

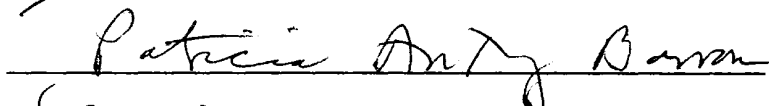
THE REFLECTIVE PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

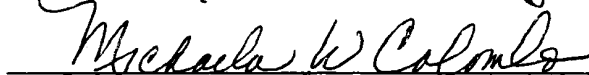
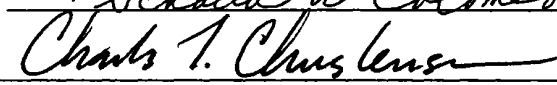
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**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
IN LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOLING
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS, LOWELL
2006**

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**THE REFLECTIVE PRACTICES OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS**

BY

FRANK A. TIANO, III

**ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION IN LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOLING
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS, LOWELL
2006**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to further the limited research in reflective practices of principals at the elementary level. It documented how the use of reflective practices enhances the role of school leaders. By examining elementary principals who were described by their peers as reflective practitioners, this study also better explained how they used reflective practices to not only increase their effectiveness as school leaders, but how they conceptualized reflection as well.

Research shows that the role of principal, as it has evolved over the past century, is vital to the success of individual schools as well as educational reform and the continuous changes that reform demands (Beck & Murphy, 1993). Given the flux of the nature of the job and the unpredictability of situations and people, there is no set of inert ideas that a principal can learn to be ready for every situation (Ackerman, Donaldson, and Van Der Bogert, 1996). Reflective practice is a means by which principals can develop a greater level of self-awareness about the nature and impact of their performance, an awareness that creates opportunities for change in behaviors and beliefs (Kottkamp and Osterman, 1993).

The research questions that were investigated in this qualitative study are:

- How do selected principals conceptualize reflection?
- How do selected principals engage in reflection in, on and for action in their daily practice?
- How do selected principals benefit in their effectiveness as a result of engaging in purposeful reflective practice?
- What conditions encourage/discourage reflection within the school setting?

Three elementary principals from the Merrimack Valley portion of Massachusetts were the sample used for this study. An exploratory, multiple case study design was used. Data was gathered through standardized, open-ended interviews, semi-structured interviews, direct observations, photography, and document analysis. Following a thorough analysis of the data, professional learning opportunities for elementary school principals was recommended after this study determined benefits related to reflective practices for school leadership.

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CHAPTER I

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

The role of the principal has developed into a very complex one. Principals today are

expected to have the dispositions, knowledge and skills to address the leadership principles and practices described by these phrases: shared, collaborative, and distributive leadership; data driven leadership; leadership without easy answers; leadership that supports, promotes and demands the attainment of high expectations; purposeful leadership focusing on broad issues and long-term goals; leadership that demonstrates and demands respectful and responsible behavior; leadership that promotes empathy, care and consideration (Damon, p.12, 2005).

Changes in the principal's role have stemmed directly from state and federal legislation. The demand to reform schools by measuring the improvement in student performance compared with state and federal standards holds schools and their principals accountable. This standards-based reform has raised the pressures on principals to deliver student performance and has brought an unprecedented level of public scrutiny to their job performance. Given this added pressure and accountability, the management functions traditionally associated with school leadership have not diminished, if anything they have become more demanding (Matthews and Crow 2003).

The evolution of the role of the principal in the 20th century had been cyclical up until the 1980s. After the 1983, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational*

Reform, written by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, demands on the principal ceased to be fluid and began to simply accumulate. This excellence movement of the 1980s segued into the restructuring movement of the 1990s. Both movements were significant for the focus on outside-in, top-down reforms that relied heavily on legislative action to improve the education within schools. By steadily increasing additions to their role and further accountability, principals have had to learn and grow with these constant changes.

Much has been written over the past century of the importance of the principal in regard to the effectiveness of the school (Beck & Murphy, 1993). This holds true today. Irwin Blumer recently stated that he is convinced that the building principal is the most important school leader in any district. “No matter how visionary and effective a superintendent is the vision remains a dream unless school principals are able to accept the challenge of transforming that dream into reality . . .” (2005, p. 2). Brown and Irby shared that belief in an earlier statement and also contended that to handle such pressures, principals needed to continue their own professional growth. “School reform efforts have focused attention on the principal as the person who facilitates the process of transforming schools . . . Principals recognize that in order to transform schools, they must improve their own practice”(Brown & Irby, 2001, p. vii).

Reflection is a powerful way in which principals can grow and learn from their practice. Dewey (1910, 1933) explained that reflection involves active and specific consideration of one’s own practices and beliefs in view of their supporting

assumptions and their eventual consequences. This experiential learning is ideal for the ever-changing environment of schools.

Schon (1987) detailed the importance of environment in relation to true professional learning. While explaining that professionals (educators) need to be well versed in theoretical knowledge, real-world problems rarely exhibit proprieties conducive to textbook only strategies. Professionals must construct new frames from the given situation in order to engage in problem solving. The reframing is done in terms of past experience and knowledge, which allows the practitioner to develop a plan for future action. Reframing is the product of doubt experienced in the action setting, when the outcome is unexpected. Given the foreseeable changes in the role of the principal, there is much doubt to be experienced.

Ackerman and Ostrowski-Maslin (2002) described how these doubts could also be wounds. School leadership, as they described it, can “take a person from an inspired moment to a crisis in an instant...things happen unrelentingly, and a leader is expected to know or do something” (p. xii). Proponents of reflective practice in education have argued that these wounding moments and other opportunities to solve problems are fertile soil in which to engage in reflective practice and further ones professional knowledge (Ackerman and Ostrowski-Maslin, 2002).

The expectations for elementary school principals are steadily increasing. The skills and abilities required to meet these expectations are changing as well. Given the complex nature of schools, and the fragmented, rapid pace of their days, principals need to continuously benefit and learn from their own valuable experiences to supplement more traditional forms of professional development. Reflection helps

educators to develop the ability to make informed decisions about how, when and why actions should be taken based on their knowledge of their own context (Richert, 1990). Understanding how principals who are reflective practitioners find the time to reflect and how that reflection impacts their professional growth and ability to lead their schools was the focus of this research.

Statement of the Problem

Research studies indicate that educators who are engaged in reflective practice are more willing to challenge their own assumptions (Osterman and Kottkamp, 1993; Senge, 1990; Schon 1983; Argyris, 1980; Argyris & Schon, 1974). Through this action a learning process where new theories in use replace existing ones lead to behavioral changes. Ways in which principals are able to engage in reflective practice to improve their professional knowledge and performance is not widely studied and available to current practitioners. That knowledge base needs to be disseminated to principals in order for them to more effectively lead their schools in this continuous climate of educational reform.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to further the limited research in reflective practices of principals at the elementary level. It documented how the use of reflective practices enhance the role of school leader by elementary principals. By studying principals who are described as reflective practitioners by their peers, this study explains how elementary principals use reflective practices to not only increase their effectiveness as school leaders, but how they conceptualize reflection as well.

The day of a principal is extremely fragmented and unpredictable. They make dozens of decisions daily that impact many people. Research indicates that despite working fifty-five to sixty hours per week, there is little time to reflect to improve performance (Quinn, 2003). Therefore, an understanding of how selected principals create time to engage in reflection in, on and for action was sought.

The selected principals' ability to reflect in relation to their specific school settings was also explored. Reflection is often considered independently of context in an institution. However, schools do not operate independently of their contexts (Boud & Walker, 1998). By analyzing this context, knowledge of the conditions in which reflection is encouraged or discouraged within a school was gained.

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

Dewey (1933) advocated for the use of reflective practices to promote professional growth. He believed that reflection was a tool that educators could use to solve the variety of problems they encountered in the classrooms and that teacher preparation programs should integrate the use of reflective practices. In 1910, Dewey offered the following definition of reflection thought. He said it "is the active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends"(p. 6).

Since Dewey's time, many researchers have advanced the notion of reflective practice. However, seven decades later, Donald Schon's work in the 1980's, set the current standard for reflective practice theory. Schon (1983; 1987) contributed the ideas of two types of reflection: *reflection on action* and *reflection in action*.

Reflection on action occurs when professionals look back on their practice while reflection in action occurs for professionals in the midst of their work.

