expenditure	Upper Expenditure	Typical
Preparation	$20,000	$150,000	$40,000
Hiring	$5,850	$20,000	$6,000
Signing	0	$25,000	$12,500
Internship	0	$85,000	0
Mentoring	$11,000	$15,000	$12,500
Continuing Education	0	$8,000	$4,000
TOTAL	$36,850	$303,000[11]	$75,000

2.5   STRATEGIES TO REDUCE TURNOVER

Most support for school principals occurs in the first few years of their careers. The School Leaders Network (2014) noted that "a focus almost exclusively on principal entry into the profession ignores the problems of "churn – currently schools lose scores of experienced principals each year, requiring replacements with less effective novice principals on an average

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[11] This figure encompasses the amount of money an affluent school district may spend to recruit, hire, coach, and professionally develop a principal.

of every three years" (p. 1). Changes in support structures by superintendents and school boards could increase principal tenure, thus improving progress and achievement for the students and community they serve.

2.5.1   Policy as a lever for principal retention

Boards of education may implement policy as a method to reduce turnover (Matlach, 2015). Matlach (2015) identified six strategies:

- Improve leadership preparation.

- Study local hiring and assignment timelines and practices.

- Invest in professional learning and support for practicing principals.

- Assess working conditions of principals and support improvement.

- Invest in the creation and implementation of strong principal evaluation systems.

- Review and reform school leader compensation (pp. 3-9).

Through policy, school boards and superintendents can improve the probability that a school principal will remain in a district. "Improving leadership preparation" includes investigating the quality of the principal preparedness programs entry criteria, understanding and knowing "program outcomes," and assigning funds for programs that generate effective principals (Matlach, 2015, p. 3). "Hiring" policies may ensure a school district hires the right candidate as the policy may provide adequate time to search and identify the best candidate for the position (Matlach, 2015, p. 5). Policies that offer on-going professional development opportunities to principals throughout their tenure and investigating the work environment may reduce turnover (Matlach, 2015, p. 5-6). Additionally, policies on evaluation and benefits and salary may reduce principal turnover. Implementing a fair and consistent assessment with

specific and valuable feedback provides a principal the opportunity to grow as a professional (Matlach, 2015). Creating multiple policies focused on principal retention may reduce turnover within a school district.

2.5.2 Coaching and mentoring throughout principals' careers

Celoria and Roberson (2015) studied coaching as a component used in an induction program focusing on the "emotional" well-being of school principals. The researchers interviewed novice principals and their coaches in order to garner a comprehensive perspective of the supports principals need (Celoria & Roberson, 2015). Coaching may be a valuable investment for school districts if results yield school leader retention and longevity. Successful coaching is grounded in a secure confidential relationship between the coach and principal (Celoria & Roberson, 2015, p. 9). Other critical components of successful coaching include "that the coaching relationship was supportive, nonjudgmental, accepting, non-supervisorial, and confidential" (Celoria & Roberson, 2015, p. 9). A multi-year coaching model incorporated into an induction program may provide school principals with the stress relief and emotional support needed to stay, thus reducing the costs districts incur when replacing administrators.

One example of a coaching program is "The Iowa Mentoring Program," which was established to support administrators. The program has multiple components but strives to make a meaningful connection for both mentor and mentee (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006). Furthermore, the program provides training to the mentor throughout the course of the program. In addition to finding a "mentor-protégé" connection, Alsbury and Hackmann (2006) found benefits from the mentor being a good listener and finding networking opportunities for the new administrator. Even though retention was not mentioned as a finding, other literature notes

principal turnover occurs due to a lack of support (Matlach, 2015). Exploring principal retention in districts with mentoring programs might provide helpful information in reducing principal turnover.

Fink and Silverman (2014) report on a supporting mechanism, "a principal support framework," that school systems implement with principals and central office staff to improve a principal's ability to be an instructional leader (pp. 23-24). Instructional leaders focus on the art of teaching and the scope of learning. The framework has essential "action areas," quoted below:

- Action Area 1: A shared vision of principals as instructional leaders

- Action Area 2: A system of support for developing principals as instructional leaders

- Action Area 3: Making it possible for principals to be instructional leaders (Fink & Silverman, 2014, p. 24)

The action steps require the organization/school system to outline expectations for principals/instructional leaders with specificity, to provide embedded and external professional development that increases a principal's ability to be an instructional leader, and to concentrate the function of the school principal on leading instructionally through policy (Fink & Silverman, 2014).

School principals have stressful and demanding jobs that pose challenges to work-life balance, an important issue for new generations in the workforce. Some of the stresses come from the accountability of high-stakes testing, assuring the safety and security of the staff and student body, and the unfunded government mandates placed on school districts. School principals face demands from community, central administrators, parents, teachers, staff, and

students, creating an endless list of work tasks. If principals are not mindful of their time, an imbalance may be created between their personal and professional lives. Creating a comprehensive multi-year support system for school principals (beyond the first years of the principalship) may improve retention, thus generating a sustainable program that has a positive effect on student achievement.

School districts use various retention strategies; the three most effective strategies revealed in Wood et al's (2013) study include "creating a positive school culture," "investing in professional development," and "using technology for mentoring and professional development." Additionally, Norton's (2003) study provides an alternative process: advising school boards to work in tandem with central administrators to write and approve a comprehensive policy on employee retention (p. 54). Gilman and Lanman-Givens (2001) conclude, "No one has said that a principal's job is easy, but the rewards can be great. Positive reforms are crucial so that principals can survive and prosper" (p. 74) – and stay. There are various retention strategies outlined within this section – professional development, "grow your own," school district policies pertaining to employee retention, coaching/mentoring, and utilization of technology focused on mentoring and professional development. One or a combination of strategies may help a school district to increase its retention rate. Ultimately, a school district needs to understand the needs of its principals, and to work collectively to build supporting mechanisms.

2.6   CONCLUSION

According to multiple studies conducted by Goldring and Taie (2014), principal turnover has consistently remained at 20 percent annually; thus, millions of children across the United Stated

are welcomed back to school by a new principal. Multiple factors influence turnover – increasing demands from all stakeholders, mounting job tasks, transitioning to a position in central administration, increased stress and pressure, poor public perception, seeking employment in a new field, and imbalance within principals' personal and professional lives. Additionally, awareness and knowledge about generational differences becomes paramount as school districts investigate principal turnover as Generation X and Millennials enter administration in larger numbers. Furthermore, school districts face fiscal burdens with principal turnover. As a result of multiple studies, recommendations have been made to increase principal retention – provide support through mentorship for multiple years, work collectively to increase retention, identify and maintain realistic job descriptions, and match salary and benefits to responsibilities. Overall, principal turnover affects many stakeholders, costs money, and slows student and district progress; thus, working collaboratively to reduce turnover and increase retention may positively impact school communities.

All school districts need a comprehensive plan for hiring and supporting effective leaders in order to build capacity in the school community and momentum for student progress. A comprehensive framework that places value on supporting principals across the tenure of the principalship is required, a framework that will evolve over time and be based on the needs of the individuals within the position (Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Celoria & Roberson, 2015). Likewise, school districts need to support principals throughout their tenure with the purpose of retaining effective leaders. The question remains: How do we teach and retain current and future leaders to respond in these ever-changing complex times?

3.0   METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

A case study attempts to tell the authentic story of its participants (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2014).   As the researcher, I seek to discover why principals in the Loysburg School District leave or consider leaving their positions. A review of the literature on principal turnover shows that turnover corresponds with financial burdens to the school district (School Leaders Network, 2014), changes within the climate and culture of the school community (Deal & Peterson, 2016; Kelley et al., 2005; Pepper & Thomas, 2002), and results on student achievement tests (Leithwood et al., 2004; Miller, 2013; Waters et al., 2003). This case study will provide the Loysburg School District with an in-depth view, from the perspective of school principals, as to why turnover is happening at such a high rate. I will also investigate and provide potential retention policies and methods.

This chapter describes my research process, my approach to case study, my research design, and my interview process. The framework for this case study is grounded in a review of the literature on principal turnover as well as the value of case study for addressing the problem of principal turnover.

3.2 APPROACH AND METHODS

3.2.1 Approach

The Loysburg School District has been experiencing a higher than normal rate of principal turnover. Historically, principal turnover in the Loysburg School District has been below the national average of 20 percent (Goldring & Taie, 2014); however, in more recent years, the school district has seen principal turnover as high as 60 percent in a single school year (L. Franklin, personal communication, March 15, 2017).

I studied this phenomenon through the theoretical perspective of grounded theory (Andrews, Higgins, Andrews, & Lalor, 2012; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hussein, Hirst, Salyers, & Osuji, 2014), utilizing case study methodology (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2014). A grounded theory framework allows the researcher to conduct research (i.e., develop research questions, select and collect data in context, analyze the data, and form conclusions) without developing a hypothesis (Andrews et al., 2012; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hussein et al., 2014). Researchers can dive deeply into a problem and allow the information to emerge from the subjects.

The framework of a case study provides a pathway into a current "phenomenon" in a particular setting (Yin, 2014, p. 16). Yin (2014) defines case study as a method that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (p. 2). In order to acquire information and knowledge about principal turnover in the Loysburg School District, I studied the problem by focusing on a specific population, current and past principals of the Loysburg School District. The following questions were investigated: What factors influence

Loysburg principals to transition from their position? What methods or tactics could the Loysburg School District implement to support and increase the retention of principals?

I attempt to uncover why such a high rate of principal turnover has occurred in the Loysburg School District by asking "Why?" Discovering "why" a phenomenon is occurring is a textbook reason for a case study (Yin, 2014). Using one-on-one interviews with Loysburg School District principals provide the opportunity to uncover why principal turnover occurs and how the school district may be able to reduce the turnover rate. Interviewees discussed their professional backgrounds, the relationships that influence their thinking about staying or leaving the principalship, the professional development opportunities they experienced that strengthened their leadership skills, and factors that influenced them to leave or consider leaving their positions. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide the Loysburg School District with methods to improve the retention rate of school principals.