Schon (1983) defined reflection as an interactive process of thinking about, framing and reframing a problem. He suggested that professionals must construct new frames from the given situation in order to engage in problem solving. Each real-world problem is unique to its context and must be considered as such in order to solve it. The reframing is done in terms of past experience and knowledge, which allows the practitioner to develop a plan for future action. Reframing is the product of doubt experienced in the action setting, when the outcome is unexpected.

Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) identified the importance of reflective practices in changing one's behavior. Reflection in and on action is pointless unless the outcome is a change in behavior. They defined a change in behavior as occurring when new theories-in-use replace existing ones. Typically, as in a workshop setting, to foster change, new information and new methods are provided and it is assumed that individuals will adopt new behaviors as a result. The reflective practice concept challenges and alters this notion. It maintains that although our espoused theories readily incorporate new information our theories in use resist changes. Thus, new ideas are adopted, but behavior continues unchanged. One of the reasons is that people are unaware that a problem exists. They must develop an understanding of their theories-in use and become dissatisfied with the resulting performance. When they develop a conscious awareness of the relationship between the theory in use and an unacceptable outcome, there is motivation to be changed. Behavioral change can only occur when they discover a problem and accept it as their own.

Festinger (1989) referred to that problem as cognitive dissonance. His theory stated that there is consistency in what a person knows, feels and believes and in what that person does. There is a consistency between the cognition and the action. When a person does not act in accordance with how they feel or behave, there is a gap referred to as dissonance.

Killion and Todnem (1991) added the term reflection for action to the literature describing reflective practices. They suggested that reflection in and on action is a tool for guiding future action. While examining past and present actions, we are creating knowledge that will inform our future actions. In other words, reflection-for-action is proactive in nature.

Research Questions

One fundamental question encapsulates the focus of this study: How do elementary principals use reflective practices to enhance their role as a school leader? To facilitate the answer to this question, the research design for this study was to answer the following, more specific research questions:

- How do selected principals conceptualize reflection?
- How do selected principals engage in reflection in, on and for action in their daily practice?
- How do selected principals benefit in their effectiveness as a result of engaging in purposeful reflective practice?
- What conditions encourage/discourage reflection within the school setting?

Methodology

A deliberate and thorough review of the literature led to the development of questions that were suited to the qualitative nature of research. Therefore, this study utilized a qualitative design, more specifically, an exploratory, multiple-case study to ascertain the benefits of reflective practices by elementary school principals.

Sampling was conducted purposefully. Principals who participated in the study were ones who actually and successfully engaged in reflective practice. Given the difficulty in objectively identifying a disconnect between one's own theories-in-use, theories that are deeply ingrained and guide our action, and one's espoused theories, what we say we think and believe, (Osterman and Kottkamp, 1993), subjects' identification as a reflective practitioner was done by their peers. Criteria of reflective practitioners were provided for peer consideration.

A letter from the researcher accompanied by criteria of a reflective practitioner was sent to eighty-six elementary school principals in the Merrimack Valley area of Massachusetts. The letter asked them to consider recommending one of their peers in the Merrimack Valley for being a candidate for the study. Three principals were randomly chosen from the ones who had been recommended and agreed to participate in the study.

There are no particular methods for data collection or analysis unique to the case study (Merriam, 1998). Primarily the choice of or the combination of three methods is used: interviews, document analysis, and observations. All three methods and the addition of photography were utilized in this study.

Two interviews were conducted with each principal. The first one was a standardized, open-ended interview. Specific questions were used to guide the interview allowing for comparison across subjects. Exact wording and sequence of the questions were predetermined.

The second interview was semi-structured in design. It was conducted with each principal at least two but no more than four weeks after the observation. The focus of the interview was centered on the principal's actions and follow-through regarding the content of the event witnessed during the observation. Each interview was scheduled for and lasted no longer than one hour. The content of each interview was transcribed. Each interviewee had the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview to clarify any statements.

The researcher conducted two direct observations. The first observation was conducted of each principal engaged with staff during a naturally occurring event, such as a faculty meeting. Each situation and time was negotiated with the principals. The common theme between each of the three principals is that the observation was conducted during an event where action items will be generated.

The second observation consisted of the researcher shadowing each principal for a half of school day. The exact times and duration of each experience was negotiated with the principals.

Photography was another form of observation as a source of data. Each of the principals had their office and various locations of the school photographed by the researcher. The principals agreed in advance to this photography, but did not have notice of when the picture was actually taken. The unannounced pictures were able

to capture the professional work setting of each principal as it naturally occurred. No human subjects were in any photograph.

Parent newsletters, school handbooks and staff meeting agendas were collected from each work site. The recording of documents followed a protocol, which included the name of the document, the significance of the document and a brief content summary. Emerging themes from these documents were analyzed in relation to the research questions.

The researcher used the NVivo qualitative data software to organize the collected information for analysis. Data was coded into thematic categories that are linked to the research questions. Additional categories were identified as themes emerged. Case studies were analyzed individually as well as collectively.

Significance of the Study

There is a need for principals to engage in reflective practice. Their role is vital to the success of their individual schools as well as educational reform and the continuous changes that reform demands.

Principals must be self-directed learners who learn not only about best practice research, but also about themselves. Principals must deal with constant changes in expectations of their role and the population with whom they work. Steadily increasing additions to their role and further accountability are foreseeable for the immediate future. Given the flux of the nature of the job and the unpredictability of situations and people, there is no one cache of skills that a principal can learn to be ready for every situation. Therefore, there is a need for more

research to better understand the how, when and in what contexts do reflective principals engage in reflective practice.

There also needs to be a more established method of spreading the knowledge base of the impact of reflective practice methods on pre and in-service training for principals. This study fills that need. Once principals are able to utilize reflection they will have it as a tool to further their professional maturity. The key element is the ability to use it regardless of experience or situation (Simpson, 1993). "Reflective practice seems to stimulate a change process that, once begun, doesn't end. By helping people to develop skills of critical analysis that they can apply to their own practice, it changes professional development from an impersonal process that takes place during a restricted period of time to an ongoing process that becomes integrated into one's professional life" (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993, pp. 138-139).

Delimitations of the Study

The generalizability of this study was limited by the small sample size. Three case studies of elementary school principals in the Merrimack Valley portion of Massachusetts were chosen for this research. This sample represents only 3.3% of the target population. The extent to which this sample adequately represents the larger population is a limitation.

A case study allows for a thorough examination of subjects and their perceptions within a particular setting. By its nature, this study's design limits generalization of findings to the population of elementary school principals at large.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, major terms will be operationally defined as follows:

Behavioral change- happens when new theories in use, deeply ingrained theories that guide our action, replace existing ones as a result of engaging in reflective practice.

Cognitive Dissonance- when a person does not act in accordance with how they believe they behave.

Espoused theories- what we say and think we believe. They exist at our conscious level and are easily changed.

Reflection- a distinct form of thinking, which emanates from doubt experienced in a particular situation that causes one to inquire and problem solve.

Reflection in action – thinking of ones actions while still engaged in the action.

Common phrase “thinking on your feet’

Reflection on action- reviewing the action from outside the setting, most commonly associated with reflection.

Reflection for action- using both reflections in and on action to guide future actions.

It is a process that engages the past, present, and future simultaneously.

Reflexive Loop- the circular process that dictates how we select data, draw conclusions, adopt beliefs and take action

Theories in use- deeply ingrained theories that guide our action. They exist at our subconscious level and are not easily changed.

Overview of the Study

The review of the literature contained in the next chapter supports the need for this study and provides a theoretical basis for reflective practice. The two areas researched are the history of the principalship and reflective practice. Chapter three describes the methodology of the study. Included in this chapter is: the justification for and detail of the qualitative design; the selection of the sample population; the instrumentation used; the methods in which the data was collected and analyzed; researcher bias and ethical considerations. Chapter four details the results of the study in relation to the four research questions. Chapter five provides a discussion of the results and recommendations for principal professional development.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The role of the principal is engaged in perpetual evolution. The first research strand of this literature review explores the increasing complexity embedded in that evolution. The changing of the principal's role throughout the 20th century, including the cumulative effect toward the end of the last decade is revealed. Though expectations had shifted focus in importance throughout the century, those expectations were no longer cyclical by the end of the 1980s and into the '90s. Growing external forces during the last two decades continuously added to the expectations of the principal without relieving them of any of the prior responsibilities.

A review of the literature regarding reflective practice and its use in education is the second strand of research for this review of the literature. Conclusions have been drawn following an examination of the impact that reflective practices have on the role of the principal. The conclusions focus on the value of the principal to his school, the importance of principals understanding their beliefs and their impact on decision-making, and the importance of the principal being a self-learner in a constantly changing environment.

History of the Principalship to the Present

Early Beginnings up through the 1920s

According to Beck & Murphy (1993) the role of "the principal has been shaped extensively by larger social and historical forces" (p. 179). Dating back to

schooling in early American history, the position of principal did not exist.

Traditionally the teacher in the one-room schoolhouse was responsible for everything from administration to custodial work. As schools grew in complexity, one person was needed to attend to non-teaching duties as well as some instruction, which led to the role of head teacher.

Pierce (1935) writes that the word “principal” was first coined in the late 1800s to early 1900s (Pierce, 1935). In the 1920’s the Departments of Elementary School Principals and Secondary School Principals were established within the National Educational Association. As Beck and Murphy (1993) note, this recognition began a movement toward specialization and increasing demands from many constituents.

During the 1920s, the role of the principal took on many responsibilities and expectations. One such responsibility was spiritual leadership of the school community. Cubberley (1923) tells of the “great spiritual importance” (p. 561) of the principal’s work in terms of leading the people of the school. Frederick Taylor’s notion of scientific management was also prevalent at that time highlighting the importance of having an efficient and productive school. Matthews & Crow (2003) state that, “The scientific management approach asserted that educational organizations, like commercial establishments, could be made business-like and efficient . . . to lead to maximum organizational productivity” (p. 27).

Cubberley (1923), at the time, favored the view of principal as scientific manager as well as spiritual leader. The convergence of the two was made congruent through the prevailing idea at the time that education was the vehicle by which

America could fulfill its destiny. “The common school quest is the search for the Holy Grail, and the knight in shining armor is the principal whose purity is the quest for school efficiency and human perfection is not overshadowed by the godly Sir Gwayne” (Cubberley, 1923, p. 32). Beck and Murphy (1993) concurred that in the 1920s “Those who believed in the divine call of American educators viewed scientific management as a divinely sanctioned method to help them achieve their goals” (p.16).

Given the idea that the principal was engaged in the twin disciplines of scientific management and of good moral character, Cubberley (1916) suggested that the principal should exercise great responsibility in all aspects of running the school to the point of advising that “the details might be best kept to himself” (p. 15). He continued in 1923, to extol the importance of the principal’s role by indicating that “we are not likely to overestimate the importance of the office of school principal” (p.28). He further summarized his belief by saying, “As is the principal, so is the school” (p. 15).

Cubberley (1923) also claimed at the time that community relations are one of the most important work aspects of the principal in the 1920s. A principal “should know his community and be able to feel its pulse and express its wants, and the community should know him and believe in his integrity and honesty of purpose” (p. 153).

The 1930s

During the 1930s the role of the principal experienced a lessening in the spiritual expectations to an embracing of the business mantra of the day. The

principal's role became more administrative and less of an instructional. The profession was beginning to separate itself from teaching. The primary expectations were providing organization for the school and supervision for the teachers. According to Beck and Murphy (1993) the literature of this decade heavily emphasized organization and supervision. This is the first time in history that a bureaucracy was purposefully perpetuated in schools as it had been in business. The role of the principal had more specific qualifications that needed to be met by individuals who wished to play that role on top of the school hierarchy.

The profession of principal continued to be separated as new university-based programs were designed to provide candidates with the requisite skills. Beck and Murphy (1993) found that "These specialization programs, while contributing to the sense of professionalism, also reinforced the belief that the job of principal is essentially an executive or managerial one" (P.26).

The principal of the 1930s relied heavily on educational research, the application of scientific management and objective educational outcomes. Tyack and Hansot (1982) wrote that the research provided the foundation for which every problem could be solved due to the growth of public education systems; state certification requirements began to increase as well. Matthews & Crow (2003) found that by 1932, nearly half the states had adopted certification standards for administrators.

The backlash of criticism from outside sources continued the trend for higher standards and the business-like manner of principals. Beck and Murphy (1993) write that "Cost and time efficient management had become almost a religious pursuit for

principals” (p.28) as a means to justify their ways to the outside community. During the 1930s, schools came under fire for poor educational results despite the monetary investment from newspapers, business, and community leaders. The Great Depression served as a backdrop for accountability for government spending (Beck & Murphy, 1993).

In 1935, Pierce claimed that the increased population of students put so many demands on superintendents that they were unable to properly supervise individual schools. Therefore, principals became increasingly responsible for local management. Due to this development and the importance of the principal’s role in the community, researchers in the 1930s continued to recommend that the principals be in touch with the community. Douglas (1932) wrote that in “every community there are men, women, and organizations that are outstandingly influential in determining community actions and attitudes. The principal must not neglect to know these people and to gain their confidence and their interest in his educational program” (p. 498).

The 1940s

World War II and the outpouring of American democracy provided the setting for the evolution of the principal’s role and accompanying expectations in the 1940s. Similar to the 1920s, the principal was asked to be the link between schools and the community regarding values and beliefs. The values were less religious and more democratic in nature. Beck and Murphy (1993) described this view of the principals as the school’s leader on the home front. Professional journals of the time, such as, The National Education Association’s Department of Elementary School Principals

handbook and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development's (ASCD) 1944 handbook covered topics such as victory gardens, rationing, understanding the enemy, air raid drill, patriotic exercises, and war emergencies (Beck & Murphy, 1993).

Campbell, et al. (1987) stated that during World War II there was a need for principals to be leaders in the war effort. There was a call for helping students understand the importance of living in and protecting our democracy and the importance of working to ensure peace. It was a principal's patriotic duty to provide this type of leadership.

That type of leadership no longer called for a top down autocratic principal. A principal was expected to work with the teachers, students, and parents to ensure a quality education, more in line with the idea of democracy. Adding to the difficulty of that charge was the student population explosion by 1940. This rise in population provided an overall difficulty in matching quality education programming with equal opportunity access. Powell, et. al, (1985) asserts, "The expanded enrollment prompted educators to develop curricula with a distinctly social emphasis, courses that were more practical and fun" (p. 276). The emphasis was much deeper than just academic. In the 1947 ASCD Yearbook, the following message conveyed that sentiment of the shifting purpose of public education;

Education, if it is to continue to be a force for improving the lives of people, must reexamine its purposes; it must take on a broader and deeper purposes aimed directly at lifting the quality of living for all kinds of people (p.9).

The 1950s

That mantra of aiming education at benefiting the quality of lives for all kinds of people became more evident in the 1950s. Principals had to deal with dueling demands of political and academic changes. The first academic change was for principals. Universities were calling for a more scientific administration of schools (Culbertson, 1988). Culbertson (1988) indicated the high value placed on the development of professional preparation programs that emphasized “theory development and . . . the building of a ‘science of administration’” (p. 16). Crowson & McPherson (1987) found that this trend, referred to as the theory movement, applied theories and concepts from the social and behavioral science to problems of educational administration.

Dividing the role between two major foci, the principal attempted to appropriately intertwine the roles of administrator and manager. Immersed in the continued research of organizations and school administration, the principal was the person who had to understand and apply the objective laws and principles that were being discovered. He needed to provide leadership in these realms. Beck & Murphy (1993) wrote:

The many references to the principal as administrator, when read in conjunction with the content of much of the literature in which they are found, suggest that principals of the fifties are expected to administer their schools by making application of insights derived from empirical and theoretical work being done in the field of educational administration by scholars grounded in the various behavioral science discipline (pp. 52-53).

The next academic change came as a result of Sputnik. As social problems or crises surface, Americans often turn to the schools for solution. During the Cold War in October 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, a satellite that orbited around the earth. According to Van Scotter (1991), “The public, politicians, and business leaders saw a direct connection between the nation’s lagging military technology and power, and the quality of mathematics and science in the schools” (p. 20). Angus & Mirel (1999) observed that educators, particularly at the high school level, came under heavy pressure to defend their curriculum as it became part of a national debate of not only education, but of national security.