3.2.2 Methodology: One-on-one interviews

Yin (2014) explains, "Interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs or actions" (p. 113). I am utilizing twelve one-on-one semi-structured interviews as the primary method to explore the research questions. Interview participants worked for the Loysburg School District as school principals for a period of time during the past twelve years (July 2004 through July 2016). The semi-structured interview process included a list of specific questions to ask each interviewee, but follow-up questions depend on the responses of each interviewee. The semi-structured format allows an interviewer to gather valuable data by asking follow-up questions that focus on the topic but are tailored to individual responses. Interviewing principals one-on-one, with opportunities for detailed

conversation, yielded richer data than a survey. Principals told their stories in one-on-one conversations that encompassed their professional histories, relationships with stakeholders, professional development experiences, factors influencing their decision to leave or stay, and methods the school district employed or could employ to retain principals.

Interviewing subjects one-on-one provides a researcher with the benefit of gathering comprehensive information (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Gathering information from principals is key to understanding and thus lowering principal turnover. This information provides background and explanations as well as evidence regarding "why" principals leave the Loysburg School District. Listening to and capturing stories of why principals left or are contemplating leaving is essential to developing methods superintendents and school boards can use to retain principals.

Initial interviews were scheduled and conducted in person for approximately one hour. Supplemental interviews lasted between 20 and 35 minutes and occurred in person or on the phone. The purpose of following up with subjects was to clarify information from initial interviews and/or to ask subjects for more detail or information about a topic mentioned during the initial interview. All subjects work or worked in the Loysburg School District, and their principal experience ranged from one year of service to 16 years of service. I sought to capture each principal's story to ascertain individual perspectives on why principal turnover is occurring and what mechanisms, if any, the school district can employ to reduce future principal turnover.

Table 16 summarizes the questions being investigated with the methods and collection of evidence being utilized.

Table 16. Inquiry Questions with Methods and Evidence Collection

Inquiry Questions	Method	Evidence Collection	Potential Outcomes
What factors influence Loysburg principals to transition from their position?	One-on-one interviews	• Audio recordings • Handwritten notes	• Insight into reasons for leaving • Explanation of reasons • Personal viewpoints • Group perspectives
What methods or tactics could the Loysburg School District implement to support and increase the retention of principals?	One-on-one interviews	• Audio recordings • Handwritten notes	• Professional Development opportunities • Ideas and thoughts on retention • Discover methods and techniques school districts can employ to decrease retention rates

3.3   RESEARCH DESIGN

The primary research activity involves one-on-one interviews with principals from the Loysburg School District to identify why principals contemplate leaving or leave their posts. The interview protocol specifically sought to have interviewees define the methods or tactics this district may implement in order to retain principals. The interview process was designed to capture each principal's story, allowing participants to express thoughts and feelings about why

they left or contemplated leaving the principalship, and to garner methods that the Loysburg School District could implement to reduce principal turnover.

3.3.1 Research setting

The research study took place during the 2016–2017 school year at Loysburg School District. Loysburg School District, in central Pennsylvania, opened its doors in 1854. The district serves approximately 8,000 students in pre-kindergarten through grade twelve. Twelve campuses cover 60 square miles throughout the city and surrounding townships. Currently, 63 percent of the student body is eligible for free and reduced lunches. The student population has decreased (see Table 4 in Chapter One) over the past two decades as a result of businesses closing and factories moving out of the area.

The current staff is comprised of 18 building administrators, almost 600 teachers, and nearly 700 non-instructional full- and part-time employees (L. Franklin, personal communication, March 22, 2017). Racial and ethnic enrollment consists of 89.18 percent White, 8.45 percent Black or African American, 1.67 percent Hispanic, 0.59 percent Asian, and 0.12 percent American Indian/Alaskan ("District Fast Facts," 2017). Most students arrive daily on school buses that collectively travel more than 5,000 miles per day. The cafeterias serve almost 2,040 breakfasts daily and more than 5,700 lunches (B. Smithfield, personal communication, March 24, 2017). Several ancillary sites operate within the confines of the school district, with additional locations in the community owned and operated by the school district. Students, staff, and community members utilize these locations throughout the year, including a planetarium, three athletic fields with artificial turf, a community education center, and a television channel,

to name a few. The Loysburg Board of Directors granted permission for this research study at their August 2016 meeting.

3.3.2 Participants

The study sample included principals who work or worked for the Loysburg School District at some point between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2016. Several of the interviewees remained employed by the Loysburg School District during the time of the study, while others retired, left the profession, or left for other school districts. The researcher telephoned the principals to determine if they were willing to participate in a research study. If the principal agrees to participate, I conducted a screening to determine whether the subject met the criteria to participate in the study (see Appendix B). Each principal was asked if he or she has worked in the Loysburg School District as a principal within the past twelve years. If the response was "yes," then the participant also had to answer "yes" to one of the following questions in order to participate:

- While working for the Loysburg School District, have you contemplated leaving your principal position?
- While working for the Loysburg School District, have you transferred from one principal position to another position either within or out of the district?
- Did you leave the profession of education within the last twelve years?
- Did you retire from the profession of education within the last twelve years?

Twelve current and/or former Loysburg School District principals indicated a willingness to participate in the study after meeting the criteria to participate.

3.4   THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

3.4.1   Recruitment

After receiving approval (Appendix A) from the University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board (IRB), I contacted the Assistant to the Superintendent at the Loysburg School District (after board approval) and requested a list of all principals who worked in the Loysburg School District for any period of time from July 2004 through June 2016. The request also included phone numbers for each principal, if applicable. A script (Appendix B) was approved by the IRB. From October 2016 through January 2017, I contacted each principal on the list by using a telephone script (Appendix B) that included an overview of the study and an invitation to participate. If the potential participant responded affirmatively when asked to participate, I immediately transitioned to the screening process to determine eligibility. If eligible, the subject was asked to propose a date and time for the one-on-one interview. If potential participants responded negatively when asked to participate in the study, I thanked them for their time.

Interviews can delve into sensitive subject matter; thus, it is imperative that the researcher guarantee each participant anonymity. The three items (i.e. telephone screening, consent form, and audio recording) that identify the participants have been kept in a locked file in the researcher's personal office for the duration of the research. After each interview, each participant was assigned a pseudonym; from that time the participant will be referred to in all documentation with the pseudonym. At the conclusion of the study, the materials will be secured with the University of Pittsburgh in accordance with IRB protocol. Before the interview began, each subject was presented with a consent form (Appendix C) for the research project. The consent form included an introduction to the study, an explanation of research activities to

be conducted, risks and benefits of the study, privacy and confidentiality for each participant, withdrawal from the study, statement about voluntary participation, and consent to participate. Additionally, subjects were asked if they had any questions or need any clarification prior to starting the interview.

3.4.2 Interview and follow-up

The interviews were conducted in one of four places: a site within the Loysburg School District, the local public library, the school district where the interviewee is employed, or the local university library. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes. After the consent form was signed, I thanked the interviewee and reiterated the purpose of the research study. An interview protocol was approved by the IRB (Appendix D) to be utilized at each interview. Prior to any questions being asked, each interviewee was asked if the interview could be audio recorded. The interviews were recorded on a mini-cassette recorder and an app, "Audio Memo."

Interviewees were asked to share their professional histories and to describe the formal mentoring process they received at the onset of their principal careers. I then asked interviewees to describe their relationships with superintendents and other central administrators, the school board of directors, teachers, students, parents, and the community. In addition, I had each interviewee outline his or her participation in professional development opportunities that strengthened his or her leadership skills. Also, the interviewee had the opportunity to explain the factors that influenced him or her to leave the principal position or contemplate leaving the principalship. Finally, the interviewee was asked to share the processes that the Loysburg School District utilizes to retain principals. Furthermore, I asked the interviewee to share recommendations to increase the retention rates of school principals.

At the conclusion of the interview, I provided each interviewee the opportunity to share additional thoughts pertaining to the topics discussed. Following each interview, I transcribed each audio recording. After each transcription, the audio recording was reviewed in order to verify the transcription with the recording. After transcribing and rereading the interviews, subjects were be contacted if clarification was needed on any topic.

3.5   DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis methods were utilized for the interview transcripts. After the twelve interviews were transcribed, I coded the transcriptions by using an Excel Spreadsheet. The transcripts and spreadsheets containing the coding were examined for emerging themes and patterns. The process used for the data analysis comes from Yin's (2014) recommendation of "working your data from the ground up" (p. 136). This technique permitted me to review the transcripts multiple times, allowing themes and concepts to emerge and to avoid preconceived ideas. This process also allowed patterns to materialize and provided an "analytic path" for the researcher to follow with the intention of finding "additional relationships" (Yin, 2014, p. 137).

Table 17 summarizes the questions being investigated with the methods being utilized and the process and analysis to be taken during the research.

Table 17. Inquiry Questions with Methods and Analysis

Inquiry Questions	Method	Analysis/Interpretation
What factors influence Loysburg principals to transition from their position?	One-on-one interviews	- Transcribe, organize, and prepare the data to be coded and analyzed - Complete content analysis to identify key aspects and themes that emerge from the principals interviewed - Create a chart to categorize the similarities and differences that occur within each interview - Identify patterns, relationships, and differences - Interpret the data and search for connections among the data - Utilize quotes from the interviews when sharing the data in order to support the analysis
What methods or tactics could the Loysburg School District implement to support and increase the retention of principals?	One-on-one interviews	- Transcribe, organize, and prepare the data to be coded and analyzed - Complete content analysis to identify key aspects and themes that emerge from the principals interviewed - Create a chart to categorize the similarities and differences that occur within each interview - Identify patterns, relationships, and differences - Interpret the data and search for connections among the data - Utilize quotes from the interviews when sharing the data in order to support the analysis

The inquiry questions facilitated the investigation into why principals leave and potential methods that may be implemented to reduce turnover. The responses to the question, "What factors influence principals to transition from their position?" could provide a springboard for

principals, superintendents, and school boards to initiate discussions regarding retention. The key themes emerging from the question, "What methods or tactics could the Loysburg School District implement to support and increase the retention of principals?" combined with research proven tools may provide the Loysburg School District with retention methods to support principals throughout their tenures.