The defenders of the curriculum in a comprehensive high school pointed to the advancement over the previous two decades of educating a greater amount of students. By diversifying the curriculum, students with varying degrees of scholastic aptitude could and did graduate from high school. Skills were needed for students beyond those in college preparatory classes and the equal opportunities for students greatly reduced dropout rates. As Angus and Mirel observed, however, the argument from the other side indicated that cafeteria-style course offerings diluted the curriculum and did not offer nor encourage the brightest students the opportunities to excel in mathematics and science (Angus & Mirel, 1999).

The political changes came as a result of the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision delivered by the United States Supreme Court. The four cases now referred to as *Brown* were the culmination of a twenty-year litigation strategy of the NAACP. According to Karst (1986), the Supreme Court, having already ordered the admission of black applicants to state university law schools and graduate schools,

based its argument on the elements of educational quality. Karst wrote, “The doctrinal ground was thus prepared for the Court to strike down the segregation of elementary and secondary schools-if the Court was ready to occupy that ground” (p.161).

The decision handed down by the Court in 1954 did not abolish segregation in public schools. It stated that when forced to face segregated schools; even though they may be equal, black children may develop a “feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone” (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954, p. 3). A full year passed before the Court issued its remedial opinion. That opinion not only failed to abolish segregation, it also failed to set timelines for a process of desegregation (Brown v. Board of Education II, 1955). Instead, the Court told lower courts to “make a prompt and reasonable start toward compliance at the earliest practicable date” (Brown v. Board of Education II, 1955, p.2). Therefore, it was left up to state and local school districts to negotiate entrance policies to schools, putting principals on the front lines. Trying to balance the running of the school as manager and administrator and dealing with social realities of the actual school community caused tension.

During the ensuing decade and half, in a series of orders consisting of only citations to *Brown*, the Court had invalidated state-supported segregation in all its forms. Karst (1986) credits the Brown decision as a catalyst for “a political movement that permanently altered race relation in America” (p. 163).

With such scrutiny on the schools, principals felt the need to defend and reassure the community that they had a tight handle on the social and academic well being of schools and their communities. Principals felt compelled to offer empirical

evidence and data that supported their actions. Kaiser (1995) believed that the decade of the 1950s saw the principal as more vulnerable to questioning from the society at large. The concern for principals with the greater evolving accountability to the public was the manner in which they were able to manage their time. Beck and Murphy (1993) noted several studies during the 1950s that were dedicated to time management and delegation as principals' responsibilities increased.

The 1960s

In the sixties, the literature describing schools took on a technical, mechanistic tone. As Beck & Murphy (1993) noted, "These images convey implicitly what many authors were beginning to claim explicitly: If the proper parts were in place and function, principals could and should function with the effectiveness of well-oiled machines" (p.101). Other researchers understanding this shift in approach are Campbell and his colleagues (1987). They discussed the principal's role during this time of "social revolution" (p.83) as a stabilizer. They describe a need to tighten the schools as a rational bureaucracy, with clear hierarchical delineations. The reaffirmation to tighten the institution also came at a time when external sources, particularly legislation, increasingly had a greater impact on the schools, including the role of the principal.

No longer was there the spiritual, lofty language of the previous decades. Principals were now entrenched in the bureaucracy of schools. The hierarchy was secure. The principalship had a clearly defined responsibility and authority. Principals acted on the directives of their superiors and less on spiritual or patriotic beliefs. Principals now were expected to protect the bureaucracy. They were also

expected to use proper techniques, technologies and strategies to run their school. In fact, it was the faith in these proper strategies that educational leaders held on to during the social upheaval of the 1960s, the idea being to keep the schools steady during times of much change. Beck & Murphy (1993) found, with the focus being on the system, principals were expected to increase their study of the community in which they worked and engage in public relations (p.112).

The community that the principals were embracing was more diverse and contentious than ones faced in previous decades. This diversity was the result of legislative changes begun with *Brown v. the Board of Education* (1954) and continued with *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964* and the *Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965/Title I*.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 signified many changes in racial discrimination. According to Eisenberg (1986), it “was prompted by southern resistance to desegregation orders and violent responses to peaceful civil rights protests” (p.286). *Title VI* stated that racial discrimination must end in all programs receiving federal financial assistance.

All school districts seeking future federal aid needed to comply with regulations by doing any one of the following:

1. By filing an Assurance of Compliance form, declaring that no discrimination whatsoever is practiced with the school district;
2. By showing that there has been a final federal court order directing the complete racial integration of the school system by 1967; or

3. By submitting approved plans for the integration of the school system (Civil Rights Act, 1964).

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA) of 1965 authorized federal money to local public schools for specialized programs to assist low-income students (Elementary and Secondary Act, 1965). This act distributed the federal money to the states through grants. In order to be eligible for the grants, the states relied on documentation from members of the local communities, including principals, regarding eligibility. Programs created at the school level were implemented, supervised, and the responsibility of the school principal. To ensure the continuation of the grants, principals, along with district personnel, needed to evaluate programming and submit a report on each program as required by law, according to the then U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1965). “The reports required of the State educational agencies would be based largely on the reports these agencies require of their participating local educational agencies” (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1965, p. 5).

The federal government specifically detailed project evaluation to which the principal was intimately involved at the school level. The steps in evaluating educational outcomes were:

Step 1. Definition of educational objectives to be achieved through the experience being evaluated.

Step 2. Translation of the educational objectives into description of behavior, which will be displayed if the objectives are achieved.

- Step 3. Identification of situation in which the presence or absence of the designated behavior can be recorded.
- Step 4. Establishment of some type of interpretive device.
- Step 5. Application of the evaluation methods derived from steps 3 and 4.
- Step 6. Analysis of evidence obtained by the evaluation devices in terms of progress toward the defined objectives.
- Step 7. Statement of conclusions regarding effectiveness in terms of the extent to which objectives were achieved (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1965, p.35).

Title VI and *Title I* are linked together for states and local school systems.

Title I money flowed into local school districts as inclusion and programs for minorities, handicapped and underprivileged children were being implemented (*Title I* of the Elementary and Secondary Act, 1965). As the heavy increase in funding was made available from *Title I* in 1966, districts that were not in compliance with *Title VI* moved more rapidly to be in compliance. The aforementioned social upheaval tightened the principal's grip on the bureaucracy and order of the school to keep civility in the schools. Compliance with these acts continued the evolution of the principal's role in meeting the changing needs of children.

Along with providing a more diverse population of students, the 1960s also represented the decade in which principals were being held accountable for student output on standardized tests. In the bureaucratic model, the leaders can and should be held liable for the quality of the product, even though the makeup of that product was

now changing. Those social, legislative and administrative changes had principals searching for the best ways in which to run their schools. Beck & Murphy (1993) found that “Accountability pressures and political demands leave the principal feeling vulnerable and confused about role expectations” (p.88).

A heavy dose of that pressure came in a report entitled the *Equality in Educational Opportunity* published in 1966. This report was an offshoot of the 1964 *Civil Rights Act*. The U.S. Office of Education was directed to conduct a study to determine the “lack of availability of equal educational opportunities by reasons of race, color, religion, or national origin in public institutions” (Coleman, 1966, p. 6). The report became known as the *Coleman Report*, named after President Johnson’s appointee, James Coleman as head of the research team (D. Meyer, personal communication, February 18, 1998).

As Kaiser (1995) writes, the *Coleman Report* obtained data from more than 4,000 schools, 60,000 teachers and 570,000 students and was primarily concerned with access to tax-based education. Other than socioeconomic status, which showed a high correlation with student performance, the report found no variable that impacted student achievement. Therefore, since the amount of resources provided for schools had no impact, the report recommended that schools should receive fewer resources. More resources should go to schools with lower socioeconomic status. The *Coleman Report* did indicate that since no other variable was highly significant, other aspects of schooling needed to be investigated (Coleman, 1966). The national debate that this report stirred helped to enhance the scrutiny of schools and their ability to produce results given the resources provided. Kaiser (1995) reported that

the result of this scrutiny came in the form of continued legislations, reports and reforms in the decades to come.

With the legislative changes and social unrest of the 1960s, principals continued to work in their finely oiled machines of a bureaucracy. As their role was more impersonal, clinical, and rational, principals found themselves increasingly in situations that were constantly changing. The next decade saw how principals expanded their role to meet the demands of these changes and forced them to rethink how they conducted business.

The 1970s

The theme of accountability continued the evolution of the elementary principal's role in the 1970s. Campbell, et al., (1987) detailed how external forces drove changes in the way in which schools were administered. The increase in federal involvement in local schools and the increasing number of special interest groups made up a significant portion of these external forces. Beck and Murphy (1993) explain that during the 1970s the "conceptions of the principalship are, indeed, affected by what might be called the 'opening of schools' to outside scrutiny" (p.115).

The principal was now expected to be a community leader along with leading children and staff. Principals were now important members of the community and shared in civic leadership. Burden and Whitt (1973) suggested that professional survival depended on the principal gaining support of constituencies outside of the school.

Community power is a coming reality. The previous view that the local school could remain aloof and isolated from those it was purported to serve is no longer a viable one. The changing concept of democracy that means all people are to be involved, not just those in power, places new responsibilities on the building administrator”(p. xiii).

As in the two previous decades, legislation continued to define the principal's role in meeting the needs of a diverse community. *The Emergency School Aid Act of 1972* provided funds for school districts to eliminate the isolation of minority groups. *Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972* prohibited sexual discrimination in schools. *Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975* forced states to ensure that all children with disabilities receive a free and appropriate education. Drake and Roe (2003) and Lazerson (1987) reported that these pieces of legislation forced changes in the way schools delivered their educational services, thus once again, dramatically changing the rules in which principals administered their schools.

The focus on providing meaningful education and viewing students holistically was a powerful theme. This however ran counter to running schools as a bureaucratic machine. Dwayne Huebner indicated that there was conflict for the principal between meeting the needs of children and upsetting the predictable routines of education for staff and all of those involved in schools. He felt that the tension between educating the individual student and maintaining an orderly school “reside not in the schools as a bureaucratic institution with defined expectancies and roles. Behind the roles and the expectancies, behind the bureaucracy and the orderliness, are the interests of people” (Huebner, 1975, p. 28).

Focus on positive interpersonal relations is quite a departure from the ways of the 60s'. With all of this shifting, much is written regarding the multiple and sometimes unrelated roles of the principal and his ability to slide in and out of each as needed. The difficulty in being successful in all of these roles is underscored by Drake and Roe in their first edition of their work *The Principalship* (1974). A principal, in their words at the time,

is a professional person being torn apart on the one hand by his intense interest and desire to lead in instruction and learning and on the other hand by his responsibility to 'keep school' through the proper administration and management of people and things as expected by the central administration (p.10).

The multiple discrepancies of the principal's role continued into the 1980s. On the one hand, they were asked to facilitate the education of a vastly changing clientele, be held more accountable for the results of that education and yet hand over their authority to outside influences. While at the same time, principals were asked to empower their teachers with a less direct approach. Beck and Murphy (1993) describe the principal by the end of the 1970s as a different person. The principal is "not typically portrayed as a bureaucrat with a clear base of authority . . . (but) as one where influence depends on interpersonal skills. Principals are expected to lead by suggestion and persuasion rather than by mandate" (p. 134).

The 1980s

The 1980s represented a time where schools and communities were seen as continuing to reach out to each other. However, Van Scotter (1991) indicated that,

“much educational reform has moved from the top down—from state legislatures and departments of education down to the classroom. Instead of working with principals and teachers to renew school learning environments, reformers focused on regulations” (p.44). Accordingly, the result is a cumulative effect of all of the responsibilities from each decade. “We see a recycling and reshaping of old expectations as scholars and practitioners alike react to the demands of school leadership in complex, diverse contexts” (Beck & Murphy, 1993, p.177).

As it had with Sputnik in the 1950s, society once again looked into the schools to find answers to a crisis. Instead of military inferiority with the Soviet Union, the issue was economic competition with Japan. “The conventional view held that a direct link existed between students’ learning basic skills and knowledge, and the nations’ economic capability. In response, business’s interest in school intensified during the 1980s” (Van Scotter, 1991, p. 20). That link turned out to be a blow for public education as it was judged to be responsible for the country’s economic shortcomings.

The real blow came in the 1983 booklet published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. Entitled *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, it began a series of reports scrutinizing public education into the 1990s. The report begins, “Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world” (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 1).

The commission provided a list of evidence regarding our deteriorating educational system including high rates of illiteracy, declining test scores, and a curriculum that has “homogenized, diluted, and diffused” learning (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 8).

This report immediately got the attention of the country and articulated people’s fears as they witnessed the difficulties of the changes in the 1970s. In a volume they edited, Gross and Gross wrote, “Never in the history of American education has there been more spirited controversy about what schools should do. Never have more people outside the schools been swept up in such discussion (about schools)” (1985, p. 15).

Public education became an important part of the national agenda and remained that way through the ‘90s. By 1985, every state had its own commission to study schools and recommend improvements. “The broad message was that schools can and should be improved academically, particularly in regard to leadership, management, discipline, teaching, and learning” (Drake & Roe, 2003, p. 12). DuFour and Eaker (1998) described the excellence movement of the 1980s as representing a top-down initiative that was standards-based with detailed specifications of school practices at the expense of local autonomy. Principals of schools that were making effective progress were studied and copied. Principals’ autonomy was curtailed and specific recommendations were made.

These recommendations included additional responsibilities for the already fragmented school principals. There was an increase in accountability for principals for their individual schools. The principals came under more pressure to administer

and defend the entire functioning of their buildings. “They are expected to know their school plants, staffs, and budget, to make needs known to persons or groups who can help meet them, and to account for the way resources are utilized” (Beck & Murphy, 1993, p.165).

Roland Barth, author of many books and articles covering schools and the principalship, detailed the increasing demands as far back as 1980. He noted that principals were now responsible for areas such as getting students to and from school safely, health and sex education, evacuation of school buses, bike safety, lunch programs, special and gifted education, children’s achievement of standards, as well as the physical plant of the school. He sums it succinctly when he says, “The principal is ultimately responsible for almost everything that happens in school and out” (Barth, 1980, p.4).

The 1980s reflected a tone of “objective language of business, of management, and of bureaucracy, which was especially prevalent in the thirties and sixties” (Beck & Murphy, 1993, p.177). This familiar business ring was directly related to the sense of urgency felt by educators due the perceived failures in the education system as outlined in *A Nation At Risk* (1983). External reforms were being imposed due to the overwhelming negativity toward schooling in the US. Michael Kirst (1988) noted that “A key assumption underlying state (reform) statutes form 1983-1987 . . . was thought to be a more rigorous curriculum. As one legislator told me, Let’s make the little buggers work harder” (p. 320). As outside influences, through studies of effective schools, were impacting the direction of the principalship, a cumulating effect can be seen. Best practices of the last eighty years were being

added to the expectations of the school principal, thereby increasing the amount of responsibility and the amount of time required to successfully fulfill the position.

Similar to the early 1900s definition of the role where the principal was intimately involved with instruction, there was a renewed expectation of the principal to influence curriculum and instruction. “The term most used to describe the principal’s responsibilities (during the 1980s) with instruction and curriculum was instructional leadership” (Matthews & Crow, 2003, p.32). Researchers of effective schools, at that time, noted that that instructional leadership meant that principals were to fully comprehend the school environment, including curriculum, teachers and students and then diagnose what was appropriate instructional leadership (Matthews & Crow, 2003).

Similar to the 1920s’ spiritual vision, researchers in the 1980s had recommendations for principals to define the vision for schools. Common at the time was the necessity to create and implement vision (mission) statements. As principals of effective schools were studied, creating a vision for their school was identified as an important trait for instructional leadership. Principals needed to think holistically, tailor the vision to all constituents, think outside the traditional paradigm and yet align the vision with that of the district. Beck & Murphy (1993) found that effective principals were ones who could articulate a sense of direction for their school and were able to further translate that sense of direction into specific goals.

The 1990s

The 1990s continued the wave of reform begun in the 1980s. This second wave was called the restructuring movement. “The Restructuring Movement of the

1990s based its approach to school reform on the premise that the paired concepts of national goals and local, site-based autonomy offered the best hope for genuine change” (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 16). The restructuring movement became synonymous with school reform in the early 1990’s. This school reform was a deliberate move away from the more of the same approaches of earlier movements. According to DuFour and Eaker (1998), the thinking was to reform at the local level where not only would local educators “have greater authority to initiate and oversee change in their schools, but they would also be given the autonomy to organize and administer programs and facilities . . . teachers and principals could respond creatively to issues they faced” (p. 7).