Data analysis provided a comprehensive view from the perspective of the participants as to why principals were leaving their posts and what methods school districts could implement to reduce turnover. Identifying the varying needs of support that exist within one group of principals at different stages of their careers may provide school districts with insight into potential retention methods. In the past few years, principal turnover in the Loysburg School District has been increasing. In the past year alone, principal turnover in the Loysburg School District was more than double the national average. A case study of this district will provide an in-depth look into a challenging context in hopes of reducing turnover and providing continuity for the school community.

4.0   RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

This case study focused on identifying why principals are leaving the Loysburg School District at an atypical rate and what methods may be instituted to reduce principal turnover. The one-on-one interviews sought to identify patterns and reasons for principal departure. Furthermore, interview participants identified supporting mechanisms that may help to increase the retention rate. By purposefully focusing on why Loysburg principals leave their positions, the researcher may identify issues that influence retention.

Twelve principals from the Loysburg School District participated in one-on-one interviews that took approximately one hour each. Each principal served the Loysburg School District for a period of time between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2016. The twelve principals possess various professional backgrounds from both the public and private sectors, have a range of years in public education (between eight and 39 years, with an average of 23 years), and have a range of years in administration (one to 27 years, with an average of 12 years). Additionally, it is important to note that some of the principals interviewed had left the district prior to the multiple years of central administrator turnover described in Table 3; some were employed prior to that period of turnover (and worked through part or all of that turnover), and some were hired during the years of turnover.

The principals were first asked to describe their relationships with various stakeholders (board members, superintendent, assistant superintendent, teachers, students, parents, and

community members) and how those relationships affected their thought processes about staying or leaving. The second portion of the interviews asked the principals to share and explain the factors that influenced them to leave or contemplate leaving. The third portion of the interviews asked the principals to identify and explain the methods or tactics they believed the Loysburg School District could implement to reduce turnover.

After spending time with each principal, listening to the recordings several times, reviewing my notes, and rereading the transcripts, I believe the participants were honest and forthright as they shared their thoughts and experiences about their time with the Loysburg School District. There was a distinct feeling of hope from the principals that sharing their experiences, knowledge, and feelings could result in reducing principal turnover in the district. Principal Davis[12] expressed, "Loysburg School District is where I got my start. I hope that there will be a true reflection on the direction (of the school district) and treatment of employees. . . ." Again, I deeply appreciated the soul searching and heartfelt responses from each principal. Moreover, I believe change will occur in the Loysburg School District if the information is received with an open mind in order to inform planning and policy regarding principal retention.

As the story unfolded there were distinct similarities along with important differences among the principals, both in their relationships with stakeholders and how each participant felt that principal turnover could be reduced. As the principals shared information about their relationships with stakeholders, many of the principals provided examples or shared personal stories to express their connection to particular groups of stakeholders. While the principals shared their stories, a wide range of emotions were projected through their actions and voices. A principal's eyes filled with tears of happiness in describing personal connections with students;

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[12] A pseudonym was utilized for each interviewed principal.

another principal appeared sad, with head and eyelids lowered while describing how the numerous changes to the position resulted in a loss of joy and passion for the job, and yet another expressed a sense of fulfillment from stakeholder support. As each individual story has validity and substance independent of the others, I attempted to capture a view of the principalship in the Loysburg School District from 2004 through June 2016 in an effort to pinpoint why principal turnover is occurring and potential methods to reduce the turnover rate. The interviews produced a thread that weaved in and out of multiple interviews and connected many principals' stories. Themes emerged across several interviews, providing insight into why principal turnover occurs. Furthermore, anomalies occurred and reminded me that each principal is an individual. While there were some outlier responses unrelated to emergent themes, those responses are still meaningful and merit listening and further exploration.

4.1   WHY? WHY ARE LOYSBURG PRINCIPALS LEAVING?

The Loysburg School District has experienced a high rate of principal turnover. Discovering why turnover is happening may provide valuable information to central administration and board members as they attempt to reduce principal turnover in the future. The national average for principal turnover hovers around 20 percent annually. In recent years, the Loysburg School District has seen principal turnover surpass the national average. Information on why turnover occurs may help the school board and superintendent develop initiatives to reduce turnover.

Each principal was asked, "What factors influenced you to leave or contemplate leaving the district?" A variety of themes emerged from interviews with 12 Loysburg principals. A few identified one specific reason for leaving the Loysburg School District, while others discussed

multiple reasons for thinking about leaving. Table 18 outlines reasons "why" turnover is happening in the Loysburg School District and the number of principals who mentioned that specific reason. It is important to reiterate that the 12 participants worked for a period of time between July 1, 2004 and June 30, 2016 and some have left the district while others remain employed there.

Table 18. Themes in Interviews with Principals

Emerging Themes from the Interviews	Number of Principals
Lack of respect and support	7
Relationship with central administration	7
Increasing number of job tasks	4
Imbalance between personal and professional time	3
Other employment opportunities	3
Personal reasons	2
Lack of professional development opportunities	2
Low pay	2
Student behaviors	2
Stress	2
Community	1
Lack of enjoyment on the job	1
Potential pension crisis	1

Many of the themes are intertwined. For example, some principals expressed high levels of stress from additional job tasks while others shared experiences of an imbalance between their personal and professional lives due to increased job tasks. However, several topics were mentioned by only a few principals; those topics are worthy of further investigation. For

example, three principals spoke about other employment opportunities. Principal Peterson stated, "I contemplated furthering my career so that I could continue growing and learning." Another principal described how the pension crisis combined with a desire to grow through professional development affected the decision to leave. Principal Anderson elaborated:

I enjoyed being a principal. We were doing a great job. I could have done it for a couple more years. What worried me was the laws being changed for the pension at the state level; that really worried and concerned me. So I started looking at what pension I would have and what the process was and it really wasn't bad; it was doable, so I thought with this pension question and with everything else being equal, I thought ok, maybe this is the time, while I'm on a high, maybe this is the time to get out and do some other things with my education. When I think back, maybe if I was given something else as far as developing my professional growth, I wouldn't have left as soon as I did.

Principal Anderson projected a concern about the potential pension crisis in the state of Pennsylvania and, while it appears to be the driving force behind his leaving, it isn't the only factor. Principal Anderson expressed the desire to grow professionally through professional development opportunities. While only two principals mentioned the professional development as an issue (see Table 18 above), several identified professional development as a tactic to reduce turnover (which will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.3). In fact, professional development was one of the topics mentioned most often by Loysburg principals as a method to reduce turnover.

All questions were open-ended (see Appendix D: Interview Questions); thus, principals shared their thoughts and feelings without a list of topics or ideas that might influence their

thought processes on the topic. The emerging themes mentioned most often are explored in the following sections.

4.1.1   Loysburg principals and feelings of disrespect and lack of support

A recurring theme expressed by seven principals concerned feelings about being disrespected and unsupported.   Examination of the principals' descriptions provided insight into their thoughts as they gave examples and shared stories from their experiences. The statements from the principals indicate feelings of being disrespected and unsupported. Principal Williams, for example, directly stated:

> I felt unsupported; I felt that I was in the trenches all alone and, when I reached out to the assistant superintendent and special education director for help, I was either turned down or ignored or told to figure it out on my own. That is fine because I am usually able do that, but I was taken aback when addressed in that way. I find it very overwhelming and difficult to complete daily tasks by being the only person in the building who is in charge without support like that of an assistant principal or dean of students. We have a guidance counselor, but their job is not to be an assistant principal but to be the guidance counselor. I was going home burnt out on a daily basis.

> Principal Thomas expressed similar feelings:

> I felt as though there was a lack of respect, a lack of support for decision making as a professional. You have been put into this position to make good decisions and use your decision-making process to be able to run your building. I felt that that had went away after the first couple years.

> Further, Principal Davis added:

The lack of respect from administration, the feeling of never being good enough, the feeling of always being wrong, never having a bone thrown my way. Being surrounded by people that were sad about their jobs; I didn't want to be surrounded by that and then think back and say, what did I just do for the past 30 years.

The three principals express an overwhelming sense of sadness, feelings of isolation and dread from a position of authority - and in a field that should be full of joy. Principal Williams used the phrase "in the trenches all alone." The phrase signifies a sense of weariness, emphasized by Principal Williams expressing a lack of support from central administrators along with a feeling of exhaustion from fighting all alone. Additionally, there is a desire to be recognized, yet a void of recognition and reinforcement. Principals describe a feeling of seclusion and ask, "Do I really want to continue in this capacity?"

4.1.2 Central administration leadership and principal turnover

Another emerging theme expressed by several principals involved the effects of continuous change and transition within central administration staff (see Table 19 below). The principals describe the uneasiness they experienced with frequent leadership change. Principal Johnson, for example, explained how these changes affected his[13] motivation:

The continuous leadership change over a short period of time brought about numerous changes to my job. Also, I felt there was no fun in the job anymore, as it wasn't about children anymore. I didn't get excited to go to work; I am sure that I didn't appear

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[13] The pronoun "he" is utilized to represent all principals and others mentioned during the interviews to protect each person's identity.

excited because I didn't feel excited. I have often said, if the former administration were still there my feelings would be different. So, when I say there wasn't any fun left to it, there just wasn't any joy; it was about completing tasks and turning in paperwork. Teachers were in quicksand and I care about them so much that their quicksand became mine and I was suffocating in the quicksand.

Principal Clark spoke about the impact of one particular administrator. Clark's response is just as direct but perhaps angrier than Principal Johnson's expressions:

I think the biggest factor was the Assistant Superintendent; I wanted to leave because I had had it. The Assistant Superintendent's lack of respect, condescending attitudes, coupled with the constant act of pitting the principals against one another, was unbearable. When you know that you're good at your job, please don't think that I'm bragging or being pompous at all, it is hard to deal with constant negativity.

Principal Miller also provided examples of how the changes in leadership affected his thought process to leave the district:

We have had so many changes. Some of the requests and the timeframes that they [central administrators] want things completed in are unrealistic. I think they [central administrators] forget that there is one of us and one secretary and it's difficult to get things done because there is no other help. It's just you and your secretary and a secretary can only do so much. Unless you've lived the life of an elementary principal, I don't know that you fully understand it. I don't know how you address it, but if I could leave for a job paying close to what I am making now and only have 300 kids and 12 teachers why wouldn't I?