The documentation of the 1980s that chastised our educational society and saw it as a direct link to the slumping economy provided the stimulus for the restructuring movement. The educational system needed to be fixed to maintain any competitive advantage that we once had economically. This proposition garnered the attention of policy makers at every level of government.

In 1989, this wave of school improvement efforts received a boost from then president George H.W. Bush. At a national education summit in Virginia, a set of eight major goals was set for the country’s schools. By the year 2000, they declared:

Goal 1. All children in the United States of America will start school ready to learn.

Goal 2. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.

Goal 3. American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency over a challenging subject matter . . . so they are prepared for responsible citizens.

Goal 4. The Nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skill and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century.

Goal 5. U. S students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.

Goal 6. Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Goal 7. Every school in the United States will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

Goal 8. Every school will promote partnerships that will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children (Goals 2000: Educate America Act, 2000, Section 102).

President Bush presented these at the 1990 State of the Union address and they became known as *America 2000*. Co-chairmen of that summit, Arkansas governor Bill Clinton continued the focus and momentum when he became president in January 1993 (Kaiser, 1995).

Kaiser (1995) reported “With all the attention, support, and initiatives channeled toward improving education since the 1970s, and the endless tales and statistics which revealed lack of success in many areas . . .by 1991 it was clear that sufficient progress was not being made” (p. 68). Due to the six national education goals being used as the measure of acceptable performance for all public schools, individual states began to engage in their own level of education reform to comply with the national standards. As the central figure in each school, the role of the principal took on additional responsibilities during the 1990s. Beck and Murphy (1993) described the accumulating effect on principals.

The principalship has evolved to meet the clerical needs of school, and nearly all of the pressures exerted on the role over the last 150 years have reinforced the administrative nature of the position. Bureaucratic schools require a manager . . . competent management, however, is likely to be insufficient to meet the challenges of leading schools into a new age. Schools need leadership, and the principalship of the 1990s must change to meet that need (p. 190).

Roland Barth in 1990 described how people in schools have continuously assumed small, discrete additions to responsibilities, particularly due to the closer examination of schools. The public lacked confidence and commitment to public education and teachers after years of declining test scores and negative reports. Now in schools for first time, educators had lost faith in themselves and there was a lack confidence. “Under this duress, educators embrace these responsibilities with not one responsibility being backbreaking, but collectively a huge burden . . . This has

become increasingly difficult for the principal in particular as more difficult to manage” (Barth, 1990, p.7). Barth stresses that the central part of a good school is a healthy community, a community of learners where all learn and share in responsibility of learning (1990).

The move was then to make teachers responsible as leaders. The idea of principals being able to correctly diagnose the needs of teachers and students while performing in a vacuum as prescribed in the previous decade, proved to be inadequate. “The shift then (in the 1990s) returned the principal’s role to what it was originally, - that of being an educator of educators, a leader of leaders” (Matthews and Crow, 2003, p.33). The result of this can be seen in the research of the 1990s.

Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993

Massachusetts is an excellent example of a state attempting to reform its educational system to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population and to comply with federal law. In the late 80s and early 90s, Massachusetts undertook the challenge of education reform on the tail of Supreme Judicial Court ruling in *McDuffy v. Robertson*. The original suit began in 1978 as *Webby v. Dukakis* and was resolved in 1993 when it was known as *McDuffy v. Robertson*. The plaintiffs maintained that the state’s system for funding public education prevents children of their communities and opportunity for an adequate education (*McDuffy v. Robertson*, 1993).

The court ruled that the Commonwealth is obligated to educate all children in every city and town at the public school level (*McDuffy v Robertson*, 1993). For the first time, the state’s responsibility for educating its students had been recognized. The result was the Education Reform Act of 1993. This act impacted every aspect of

public education in the Commonwealth and greatly changed the expectations for school principals and administrators. Overall, the Education Reform Act of 1993 developed three tools. The first was to substantially increase state aid for under-spending districts. The second was a series of curriculum frameworks that would let school districts know what their students were expected to learn. The last piece was the MCAS, a system of assessments that were aligned with the curriculum frameworks developed by the states Department of Education (Gaudet, 2001, p. 5).

The Education Reform Act of 1993 specifically:

1. Established a foundation budget designed to bring all schools to an adequate level of per-pupil spending.
2. Increased student-learning time for core academic subjects.
3. Mandated the creation of charter schools (publicly funded, yet free from many district and state mandates).
4. Tightened certification requirements for teachers.
5. Threatened receivership for schools and districts that failed to perform adequately.
6. Oversaw the development of statewide curriculum frameworks in all core academic subjects.
7. Mandated assessments of student progress toward framework objectives.
8. Required 10th graders to show competency in the frameworks in order to receive their high school diploma. (Massachusetts Education Reform Act, 1993)

The theory behind this effort was similar to that of other states. The Commonwealth would provide clear expectations for outcomes and a manner in which to test those outcomes. It would provide more funding to those districts that were unable to support their local education. The Commonwealth also provided higher expectations for professional staff to implement the curriculum.

This level of support demanded a higher level of accountability at the school level, which rested in the lap of the principal. Prior to 1993, the only statewide educational requirements were history and physical education. Implementation of the comprehensive new curriculum and training of teachers at the school level was the responsibility of the principal as instructional leader. Teachers' professional development plans required by the state for re-certification were required to be reviewed and monitored by the school principal. Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) scores, which were published in the newspaper by school, were to demonstrate annual yearly progress or potential reprimands for the school, including receivership, and ultimately the school principal could be implicated. The principal, as of the 1993 Education Reform Act, was no longer able to participate in collective bargaining; therefore without the support of a union, the principal was more vulnerable to termination.

By the end of the 1990s, principals were being asked to embrace all parts of the role combined from the past century. They were asked to be the instructional leaders for their staff and lead by creating a learning community, though legislation had shifted responsibility for assessment to the state away from the teachers and the school. While the pendulum has swung back to principal as educator, management

demands (including the scheduling, administration and analysis of the MCAS) have increasingly made it more difficult for the principal to be engaged in that role. The emphasis for the principal to once again embrace the community at large and provide members of that community opportunity for participation in the governing of the school, particularly school councils that were mandated by the 1993 Education Reform Act in Massachusetts, has also consumed the principal's time. The school community, due to change in the social fabric, legislation and plain evolution, is an increasingly more challenging one.

The Principal Today

Matthews and Crow (2003) clearly articulated the accumulation of responsibilities to the role of the principal from entities outside of the school arena.

The principalship has developed into a complex role-far more complex than it was originally conceived. Historically, the principal's role has been shaped by numerous social and cultural forces, and these roles continue to change as schools and society reshape them. Currently, there is an urgent and widespread demand to improve student performance and reform school. The push for standards-based reform-and the pressure on schools to deliver in terms of academic performance-has raised the demand and pressures on principals and assistant principals and brought an unprecedented level of public scrutiny to their job performance . . . Nor have the management functions traditionally associated with school leadership gone away-if anything they have become more demanding (p. 33).

One recent significant piece of legislation that has greatly increased the pressure and public scrutiny that face principals today is the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)*. “Signed by Congress in December 2001 and by President G. W. Bush in January 2002, the *No Child Left Behind Act* is the most extensive reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) since it was enacted in 1965” (Eye on Education, 2003, p. 3). NCLB has refocused the federal government’s role in educating children in the United States. To close the achievement gap between students on diverse ends of the socioeconomic spectrum, NCLB established the following four principles: stronger accountability for results; increased flexibility and local control; expanded options for parents; and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work (*No Child Left Behind Act, 2002*).

The main thrust of the accountability principle is Annual Yearly Progress (AYP). “The concept of AYP is simple; Establish clear goals for student learning; measure whether students are reaching them; and commit to making improvements in schools that aren’t raising student achievement” (Weiner & Hall, 2004). The measuring of AYP is focused on math and reading assessments. The ultimate goal is that all students will meet the individual state’s standards of “proficient” by 2014. If a school’s achievement is at or above the state goal in a given year then it is making AYP. If a school is below its target goal for two consecutive years, the school is labeled, as needs improvement (*No Child Left Behind Act, 2002*).