Principals expressed how the continuous turnover in central administration affected their thoughts on leaving.   The statements above come from interviews with principals who have or had multiple years of experience in education.   As the principals shared their experiences in different ways, it appears that a common theme was not feeling valued by the new leadership. Perhaps if the principals felt heard, if their knowledge and expertise was sought by the new administration and the history of the district was appreciated, then the principals may have felt appreciated and valued.   Furthermore, if the new central administrators worked collaboratively with the principals; a team approach could have been established in the school district, benefitting the students served in Loysburg.

4.1.3   Increased work load and principal turnover

The third factor influencing principals in the Loysburg School District is the increased work load.   Principals spoke of additional tasks being assigned without anything being removed.   In the article, "Burnout Among Elementary School Principals," Combs et al. (2009) indicated that many principals in his study identified numerous job responsibilities as a reason for turnover.

In addition to the effect central administration turnover had on the principals, it also appears as though each new central administrator added responsibilities to the principals and made significant changes to many established processes: this situation left more questions than answers. Principal Johnson describes an exorbitant amount of change in a short amount of time: "He [the assistant superintendent] brought in too many things too quickly; I watched more teachers cry in nine months of working than in my entire career, because people could not keep up, including me."   Principal Johnson describes a scene in which employees felt completely

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overwhelmed by the additional responsibilities and an inability to complete tasks, which unsurprisingly caused employees to break down.

Along with increased demands comes additional time principals must commit to their work. Many of the interview participants provided insight into their perceptions of the principalship and their thoughts on creating balance between their professional and personal lives.

Principal Miller, for example, discussed the effect of increased workload on his state of mind:

> Honestly there is a lot of days that I feel like I can't do my job. Not for lack of trying and not for lack of knowledge. It's just impossible; there is just too much. I have said it numerous times; I just keep waiting to get fired. Not because I'm not trying. I just feel like I am missing something or I can't keep up. It's not that I don't want to do them [work tasks]; I just can't get to them. It's not because I am sitting here [at my desk]. It's because I am putting out this fire or that fire, or I'm dealing with an irate parent. There are so many managerial things that need done that it eats into that time to be a true educational leader. If you don't do the managerial things, you will never get to the educational things. So you have to focus and do those things [managerial tasks] and whatever time you have left you can deal with the other aspect of the job, which should be the main part of the job.

In contrast to Principal Miller's description of daily overwhelm, Principal Brown discussed one specific issue, school overcrowding:

> Not only did we totally fill classrooms, we placed the poorest students in the city together. Problems from the neighborhood were carried into school. The issues they

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[students] faced outside of school impacted their learning in the classroom. The overcrowding of school was a big thing and the lack of support made it overwhelming. It didn't matter what I did every day the job wasn't any better. Teachers were feeling the stress of overcrowding, discipline issues and a feeling that no one was listening or willing to help. It didn't matter what I did everything remained the same, there were so many kids and no extra support. I always felt as if I was on my own.

Principal Johnson cited a specific example pertaining to work and family life: "The demands - it became a 24/7 job; still to this day I remember receiving emails over Easter weekend. I was with family and emails came through from the boss that needed done and we were off." Collectively, the principals expressed feelings of drowning in work tasks and how the addition of tasks created an imbalance between their personal and professional lives. Principal Johnson continued, "The new leadership [central administrators from 2013 to 2016] doesn't prioritize family when we're actually off on contractual holidays. I did value my family and wanted to just be done with a job that was no longer fulfilling me professionally or personally." Identifying and maintaining a balance between a principal's personal and professional lives may reduce stress and reduce principal turnover (Combs et al., 2009; School Leaders Network, 2014).

The excerpts from the interviews illustrate the imbalance principals experience between their personal and professional lives. Still, there was a desire to do their job and do it well. Their responses validate the need to examine the work load principals are facing and find ways to support them in the position. A significant part of principal workload is communication with stakeholders. The next section explores the relationship Loysburg principals have with various stakeholders and the degree to which those relationships affected principals thought processes to leave or stay in the district.

4.2   STAKEHOLDERS

Although the thrust of this research pertained to why principal turnover was happening at such a high rate in the Loysburg School District, other related topics emerged from the interviews. These topics include principals' relationships with various stakeholders, including board members, superintendents, other administrators, teachers, parents, and community members.

The questions pertaining to stakeholders sought to determine the effect those relationships had on principals when they contemplated leaving or did leave their positions. The principals were asked to describe their relationships with each stakeholder or stakeholder group. Additionally, the principals were asked to share the evolution of those relationships. Furthermore, the principals were asked to expound upon the depth of those relationships and the effect, if any, relationships had on each principal's thought process to stay in or leave the principalship.

4.2.1   Board members

The School Board in the Loysburg School District is comprised of nine elected members, each elected for a four-year term. Four seats are up for election during one election cycle; two years later, the other five seats are up. Board membership has changed over the period in which the interviewed principals worked for the Loysburg School District. Each principal responded to the following prompt: "Describe your relationship with the School Board of Directors from the school district where you are/were the principal and how that relationship affected your thought process to stay or leave."

Overall, the majority of the principals described having no relationship or minimal contact with the school board. Principal Clark, for example, explained:

I truly did not have a lot of dealing with the school board; I just tried to be cordial with them and they did not have an effect [regarding leaving or staying] on me one way or the other, honestly. I have not had a lot of interaction with them. We don't have a lot of interaction with them here.

Principal Young's reflections were similar:

Most of the dealings with the school board were by invitation. We were forbidden to go to the board members with issues, specifically public. It was not a position in which I interacted; I dealt with the superintendent and assistant superintendent. Our direction came from the superintendent and assistant superintendent.

Principal Young asked me to repeat the second part of the question about the effect the relationship had on his thought process to stay or leave, and he replied, "Neither, really it was ambivalent. I don't think I would use that as a reason to leave or stay."

In sum, 11 of the 12 principals said that the Loysburg School Board had no effect on their thought process to stay or leave the district. Principal Thomas described his mixed experience with the board:

I personally never really had an intimate relationship with the school board. I felt like I had a good working relationship if they came to the building. I never really had an opportunity. I was removed from the board. I remember there being a phone call asking why I left, so I shared. Perhaps if I felt like I had a better relationship, I could have gone to them with my concerns, to share what I needed professionally and we could have

found a way to resolve this, then I could have found a way to stay. They didn't affect my decision to stay or leave.

While Principal Thomas expressed concern about his relationship with the school board, his conclusions were similar to those of other respondents. Relationships with school boards did not influence principal departures.

4.2.2 Superintendents

The Superintendent position in the Loysburg School District turned over during the time frame of this study. Following the 2013 retirement of a superintendent who had a lengthy tenure, the superintendent position changed several times from the spring of 2013 through June 2016. Table 19 outlines the tenure of Loysburg superintendents from 1984 through 2016.

Table 19. Employment Timeframe of Loysburg Superintendents

Time Frame	Position
1984-1985 School Year through Spring 2013	Superintendent
Spring 2013 through June 2013	Interim Superintendent
July 2013 through Spring 2015	Superintendent
Spring 2015 through June 2015	Interim Superintendent
July 2015 through Spring 2016	Superintendent
Spring 2016 through June 2016	Interim Superintendent

Participants in this study were asked to describe their relationships with each superintendent. All of the interview participants were asked to respond to the following: "Describe your relationship with the Superintendent from the school district where you are/were the principal and how that relationship affected your thought process to stay or leave." The participants were asked to answer this question for each superintendent they reported to during their principalship.

Nine of the 12 principals worked for the first superintendent. Eight of the nine expressed that the relationship with the superintendent did not affect their thought process to stay or leave the Loysburg School District. One of the nine considered leaving due to feeling unsupported. Ultimately the principal did not allow the relationship with the superintendent to affect the decision to stay or leave.

Seven of the 12 principals worked for the second superintendent. All seven of the interviewed principals said that the relationship did not influence their thought process on staying in or leaving the district.

Eight of the 12 principals worked for the third superintendent. Five of the eight said their relationship with the superintendent did not affect their thought process on staying or leaving. Three of the eight principals shared that the relationship affected their thought process about leaving. In the end, however, this relationship was not a deciding factor in leaving or considering leaving the district.

While the majority of participants argued that the superintendent at any given moment did not influence their thought process on staying or leaving, several described a challenging relationship. Principal Johnson provides an example:

I believe that that had an impact on me. I had one superintendent for much of my career in the district. I found the first superintendent to be a genius, a visionary, a supporter, and a leader that believed in his team and let us do our jobs. Then that leader left and there were new leaders over the course of the next three years. The new leaders were micromanagers of the principals and their skill sets. For example, the new leadership would often say nothing had been done correctly before. Implying that they were there to fix things, which was hurtful because we had been an excellent district. My job became a ten-hour day in the office to complete managerial tasks, thus spending less time on instructional leadership responsibilities and children.

Principal Miller echoed the themes expressed by Principal Johnson:

I thought there were times that this just wasn't worth it, I don't feel appreciated, I feel beat down. I just didn't feel that there was any concern for us [principals] or wanting to help us. It just always seemed like he wasn't there for us. He wasn't approachable and I couldn't go to him for assistance or help.

Principal Anderson's reflections were similar, but he affirmed that the relationship would not make him more likely to leave:

It was hot and cold; there were days that I felt really loved and there were days that I thought he didn't care for me much. Of course, I take responsibility for this, too. Mostly I knew that I respected him and I knew that he had knowledge. I didn't feel like I could share everything with him, I felt like I could share more with the assistant superintendent. I did not feel as confident approaching the superintendent. I felt stifled, but I wasn't going to leave. I didn't feel like I had anywhere for my ideas to go; I was a good student and I did as I was told.

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The passages above are representative of the majority of the principals interviewed. Some of the principals expressed concern about their connection with the superintendent during the three years in which the district experienced superintendent turnover, but it was not significant enough for the principal to leave or look for employment elsewhere. So while principals described challenging relationships with the superintendent, they also said it wasn't a determining factor for leaving the Loysburg School District. Principal Young said, "That is what superintendents do [referring to being held accountable]; it was not a reason for me to leave the district." However, the strained relationships described in the interviews indicate a need to cultivate better relationships between principals and the superintendent.

4.2.3   Assistant Superintendents

The Assistant Superintendent position in the Loysburg School District changed multiple times from 2009 (with the Secondary Assistant Superintendent position) and 2010 (with the Elementary Assistant Superintendent position). Additionally, there were points between 2009 and 2016 when one assistant superintendent covered both the elementary and secondary programs. I asked participants to describe their relationships with the assistant superintendent(s) by responding to the following statement: "Describe your relationship with the Assistant Superintendent from the school district where you are/were the principal and how that relationship affected your thought process to stay or leave."

Prior to the continuous turnover in the assistant superintendent position (2009/2010 through 2016), the majority of the principals said this relationship did not affect their thought processes on leaving.

Principal Anderson, in fact, described a very positive relationship:

I had a great relationship with the Assistant Superintendent. The Assistant Superintendent was the reason I was successful. He mentored me, he would answer any questions, he supported me, and he reached out to me on a personal and professional level. He really was the reason for my success.

A different principal, in contrast, contemplated leaving because of the relationship with the assistant superintendent. Principal Harris explained, "I didn't feel like the assistant superintendent pulled us together. It was more like keep us apart, divide and conquer. I don't think the assistant superintendent wanted to hear anything that I wanted to say."

Principal Young expressed gratitude: "I learned more from him than I learned from anyone in education. Leaving was a tough decision. He [the assistant superintendent] encouraged me to move on and take the next step. I wanted to leave, but I didn't want to leave." Principal Johnson extended those sentiments by saying, "I still idolize, admire, and respect him [the assistant superintendent] 100 percent to this day. I yearned to learn from the former superintendent and assistant superintendent."

Generally, there was little to no effect on principal turnover based on the relationship prior to the years of transition in the assistant superintendent position. However, the multiple years in which the assistant superintendent(s) position was in a state of turnover did affect principal turnover. Below are a few statements from the principal interviews that provide insight into how the relationship with an assistant superintendent affected principal turnover in the district.

Principal Brown described the relationship he had with the assistant superintendent:

He [the assistant superintendent] asked me to do things that no one [my colleagues] else had to do. His leadership is the reason I started looking to other districts and putting my

resume out. His style was being a bully. In public he was one thing, but in other environments he was crass, he was so unprofessional. He said unprofessional things to kids.

Principal Miller provided another perspective, less focused on relationship dynamics and more on job expectations:

Some of the requests and timeframes to complete tasks are unrealistic. I think they [assistant superintendents] forget that there is just one of us here. There is just one of us and one secretary and it's difficult to get things done because there is no other help. It's just you and your secretary, and a secretary can only do so much. Unless you've lived the life of an elementary principal, I don't know that you fully understand it. In this district, I don't know that it's that way everywhere. They [central administrators] preach that we [principals] need to be the educational leader in our building, you can't because you are the manager. You are the manager, you are putting fires out, and you are getting calls to attend meetings out of the building. That leaves no one here, but at the secondary level there is another administrator in the building.

Principal Johnson spoke of the continuous change and how the relationship with one superintendent affected motivation:

I lost respect, I started to lose heart, [and] I started to lose gumption. To be able to work for somebody that I knew, I knew more than he did. I had to work for and listen to someone that was a joke, not credible, he did not make sound decisions, he thought the district for the past 40 years needed changed. It left me to feel like I didn't have a voice in a school I had run [for many years].

The continuous changes from the multiple transitions in the assistant superintendent position left many principals feeling marginalized and disheartened. As principals described this period of time, I heard how they felt disregarded by the assistant superintendent, particularly after working under leadership who made them feel valued and respected. Principal Williams shared an interaction he had with the assistant superintendent and director of special education, "When I reached out to the assistant superintendent and special education director for help, I was either turned down or ignored or told to figure it out on my own." Principal Williams' words reinforce the feeling of isolation felt by him and other principals. During these transitional years, principals investigated other employment opportunities, pursued positions in education elsewhere, or left the Loysburg School District.

4.2.4   Teachers, parents, students and community members

Each principal was asked a question pertaining to each stakeholder (i.e. teachers, parents, students, and community members) in an effort to discover if the relationship influenced the principal to stay or leave their principal position. For the most part, the principals described positive, productive, and friendly relationships with teachers, parents, students, and community members. In fact, as I observed the principals respond to questions about teachers, parents, students, and community members, most principals had a positive shift in their facial expressions and posture. They leaned forward and their eyes were brighter, their tone was happier, and they smiled. In the following sections, principals express their thoughts and feelings about their relationships with stakeholders.

4.2.4.1 Teachers

Principals shared their connections to the teachers in the Loysburg School District and how those relationships affected their thoughts to stay or leave.

Principal Thomas expressed the connection he had with his teachers and the positive school culture that emerged as a result:

I think that was the most difficult part of making the decision (to leave or potentially leave) because the time we had together, we worked on building a culture. I wanted people to come and share with me, and I felt like I didn't have that same relationship with my own administration. So it was almost like a counter-culture that was happening. I was trying to promote something, but yet that was not the kind of culture I was living through from a leadership perspective with my administration.

Similarly, Principal Clark shared his journey with teachers:

That was probably one of the most difficult decisions I had, because I loved my teachers. You build relationships with them, you work for them, you work with them, and I was able to move them in a positive way to affect their thought process on children and putting children first.

These two principals reflect the experiences of other principals and their connection to the teachers. All the principals expressed positive relationships with teachers, and a few principals made statements about having difficult relationships with a few teachers (but also expressing that being in a leadership position means having difficult conversations that can elicit mixed feelings between individuals).

4.2.4.2 Parents

Principals described their rapport with parents in the Loysburg School District and how those relationships affected their thoughts on staying or leaving.

Principal Peterson, like most respondents, expresses his interactions with parents as positive:

I have always had positive interactions with parents. I think parents have always found me to be helpful, knowledgeable and to get things right for kids. Some didn't always like to follow the rules, but in the end I think even the parents that didn't agree with some of the things, would say that I was fair.

Principal Young similarly describes the positive communications he had with parents:

I think I had a good relationship with parents. My feeling was always that everyone is tough on the phone or behind the steering wheel, but when you get them in and talk to them face-to-face, you could verbally disarm them. I try to see it from their side and I think they appreciate meeting with me about things. In the end, they respected me, I certainly grew in the position over time and I didn't want to have a combative relationship with parents. I just really wanted to be the person that they [parents] could come to when there were issues in the building.

Principal Peterson and Principal Young reflect the feelings of other principals and their connection to parents. All the principals expressed positive relationships with teachers, and a few principals shared experiences with parents that were challenging; however, those difficult interactions comprised a small percentage in comparison to the other stories principals shared about their relationships with parents.

4.2.4.3 Students

Principals described their connection and joy with students in the Loysburg School District and how those relationships affected their thought processes to leave or stay. The principals who left the Loysburg School District spoke of how their connection to students was a concern for them once they decided to leave. There was a true happiness in the faces and voices of principals as they talked about their students. In fact, a few of the principals needed to take a moment when they began to share their stories about students because they became emotional, sometimes to the point of tears.

I asked the principals to describe their relationships with students from the Loysburg School District and how those relationships affected their thought process on staying or leaving. Principal Clark took a deep breath, waited a minute, and shared, "That was probably the most difficult, I'm going to tear up now." Principal Clark went on to share several personal stories about students and working to make a difference for each one of them. As I conducted the interview, I could feel the genuine care and concern Principal Clark had for students as well as the desire to make positive changes in their lives.

As I read the question pertaining to students, Principal Miller smiled and, in a dynamic tone, said, "That's why we do this; you walk down the halls and get hugs from the kids; they get excited to see you." After Principal Miller shared a story about a student, I asked, "Would you consider students a driving force for you to stay?" Principal Miller emphatically stated, "Oh my, yes, them and the teachers, that's the reason I am here."

As a whole, the principals shared their positive connection with students. Even though all principals shared positive stories about students, a few expressed concern about student

behaviors and the need for additional manpower to meet the needs of students. Ultimately, the positive stories outweighed the negative ones.

4.2.4.4 Community members

Principals consistently described positive relationships with members of the Loysburg community and how that relationship did not affect their thoughts to stay or leave.

Principal Thomas shares the connections he had with various community agencies:

We [the school staff] had a lot of wonderful initiatives happening at [our school] through the parents and outreach through the community. I felt that we had a good rapport with agencies and resources. I felt comfortable to reach out knowing that there were supports.

Principal Young described his relationships with and his respect for community members from multiple schools:

Each school had its own set of community members that were involved in the school. I had a great relationship with all of them and then the parent group, the PTO, they would bring in community members, so there was a good relationship. It's tough to leave the principal's job because of the parents and community members. I was connected with and befriended many of them, but it did not affect my decision to stay or leave.

Overall, principals shared joys and positive connections with teachers, students, parents, and community members in the Loysburg School District. It was thought-provoking to witness the change in principals' demeanor as they answered questions pertaining to teachers, students, parents and community members.   In the end, the relationships between principals and community members did not influence principal turnover in the Loysburg School District; in fact, the relationship may have been helpful to retention.

4.3   HOW? HOW CAN TURNOVER BE REDUCED IN LOYSBURG?

Loysburg principals were asked to identify methods or tactics they thought might reduce principal turnover in the Loysburg School District. The question, "What methods or tactics could the school district implement in order to retain principals?" made principals step back and reflect. I observed principals ponder this question more than any other. Some sat back and paused for a few minutes before sharing ideas, while others raised their hand to their face and took a moment before sharing. The answers were diverse in nature, yet two ideas were mentioned in several interviews – professional development and validation. Again, the questions were asked in an open-ended format; principals were not given a list of ideas or options to select from when responding to the questions. In addition to these two dominant themes, other responses included building relationships between principals and central administrators, defining a clear role for the principal, developing a clear district-wide vision, creating open lines of communication, and addressing compensation and manpower shortages.