AYP is based on subgroups of students in a particular school rather than on school averages, thus increasing the level of difficulty for a school to earn it. If a

school fails to make AYP with students who are low-income, minority, special education, or limited English proficient (LEP), then the school does not make AYP.

AYP has focused on the goal of holding all students to high academic standards, along with their schools and districts, and creating ways to lessen the gap between schools and districts. At the school level, Thomas (2004) intimated that principals are becoming more focused on the high-stakes state tests such as the MCAS. Principals are under greater pressure to ensure that they and their teachers understand and teach the state standards, as well as, analyze and monitor student progress with more level of specificity than any other time in history. Principals and their staff are analyzing testing data by student, class, grade and subgroup, as well as, by question type and learning strand. While providing valuable data in which to guide instruction, Mayo and Shotts, (2004) feel that principals are engaging in time-consuming and stressful activities that were not part of their routine as recently as five years ago, thereby adding to their role as principal.

Carole Kennedy, the Principal in Residence at the U. S. Department of Education from 1999-2001, agrees with the assertion that the current role of the principal has dramatically changed. She observed that while “practitioners realize the job has changed exponentially, the general public doesn’t. Too many people transpose their old image of the principal onto today’s school leader and continue to look for the hero who is going to save the day” (Kennedy, 2002, p. 29).

Kennedy asserts that policymakers are guilty of not recognizing the change in responsibilities as well. In her role as Principal in Residence, she participated in many discussions around the principalship and the impending shortage and noticed that

“these meetings were attended by university professors and researchers, foundation representatives, various educational and business organizations, and policy makers- but few practitioners” (Kennedy, 2002, p. 29). Participants of these discussions did realize the new complexity of the job, however, their solution was for principals to simply gain additional skills and take on even more responsibility.

For many years, principals have taken on new challenges. They have “worked to provide health, social, and food services; they have initiated before-and after-school programs, and much more” (Kennedy, 2002, p. 29). Kennedy was concerned how principals can handle the demands for accountability, increased test scores, and have highly qualified staff in each classroom, all of which rests on their shoulders, as indicated by *No Child Left Behind* legislation (2002).

Policy makers and the others involved in the discussions described earlier concluded that “today’s principal must be a manager, instructional leader, visionary, politician, strategist, community leader, and, following September 11, an emotional leader as well (Kennedy, 2002, p. 28). That made Kennedy wonder if “a principal’s job posting should read, Only God Need Apply” (Kennedy, 2002, p. 28).

Despite the principal’s history of rising to the challenge, Kennedy (2002) stated that few principals are prepared to successfully carry out all of these new roles. One major reason she feels for lack of preparedness is due to inexperience. For example, in North Carolina, the transition time from assistant principal to principal averages twelve to eighteen months, which is significantly lower than in the past. In New York City, 400 principals have been in position for less than three years. That level of inexperience will be prevalent over the next few years. “The number of

positions is expected to grow between 10% and 20% through 2008. Exacerbating the shortage is the aging pool of current principal; 40 percent will be eligible to retire in the next six years” (Groff, 2001, p. 16).

In an article that appeared in an issue of *State Legislatures*, Frances Groff (2001) expressed concern about experienced principals’ abilities to handle the new demands. Through her interviews with current principals, Groff offered further evidence for the increasing demands on the role of the principal. That evidence had to do with today’s society. “Any problem society is facing, is found in the schools, and it is now the principal’s personal responsibility to address it” (Groff, 2001, p. 16). Now, more than in the past, principals are servicing children of dysfunctional families, children with severe emotional needs, and new federal rules, particularly in the area of special education. It appears that over time schools have assumed more of the families’, churches’ and social services’ responsibilities. Groff (2001) cited day care and health care as examples. Principals eagerly meet these challenges though they wish they had more administrative support to help increase the amount of attention that is required to appropriately service each of these responsibilities. She found that the impact on the principal’s time is significant. It is common for a principal to be doing paperwork at 6AM or 10PM.

Casey Hurley (2001) shared similar concerns as Kennedy with the role of the principal being redefined by people other than practicing principals. An article in *Education Week* identified recent attempts at redefining the principalship by state legislatures, governors, business leaders, foundations, universities, professional organization, and school districts as off target. The ideas seem to perpetually focus

on the principals continuing to be building managers but needing to do more. While continuing to work with school finances and dealing with everyday events, the principal must now be the instructional leader who must coach, teach and develop teachers. Principals now must be “steeped in curriculum, instruction, and assessment in order to supervise a continuous improvement process that measures progress in raising student performance. They must build a learning community within their school and engage the broader school community in creating a compelling vision for their schools” (Hurley, 2001, p. 28).

A survey by the National Association of Elementary School Principals concurs with that assertion. Published in 1998 and seventh in a series conducted every 10 years, the study was based on a comprehensive survey mailed to a randomly selected group of 3,000 principals servicing elementary or middle schools. Principals of K-12 schools were excluded. Responses were received from 44% of the principals. The study was divided into several areas in which principals reported including responsibilities and authority, school-based decisions, and concerns for principals (Doud & Keller, 1998).

Responsibilities and Authority

Principals reported an increase in influence concerning district decisions that impacted their schools. However, they also reported a decrease in authority to make such decisions, despite increased responsibility and accountability. Principals felt increased responsibilities in: involving teachers and parents in building decisions; marketing their schools; political involvement; involvement with social services; and

working with site-based councils. Ninety percent of the respondents noted a positive working relationship with their various constituents (Doud & Keller, 1998).

School-Based Decisions

The study identified a trend toward shifting decision-making responsibilities to the schools. Seventy-five percent of the respondents indicated that they have received more authority to make decisions at the school level over the past three years. Sixty percent indicated that school-based councils have had a positive or highly positive impact on their schools. Staff and parents were reported to have the greatest impact on school decisions (Doud & Keller, 1998).

Concerns of principals

The greatest concern by principals noted in the survey was fragmentation of their time. Seventy-two percent identified it as impacting their ability to function in their role. Assurance of financial resources was the second highest (fifty-six percent) concern for principals. Over fifty-percent of the respondents noted that they were concerned about their students' outcomes on state assessments, as well as, providing adequate staff development for teachers (Doud & Keller, 1998).

Vincent Ferrandino, executive director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, referred to the fragmentation issue of a principal's day in a separate publication examining this study.

There are simply not enough hours in the day . . . responsibilities of an administrator and an instructional leader, including staff supervision and evaluation, student discipline, curriculum development, and working with parent organizations and site-based governance councils. NAESP's 1998

study paints a picture of a typical principal working 10 hours a day- - without an assistant principal --while devoting an additional eight hours a week to school-related activities (Ferrandino, 2002, p.441).

Quinn also noted the level of fragmentation in the daily routines of principals in 2003. Principals consistently listen to requests from teachers, parents, central-office administrators, school boards and community members, all of whom have competing interests. Principals make dozens of decisions everyday with small margin for error. Though they average 55-60 hours per week, their time is so fragmented that there is little opportunity to reflect in order to improve performance (Quinn, 2003). Their expanding role has compounded the idea of fragmentation. Archer (2002) added that though they feel more like social workers and referees than instructional leaders, they are still expected to be the administrator, business manager, and personnel managers in their schools.

Peterson (1985) conducted a study examining the types of activities in which a principal is engaged in during the course of a school day. Peterson's study of two elementary principals clearly demonstrated that their work is fragmented at best. While observing both principals, Peterson (1985) found that both principals averaged 13 activities per hour with a high of almost 50 activities in a single hour time span. Most tasks lasted one to two minutes. Interactions lasting longer than two minutes were frequently interrupted by the demands of others. Eighty percent of the time was spent in the general office area. Other people initiated forty percent of the tasks. The greatest percentage of their day was filled with activities not related to classroom instruction or teacher development (Peterson, 1985).