Principal Anderson provides an example of the most frequently voiced themes in this part of the interview. A desire to learn and grow as a professional, as well as to receive support from superiors, are at the heart of his response:

> I would have loved more professional development as a leader. Central administrators should let principals know how they are valued, let them know when they do a good job. Just be supportive; that doesn't mean that you have to agree, but have a system set up so that you can communicate back and forth. I felt alone; let them [principals] know that no matter what you tell me, that you are going to be supported unless it is a breach of contract. Principals want success, so trust that they will do their job; I don't know what mechanism can be put in place for that one, but it is a big one.

Principal Thomas shared similar views:

I think principals need to be offered professional development; you need to have avenues

to grow as a group and grow collaboratively. Also, you have to have avenues that are

crafted for an individual person. A person needs to feel like they're an adult learner.

Alternatives need to be offered. You also need to encourage and be supported by your

administration. You need to feel respected. This idea that you have to be at work at 7:30

and leave at 4. If I as a principal stayed up late and got my work done from home, my

start time should be when students are on site. I am a professional; it is about managing

your responsibilities and using your own judgment and discretion to complete the

essential functions of the job, and however you choose to do that you shouldn't have to

be somewhere from 7:30 to 4. I think that as a principal we need to give people the

professional courtesy to be a professional and be able to use their time wisely. Whether

it's to leave at 3:40 every Wednesday so that I can take a class without somebody telling

you "no you cannot"; that to me is micromanaging an individual and I don't think it

allows them to be a professional; I think that it strips away a little bit of that

professionalism.

Principal Harris shared Principal Thomas' sentiment on professional development and the

giving of worthy praise:

I think a weakness is the lack of professional development. How can I help teachers

move forward? I think I have to be an inspiration to them in order for them to be the best

they can be. I need the training, I need the learning, I need the knowledge, I need to be

the kind of leader that is a life-long learner that carries that and willingly wants that.

Praise them for their good work, instill the joy in them (principals) that they hope to

instill in other people.

Principal Smith emphasized the need to be supported:

I don't think the current situation validates the principals; I think validation produces a

feeling of worth and individuals work harder. Currently, they don't let us know that we

are worth anything, the rewards from being a principal were self-generated by interacting

with kids. The kids let me know that I was appreciated. Calming an irate parent and

letting them know we are on the same team is validation, but I produced that scenario. I

think that if people know their worth from upper management would help retain

principals.

The question, "What methods or tactics could the school district implement in order to

retain principals?" solicited varying responses from the principals. The four responses from

Principal Anderson, Thomas, Harris, and Smith capture the two most frequent emerging themes

– professional development and support. This finding is not surprising given the scholarship that

cites the importance of professional development (Matlach, 2015; Wood et al., 2013) and support

(Alsbury & Hackmann, 2006; Celoria & Roberson, 2015; Combs et al., 2009) for principal

retention.

4.4   CONCLUSION

The information presented above synthesizes the findings from interviews with Loysburg School

District principals. The data exposed why the Loysburg principals contemplated leaving or left

the school district. Furthermore, the interviews uncovered potential ways the turnover may be reduced in the Loysburg School District.

The Loysburg principals tend to leave or consider leaving the district due to problems with central administrators - specifically, in terms of additional job responsibilities and relationships with leadership. Overall, the principals thought about leaving or left because they felt unsupported and disrespected, felt a lack of connectedness to central administration during the years of transition, and received an increase in responsibilities. These three emerging themes surfaced among a myriad of others from the open-ended interviews. As a follow-up to "why" principals are leaving, interview participants shared ways to potentially reduce the turnover. The principals made several suggestions, but the two that were mentioned most were professional development and support.

This case study provides insight into principal turnover in the Loysburg School District by interviewing current and past principals. Even though this data may be limited in nature, the Loysburg School District may utilize the results as a springboard to make changes toward reducing principal turnover.

5.0   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The principalship in the Loysburg School District has experienced a phenomenon in recent years – a high rate of turnover, one that surpasses the national average of 20 percent. This case study provides insight into principal turnover in one district from the perspective of school principals.

The primary focus of this case study was to identify why principals have left or investigated leaving the Loysburg School District. Additionally, this case study elicited potential solutions Loysburg principals thought could reduce principal turnover. The data produced by the one-on-one interviews was thought-provoking and insightful.

I utilized a qualitative approach with semi-structured one-on-one interviews with 12 Loysburg principals. Each question or statement was structured in an open-ended way, giving each participant the opportunity to share individual stories and ideas. In this study, grounded theory was implemented in order to allow themes to emerge from the data. Limitations exist with one-on-one interviews. In this case, the data was limited to the participants in the study who have experience in one particular district. Their experiences may not be generalizable to principals outside of this district. The conclusions drawn from this case study come from analyzing, identifying, classifying, and interpreting information from this group of principals.

5.1 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT WHY PRINCIPAL TURNOVER OCCURRED IN THE LOYSBURG SCHOOL DISTRICT

This case study investigated why principals left or sought to leave the Loysburg School District. Multiple themes emerged from the data: lack of respect and support, relationships with central administrators, increasing number of job tasks, imbalance between personal and professional time, other employment opportunities, personal reasons, lack of professional development opportunities, low pay, student behaviors, stress, lack of community support, lack of enjoyment on the job, and the potential state pension crisis. Even though thirteen themes emerged from the data, three themes were referenced most frequently: lack of respect and support, relationships with central administration, and increased job tasks.

The principals' perspectives about lack of respect and support as well as their relationship with central administration indicate a shift in the climate and culture of the school district in the past few years. Analysis of interview transcripts indicates a need for Loysburg central administrators to focus on the climate and culture within the school district, specifically with the principal group. Much of what we do in education revolves around numbers and data – collecting and analyzing measurable data such as standardized test scores, grades, attendance, and the like – but as I think about the principal interviews, their frustration does not come from numbers. There appears to be a relational piece missing between central administration and the principals. I am reminded of a statement in the book, *Shaping School Culture,* (2016), that captures the contrast between the measurable and the immeasurable elements of education:

> As a US Department of Education spokesperson remarked in 2007, "If it can't be measured, we're not interested in it". This attitude is diametrically opposite to [Albert]

Einstein's notion that "not everything can be counted and most things that can be counted probably don't count" (p. 6).

Levels (federal, state, local) of accountability have affected school climate and culture; however, not everything principals do is actually measureable. Many of the problems the Loysburg principals identify are also not quantifiable. Loysburg principals have expressed feelings of isolation and despair; conceivably, principals are searching for respect in a positive environment when seeking new positions. I suggest that the Loysburg superintendent and school board focus on rebuilding the climate and culture with the principals. Relational activities may strengthen the bonds between and among individuals. Table 20 identifies various team building activities ideas to address the climate and culture .

Table 20. Ideas to rebuild the climate and culture

Team Building Activities	Ideas
Refuel the health and wellness of the team	• Hike or bike on local trails • Visit a spa
Retreat day(s) off-campus	• Play an afternoon round of golf • Take a riverboat cruise
Serve your community together	• Participate in Relay for Life • Contribute to a local cleanup day

Deal and Peterson (2016) affirm, "Contrary to common misconceptions…one thing is crystal clear: *the culture of an enterprise plays a dominant role in exemplary performance"* (p. 2). I believe team building activities will engage and connect principals and central administrators beyond the schoolhouse, strengthening bonds while refueling each team member. Being a principal is difficult and challenging; principals in this study cited a need for a supportive culture.

Another idea to improve the climate and culture would be to host a keynote speaker at the beginning of the school year, one who focuses on fostering a positive environment. The superintendent and assistant superintendents may utilize the message from the keynote speaker as the focus for the school year in order to build relationships and improve the climate and culture. Such an event, with follow-up during the year, could provide one way to demonstrate a unified, cohesive effort to positively influence principals' work environment.

Furthermore, the Administrator Compensation Plan (ACT 93), an agreement between the school district and principal group, may be a valuable instrument in principal retention . Looking forward in an effort to make positive change as well as create stability, the ACT 93 group may want to incorporate talking points focused on retention and the topics that emerged from the study. Consultation between principals and the school district may be beneficial for both groups.

As the researcher, hearing the stories in isolation and then analyzing them collectively provided insight into why principals are seeking to leave or have left the Loysburg School District. There is an appearance of chaos within the district as central administration has turned over multiple times in the past few years, thus hindering continuity in the district. In fact, as the data for this study was collected through June of 2016, the superintendent and both assistant superintendents turned over. Additionally, a sense of negativity may have stemmed from the chaos. These findings have the potential to generate a sense of urgency toward building a positive climate and culture for principals.

The two themes the Loysburg principals most frequently referenced included lack of respect and support and a negative relationship with central administrators. I believe if the superintendent, other central administrators, and the school board as well as the principals work

to build a positive climate and culture, principal retention will increase. Additionally, a level of ownership and responsibility falls to the principals. One must take accountability for oneself and find avenues to voice concerns and search for ways to openly communicate with central administrators. As leaders, principals solve problems on a daily basis for the schools they serve. It is imperative that principals utilize problem solving skills to move beyond the school site and work to better relationships across the school district.

The third theme that emerged most often regarding principal turnover includes increased job tasks. This particular theme also coincided with an imbalance between a principal's professional and personal life. Combs et al. (2009) researched principal stress and found that principals leave due to the immense list of job tasks and the inability to complete those tasks on time. Principal Miller captured that sentiment: "Honestly there is a lot of days that I feel like I can't do my job. Not for lack of trying and not for lack of knowledge. It's just impossible; there is just too much."

I recommend that the Loysburg School District review the principal's job description, identifying goals and tasks needed to reach the district goals. This process should include the superintendent, assistant superintendents, and the principals. One of the participants in the study spoke of his desire to be an instructional leader, but never had time because of paperwork and managerial tasks. If the superintendent, assistant superintendents, and principals work collaboratively in an open forum, they may be able to identify time consuming tasks that are unnecessary, redundant, and/or able to be completed by another department. Additionally, the principals may identify tasks that one person may be able to complete and share with the collective group rather than have each principal complete tasks independently. For example, newsletters include similar articles, and one principal may enjoy the task of writing and creating

a newsletter for other schools. In fact, such a task may be completed quickly and with ease by one person. Once the newsletter is shared, each principal could contribute by building specific components and then prepare for distribution. Another tactic to reduce tasks may be to utilize technology to streamline processes. By reducing unnecessary tasks, removing redundant tasks, and sharing tasks, principal retention in the Loysburg district may increase.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT POTENTIAL REDUCTION IN PRINCIPAL TURNOVER FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PRINCIPAL

Two themes emerged from the questions regarding ideas to reduce turnover – professional development and validation. Interestingly, one of these two themes, validation, was minimally reflected in the literature on principal turnover (Section 2.5: Strategies to Reduce Turnover). Matlach (2015) identified multiple strategies to potentially reduce principal turnover through policy. One of the strategies identified was professional development. Multiple participants identified professional development as a method to reduce turnover. Table 21 lists ideas the Loysburg School District could implement to increase professional development opportunities.

Table 21. Professional Development Ideas

Ideas
Partner with local universities
Promote continuing educational opportunities

Offer credit reimbursement

Connect with the local Intermediate Unit (IU)

Attend conferences

The Loysburg school district is located within one hour of multiple universities and colleges as well as an intermediate unit. These entities may have both coursework and conferences that principals may attend to increase leadership skills and knowledge. The ACT 93 agreement may be a way to advocate for principals to continuously grow within the profession in addition to providing monetary support to demonstrate the value the school district places on professional growth.

The findings in this study illustrate the diversity of professional development needs principals have. Due to this variety, the Loysburg School District may need a plethora of options for principals to access in order to reduce turnover. I suggest that the Loysburg School District investigate policies and procedures that provide a forum for principals to discuss and share ideas regarding professional development. The principalship is complex; the Loysburg central administration may find value in assembling the principal group to discuss their individual and group needs in professional development. I recommend that this process happen multiple times over the course of the school year, as needs change. This process may allow principals to share their needs, thus resulting in a reduction of principal turnover.

The second theme that emerged was validation, or a need for respect and support. Principals work hard on a daily basis to serve their students, teachers, and school community. I propose the superintendent, assistant superintendent, and school board recognize principals in a genuine, sincere manner, both publicly and personally. A personal phone call, email, or

handwritten note provides recipients with a sense of accomplishment. I believe acknowledging a job well done keeps an employee working hard and striving to improve. Receiving recognition and appreciation from district leadership can provide a sense of value and worth that could result in improved retention rates of principals.

5.3   IMPORTANCE OF THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

The Loysburg School District has experienced a high turnover rate among administrators, including but not limited to principals. This case study concentrated specifically on principal turnover in the Loysburg School District. I gathered data from current and previous principals through one-on-one interviews and sought to identify why principals are seeking to leave or have left the Loysburg School District. The principals' insight and thoughts about turnover are important to the process of improving principal retention. The focus of this study was to hear the personal stories of Loysburg School District principals in order to determine the cause(s) and potential solutions for principal churn.

I am sure that there was speculation from central administrators, school board members, and teachers about why principal turnover was occurring in the Loysburg School Distict, but gathering the data directly from the principals provides the district with the principals' point of view. This information could inform work on policies and procedures to improve district climate and culture and ultimately to improve retention rates.

As I reflect upon this study, I acknowledge the insight I have gained about the substantial value relationships play among professional colleagues. The phrase "keep your thumb on the pulse" has new meaning for me. As a school leader, I need to have insight into the climate and

culture and a working knowledge of staff relationships in my school building. Furthermore, I believe leaders need time to reflect and create; in order to do so, their schedules cannot be completely filled with administrative tasks. Focusing on fostering positive relationships and concentrating on set goals may build sustainability and continuity in a school district.

Moving forward, the Loysburg School District could have central administrators and principals work collaboratively to set goals and identify work tasks to reach those goals. This process may build and improve positive relationships between central administrators and principals. By identifying the tasks needed to reach the goals, they will essentially monitor the number of job tasks. This process will assist in building rapport and positive, open communication. This collaborative effort will inevitably improve relations between central administrators and principals so that turnover rates, or churn, reduce.

In the end, this case study may directly benefit the Loysburg School District administrative leadership (i.e., principals, superintendents, and school board). The findings, in conjunction with other research, provide an avenue for administrative leaders to build policies and procedures linked to principal retention. Other districts experiencing high rates of principal turnover may utilize this study in order to examine administrator churn and to investigate potential solutions to reduce that turnover.

5.4   RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This case study investigated a high rate of principal turnover in one school district. The research sought to determine why principals were seeking to leave or have left the school district between the years 2004 and 2016. The findings suggest other areas for future research, including:

- Duplicating this study in a similar school district (i.e. one experiencing similar rates of principal churn).

- Examine school district retention policies and procedures in school districts with low rates of turnover.

- Examine principal turnover based upon years of service in the principalship to ascertain differences among principals new to the position and those with multiple years of service.

- Consider principal turnover rates in regard to generational differences.

- Investigate principal turnover in an elementary setting versus a secondary setting to determine variations between settings.

5.5   LOOKING FORWARD

The research provided within this document offers the Loysburg School District insight into the churn of the principalship. Churn references each principal turnover and the impact turnover has on each school. As the research offers insight into the problem, it gives the school district the opportunity to move forward in a positive, sustainable way. The principalship is a part of the district, and the district is a part of larger systems, statewide and nationally. We must think beyond our individual schools and district because we exist beyond our district. We (educators) cannot control what national and state legislators send our way, but with collaborative preparation and forethought, we may be able to to build sustainability and continuity.

Maya Angelou said, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." The perspective provided by the principals gives the Loysburg School District

the opportunity to make positive change for their school district through collaboration and communication.

5.6   FINAL THOUGHTS

This Problem of Practice study sought to ascertain why an unusually high number of principals sought to leave or have left the principalship in the Loysburg School District. Also, this study elicited principals' opinions on methods or tactics the school board or central administration could implement to reduce turnover. Insight and knowledge was gathered from Loysburg principals about principal turnover and potential retention strategies. As the study pertains to the Loysburg School District, it is hoped that the information obtained, analyzed, and shared will be helpful to leaders in the Loysburg School District and their future planning. As a result, perhaps principal churn may be reduced and the school district may utilize strategies to build sustainability and continuity for the community they serve as well as the principalship at large.

APPENDIX A

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

University of Pittsburgh
Institutional Review Board

Memorandum

To: Jill Daloisio
From: IRB Office
Date: 10/11/2016
IRB#:   PRO16070550
Subject: A CASE STUDY ON WHY PRINCIPALS ARE LEAVING A CENTRAL
          PENNSYLVANIA SCHOOL DISTRICT AND METHODS THE SCHOOL DISTRICT
          CAN USE TO RETAIN PRINCIPALS AND BUILD SUSTAINABILITY AND
          CONTINUITY THROUGH LEADERSHIP

The University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved the above referenced study by the expedited review procedure authorized under 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110. Your research study was approved under:

45 CFR 46.110.(6)
45 CFR 46.110.(7)

The IRB has approved the waiver for the requirement to obtain a written informed consent for the screening activity.

The risk level designation is Minimal Risk.

Approval Date: 10/11/2016
Expiration Date: 10/10/2017

For studies being conducted in UPMC facilities, no clinical activities can be undertaken by investigators until they have received approval from the UPMC Fiscal Review Office.

Please note that it is the investigator's responsibility to report to the IRB any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others [see 45 CFR 46.103(b)(5) and 21 CFR 56.108(b)]. Refer to the IRB Policy and Procedure Manual regarding the reporting requirements for unanticipated problems which include, but are not limited to, adverse events. If you have any questions about this process, please contact the Adverse Events Coordinator at 412-383-1480.

The protocol and consent forms, along with a brief progress report must be resubmitted at least one month prior to the renewal date noted above as required by FWA00006790 (University of Pittsburgh), FWA00006735 (University of Pittsburgh Medical Center), FWA00000600 (Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh), FWA00003567 (Magee-Womens

APPENDIX B

TELEPHONE SCREENING SCRIPT FOR POTENTIAL PARTICIPANT IN A
RESEARCH STUDY

Telephone Screening Script for Potential Participation in a Research Study

STUDY TITLE:

PRINCIPAL CHURN: A CASE STUDY ON PRINCIPAL TURNOVER

AND STRATEGIES TO BUILD SUSTAINABILITY AND CONTINUITY

STUDY INTRODUCTION:

My name is Jill Daloisio, and I am a researcher at the University of Pittsburgh. The purpose of

the research study is to look at and gain knowledge about principal retention and turnover.

Specifically, we want to determine if there are methods and/or tactics school districts can employ

to retain effective principals in order to increase student achievement.

I will be asking principals to participate in one-on-one interviews pertaining to the factors that

influence principals to leave or transition from their posts, support mechanisms that are currently

in place and the needs school principals have to maintain a balance in their lives. This study will

require approximately one hour of your time initially followed by an additional 30 minutes if follow-up is needed after the initial interview. Please note:

- Participants will not receive compensation for participating in this research study.
- Participants can withdraw at any time during the study.
- The potential risk of participating would be a breach of confidentiality.
- The potential benefits of participating that your knowledge and expertise will be utilized in the results and the Demonstration of Scholarly Practice. Additionally the results and Demonstration of Scholarly Practice will be shared and given to the School Board for potential implementation.

Do you have any questions or concerns? Now that you have a basic understanding of the study, do you think you might be interested in participating?

If NO: Thank you for your time, have a good day.

CALLER IS INTERESTED:

If YES: Before enrolling you in this study, I need to determine if you are eligible to participate. I would like to ask you two questions pertaining to your role as a principal. There is a possibility that a question may make you uncomfortable or distressed; if so, please let me know. You can skip any questions you do not wish to answer. I will keep all the information I receive from you by phone, including your name and any other identifying information confidential. The purpose of these questions is to determine whether you may be eligible to participate in the study. Remember, your participation is voluntary; you do not have to complete these questions. Please feel free to stop me at any time if you have any questions or concerns. Do I have your permission to ask you these questions?

QUESTIONS:

When answering these two questions, your response should be "yes", "no", "maybe", of "I don't want to answer that question":

1. Have you worked for the Loysburg School District as a school principal during the past five years?
2. In the past five years have you contemplated leaving or transitioning from your post to go to another school within the school district, from this district to another school district or left your post prior to your original intentions?

POST RESPONSE COMMUNICATION:

If yes to both questions: Based on your answers to the questions, it appears you are eligible to participate in the research study. Would you like to schedule a time that we may meet to go over more details, the consent form and interview?

If yes: Set up a date, time and location.

If no: Thank you for your time, have a good day.

If no to one or both of the questions: Unfortunately, based on your responses, you are not eligible to participate in the research study.

At the conclusion of the call:

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. Again, my name is Jill Daloisio and I can be reached at 814-889-9702 and/or by email is jrd81@pitt.edu

CONSENT FORM

Consent to Act as a Participant in a Research Study

STUDY TITLE:

PRINCIPAL CHURN: A CASE STUDY ON PRINCIPAL TURNOVER

AND STRATEGIES TO BUILD SUSTAINABILITY AND CONTINUITY

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jill R Daloisio

228 East 1st Avenue

Altoona, PA 16602

814-889-9702

jrd81@pitt.edu

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY:

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to talk to someone other than the research team, please call the University of Pittsburgh Human Subjects Protection Advocate toll-free at 866-212-2668. Additionally, you can contact the study investigator if you have any questions about the study, concerns or complaints. Contact Principal Investigator, Jill R. Daloisio at 814-889-9702 or the Study coordinator, Dr. Gerard Longo at 412-648-1937.

INTRODUCTION:

Over the past few years the school district has seen a high percentage of principal's transition from their role. The research is being conducted to determine the factors that influence principals to leave their posts, how the transitions affect student achievement, and define potential methods school districts could implement in order to retain principals. As a current or former principal your insight into these topics will be valuable to the research. In order to participate in this research study, you need to have been employed by the school district within the past five years as a principal and either left or transitioned from the school district or contemplated leaving your role as a principal. This initial interview will last between 40 and 60 minutes and there may be up to an additional 30 minutes as a follow-up to the interview.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES:

This research study will include two activities. The first activity is one-on-one interviews with current or former principals with the school district. The interviews will audiotaped and transcribed. The researcher will provide the interviewee with a copy of the transcript within one week of the interview and allow the interviewee to review the transcript and clarify any information within the transcript. Additionally, the researcher may contact the interviewee after the initial interview to clarify an answer or ask follow-up questions pertaining to the interview. This second interview will be conducted over the telephone.

The second activity does not include any participants. The researcher will be conducting a secondary data analysis with student achievement data retrieved from the Pennsylvania Department of Education website and comparing the data with the number of years a principal serves in a school/district.

STUDY RISKS:

As with any research study, there are risks to participants. This research study has been deemed as no more than minimal risk. Federal regulations define "minimal risk" as follows: *"The probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests."* The questions being asked will be non-sensitive and pertain to the participant's professional life. The potential risk in this research study is a breach of confidentiality.

STUDY BENEFITS:

Participants may potentially benefit from the study as the results along with the Demonstration of Scholarly Practice will be shared and given to the School Board for potential implementation.

PRIVACY and CONFIDENTIALITY:

All data, recordings and notes will be kept in a locked file and password protected computer by the principal investigator and then stored on University of Pittsburgh property. All participants will be given a pseudo name at the onset of the research and that pseudo name will be used throughout all research materials. As per University of Pittsburgh policy all research records must be maintained for at least 7 years following final reporting or publication of a project.

WITHDRAWAL FROM STUDY PARTICIPATION: You can, at any time withdraw from this research study. This means that you will also be withdrawn from further participation in this research study. Any identifiable research obtained as part of this study prior to the date that you withdrew your consent will continue to be used and disclosed by the investigators for the purposes described above.

- To formally withdraw from this research study, you should provide a written and dated notice of this decision to the principal investigator of this research study at the address listed on the first page of this form. Your decision to withdraw from this study will have no effect on your current or future relationship with the University of Pittsburgh.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:

Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. The principal investigator will be available to answer your current and future questions. Whether or not you provide your consent for participation in this research study will have no effect on your current or future relationship with the University of Pittsburgh.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE:

The above information has been explained to me and all of my current questions have been answered. I understand that I am encouraged to ask questions, voice concerns or complaints about any aspect of this research study during the course of this study, and that such future questions, concerns or complaints will be answered by a qualified individual or by the investigator listed on the first page of this consent document at the telephone number given.

I understand that I may always request that my questions, concerns or complaints be addressed by a listed investigator. I understand that I may contact the Human Subjects Protection Advocate of the IRB Office, University of Pittsburgh (1-866-212-2668) to discuss problems, concerns, and questions; obtain information; offer input; or discuss situations that occurred during my participation. By signing this form I agree to participate in this research study. A copy of this consent form will be given to me.

_____   _____

Printed Name of Person Consenting to Participate in this Research Study   Date

_____

Signature of Person Consenting to Participate in this Research Study

INVESTIGATOR CERTIFICATION:

I certify that I have explained the nature and purpose of this research study to the above-named individual, and I have discussed the potential benefits and possible risks of study participation. Any questions the individual has about this study have been answered, and I will always be available to address future questions, concerns or complaints as they arise. I further certify that no research component of this protocol was begun until after this consent form was signed.

_____   _____

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent   Role in Research Study

_____   _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

APPENDIX D

PROTOCOL FOR INTERVIEWING

1. Interviewer thanks the interviewee for their time.

   a. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me as I conduct interviews with school principals to gather research for my dissertation at the University of Pittsburgh.

2. Interviewer introduces self and establish purpose for the interview to interviewee.

   a. My name is Jill Daloisio and I am conducting research on school principals leaving or contemplating leaving their posts. I am looking to attain the school principal story and discover why principal turnover is happening at such an alarming rate. I want to talk with you about your personal experiences as a school principal. Therefore, I will be asking you about your professional pathway, the positives and negatives of being a school principal, and if you have contemplated leaving or have left a school principal position. Additionally, I am investigating the affect these moves have on a school's student achievement data. As a secondary part of my research I will be cross referencing school achievement data (PSSA) and the longevity of a school principal serving a school. Furthermore, I want to develop methods or processes school districts could implement in order to retain principals and build sustainability. Therefore, I will be asking you to share ways that you believe a school district could support and nurture school principals.

3. Interviewer gains permission to record the interview.

   a. As a part of this process, I would like to audio record our interview with your permission, so that I get the story right. Even though I will be taking a few notes, I want to be able to

go back, listen to our conversation and capture your story. Do I have your permission to record this interview?

      i. Did the participant agree to have the interview audio recorded?

      Yes   No

4. Interviewer acquires informed consent and establishes confidentiality with interviewee.

    a. As the researcher of this project, I want to assure you that this interview will be confidential. The recording and transcripts will only be accessible to those directly involved with the research at the University of Pittsburgh. The notes from the interview, the transcript from the audio recording and the final report will not identify you as a participant. I will only use pseudo names in the final report.

        Do you have any questions? _____ yes   _____ no

        Are you willing to participant in the interview? _____ yes _____ no

5. Interviewer asks questions.

    a. Tell me about your professional background.

      i. Probing Questions:

        1. Would you explain more about…

        2. Is there anything else about your professional history you would like to share?

        3. How long have you been a principal and at what schools?

    b. Describe the formal mentoring process you received from your school district as a school principal to assist you in your new position.

      i. Probing Questions:

        1. Would you explain the idea/thought/story in further detail?

        2. Could you elaborate on the idea/thought/story?

    c. Describe your relationship with the Superintendent from the school district where you are/were the principal and how that relationship affected your thought process to stay or leave.

      i. Probing Questions:

        1. Could you go into more detail about that idea/thought/story?

d. Describe your relationship with the School Board of Directors from the school district where you are/were the principal and how that relationship affected your thought process to stay or leave.

    i. Probing Questions:

        1. Could you elaborate further about that idea/thought/story?

e. Describe your relationship with the Assistant Superintendent from the school district where you are/were the principal and how that relationship affected your thought process to stay or leave.

    i. Probing Questions:

        1. Could you go into more detail about that idea/thought/story?

f. Describe your relationship with the Teachers from the school district where you are/were the principal and how that relationship affected your thought process to stay or leave.

    i. Probing Questions:

        1. Could you share an idea/thought/story about the connection with teachers?

g. Describe your relationship with the Students from the school district where you are/were the principal and how that relationship affected your thought process to stay or leave.

    i. Probing Questions:

        1. Could you share an idea/thought/story about a time when you connected with students and how that affected you as a principal?

h. Describe your relationship with the Parents from the school district where you are/were the principal and how that relationship affected your thought process to stay or leave.

    i. Probing Questions:

        1. Could you go into more detail about how you worked with parents on that idea/thought/story?

i. Describe your relationship with the Community Members from the school district where you are/were the principal and how that relationship affected your thought process to stay or leave.

j. What professional development opportunities did you participate in that improved or strengthened your leadership skill after being hired as a school principal?

    i. Probing Questions:

1. Could you share the ones that you think strengthened your leadership or that you would advise other principals to attend?

k. What factors influenced you to leave or contemplate leaving the profession?

    i. Probing Questions:

        1. Would you explain further…?

l. What methods or tactics could school districts implement in order to retain principals?

m. What processes are currently in place that you would recommend sustaining in order to retain principals? Provide rationale for each specific process.

n. Do you have anything that you would like to add to this interview?

6. Interviewer concludes the interview by thanking the interviewee.

a. Once again let me thank you for your time and the information that you shared as I continue to research the factors that are causing principal turnover and investigate potential remedies to slow the turnover down.

7. Interviewer explains the next steps of the process.

Now that the formal interview process has concluded, the next steps in this process is for me to spend time writing notes based on our time together and transcribing the recording. After transcribing the interview and rereading, I may reach out to you in order to clarify information from the interview or ask follow-up questions based on the information you shared. Would you prefer that I follow up in person or on the phone? Do you have time now to look at your calendar to set up a follow up or would you prefer that I email you? (if time allows now, set it up) Additionally, I will analyzing the transcripts from multiple principals in hopes of discovering factors that influence principal turnover and hope to ascertain remedies school districts can use to slow the turnover down. If you would like to review the transcript before I use it in my study, I would be happy to send it your way.

Would you like to review it? _____ yes _____ no

Thank you for your time.

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