All of this additional pressure and responsibility has taken its toll on the individuals who make up the principalship. In 1995, Whitaker interviewed principals to examine emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in their jobs. Four emerging themes surfaced to reveal issues related to principals potentially leaving their profession. Those themes are:

1. Increasing demands of the principalship where accountability pressures and time-management issues were the factors.
2. The lack of role clarity in the areas of site-based management and shared decision making and how they fit in with the performance of the actual job.
3. Lack of recognition. Principals felt the need for recognition from the central office.
4. Decreasing autonomy. Sharing their decision-making authority had principals feeling powerless and vulnerable (Whitaker, 1995).

Pitner (1988) suggested that being an elementary principal can create the feeling of isolation. Often they are the only administrator in the building and research shows that they spend little time with central office personnel or other principals. Blumberg and Greenfield conducted case studies with eight elementary school principals to determine the connection principals have with other administrators in their district. They identified two characteristics of the principal's role that led to the feeling of isolation. First, principals have a weakly defined relationship with all other administrators. Second, principals work in isolation in regard to their principal peers. Blumberg and Greenfield concluded that feeling unable to impact the larger system;

principals view themselves as powerless, therefore forcing them to focus their attention back on their own school where they have some control, which perpetuates the isolation (1986).

Ackerman and Maslin-Ostrowski (2002) discussed in great depth in their book *The Wounded Leader*, the idea of school leaders being continuously wounded on the job. One general cause of the wounding has to do with the isolation of the principal's role.

An administrator has virtually no time for reflection or talk with trusted colleagues about concerns and fears. Although surrounded by teachers, students, staff, and parents, a leader can easily be isolated and may have to bear the burden of leadership alone. The chronic work-life tensions a leader experiences present him with significant personal obstacles (2002, p.11).

Reflective Practice

The need for educators to engage in reflective practice has been increasingly noted in educational research and literature. Many schools of education have also been providing ample opportunities for practitioners to engage in the process of reflecting. The impetus for this movement can be directly attributed to Donald Schon's work in the 1980's, which set the current standard for reflective practice theory.

In *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, Schon presented a choice for educators. "Shall he remain on the high ground where he can solve relatively unimportant problems according to prevailing standards of rigor, or shall he descend into the swamp of important problems and non rigorous inquiry?" (1987b, p. 3)

Schon argued that most situations handled by principals and other educators are beyond the reach of technical rational solutions developed by educational theory. He and others draw a heavy distinction between theoretical thinking (technical rationality) and professional knowledge. “What aspiring practitioners need most to learn, professional schools seem least able to teach” (Schon, 1987b, p. 8). He suggests an “epistemology of practice implicit in the artistic, intuitive processes which some practitioners do bring to situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict” (1983, p. 49).

Craft Knowledge is the term Roland Barth (2001) used to describe professional knowledge. He states “craft knowledge is the massive collection of experiences and learnings that those who live and work under the roof of the schoolhouse inevitably accrue during their careers” (2001, p. 56). Barth stressed the importance of finding the right conditions in which educators can reflect on this knowledge. “So it behooves us to ask, under what conditions are educators likely to come to reflect on and consolidate and disclose it to others . . .”(2001, p. 61).

Sergiovanni (1991) agreed that the nature of reflective practice is a vital component in an educator’s professional performance. However, he cautions not to overlook the key role that theoretical knowledge plays. Sergiovanni explained that the “mismatch between theoretical knowledge viewed as a singular truth and its subsequent ill-fitting application to practice may seem to suggest that research-based knowledge is useless. Reaching that conclusion would be a mistake” (Sergiovanni, 1991, p. 8). Educators, as they reflect on their professional practice and develop their craft knowledge, need an established theoretical knowledge base from which to

operate. Sergiovanni detailed that given the “idiosyncratic nature of the situation (school) she or he must be in control of the available scientific knowledge” (1991, p.9) in order to make sense of the reality of the situation.

With his assertion that professional knowledge is rooted in professional experience, Schon (1983) argued that reflection is the manner in which to maximize the benefit of professional experience. Schon defines reflection as an interactive process of thinking about, framing and reframing a problem. He uses the terms *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*. Reflection-in-action, Schon described with common sayings such as “thinking on your feet” and “learning by doing,” which suggest not only that we can think about what we’re doing but that we can think about doing something while doing it” (1983, p. 54).

Reflection is a distinct form of thinking, which emanates from doubt experienced in a particular situation that causes one to inquire and problem solve, according to John Dewey (1933). It was the existence of a problem that the person needed to resolve and then solve it in a rational manner that Dewey (1910) stressed was vital for true reflection to occur. He cautioned that though the existence of a problem or conflict may be uncomfortable, it is a necessary part of reflection.

Reflective thinking, in short, means judgment suspended during further inquiry; and suspense is likely to be somewhat painful. . . To maintain the state of doubt and to carry on systematic and protracted inquiry—these are the essentials of thinking (Dewey, 1910, p. 13).

In 1987, Schon described how practitioners solved problems by “applying theory and technique derived from systematic, preferably scientific knowledge” (p.

4). However, his research indicated that real-world problems rarely come in readily identifiable structures. “When a practitioner recognizes a situation as unique, she cannot handle it solely by applying theories or techniques derived from her store of technical knowledge” (Schon, p. 6). Practitioners must construct new frames from the given situation in order to engage in problem solving. The reframing is done in terms of past experience and knowledge, which allows the practitioner to develop a plan for future action. Reframing is a product of the doubt experienced in the action setting, when the outcome is unexpected. It is this idea of “reframing” that is at the heart of Schon’s idea of reflection-in-action.

Schon based his ideas on his previous work with Argyris. In their 1974 book, *Theory in Practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*, Argyris and Schon detailed their earlier research on constructing theories that affect practice. They explained that for people doing a certain job they would need skill, but then began to question what skill was. They eventually replaced skill with the term *theory-in-action*. To train people, they needed to teach them new theories. They noted that people who had difficulty learning new theories did not have difficulty in the theories themselves, but in the existing theories people possessed. They called these *theories-in-use* or how the person actually behaves which are different from *espoused theories*, the assumptions that the individual expresses about an event that are used to justify behavior (Argyris & Schon, 1974).

Argyris and Schon (1974) discovered how reluctant people were to acknowledge how their own attitudes affected their behavior and unaware of the

negative impact their behavior had on other people. They felt that culturally, people don't point incongruity in other people's espoused theories and theories in use.

Using that knowledge, Argyris and Schon (1974) defined and tested single-loop or model I behaviors. Outcomes are predictable when what is believed will happen in a given situation comes true. Model I thinking is similar to an equation. In a given situation (S), if the following occurs (A), the expected result is known (B) or $S + A = B$. Single-loop or model I behaviors are useful in stable settings. However, in unstable or changing environments, model I behaviors can be counterproductive. These behaviors can be counterproductive because they: (a) are competitive, (b) create win/lose strategies, (c) depend on rational, linear logic schemes, and (d) prevent the search for better answers by developing a one best solution (Argyris & Schon, 1974).

The use of double-loop learning strategies (Argyris & Schon, 1974) is proposed by Schon (1983) to provide solutions for messy, complex problems. These problems do not yield to model I or single-loop learning. Double-loop learning serves two important functions, which are learning in order to understand and understanding in order to take action (Argyris, 1982).

Double-loop or model II thinking processes require the individual to reflect on their own puzzling experiences. These are the experiences that do not yield readily to their normal processes for problem solving. When reflecting, the individual needs to identify his own assumptions. The underlying assumptions determine an individual's response to the events. Emphasis is placed on differentiation between espoused theories and theories-in-use. If the event and the assumptions are not congruent and

still leave the puzzle unsolved, the person is left to modify the assumption and look for a new theory (Argyris, 1982; Argyris & Schon, 1974).

Leon Festinger (1989) has another term for the doubt or problem that Schon asserts drives the reflection-in-action. Cognitive dissonance theory states that there is consistency in what a person knows, feels and believes and in what that person does. There is a consistency between the cognition and the action. When a person does not act in accordance with how they feel or behave, there is a gap referred to as dissonance. "Existence of dissonance, being psychologically uncomfortable will motivate the person to try to reduce the dissonance and achieve consonance" (Festinger, 1989, p. 3).

Barth (1990) echoes the theme of dissonance providing fertile soil for reflecting. He suggests that embracing differences helps educators to reflect. Where different teacher practices are used, different types of learners or students from varied cultural backgrounds are present, then there is much upon which to reflect. Tension, conflict and differences bring reflection and ultimately learning to a school environment more so than homogeneity.

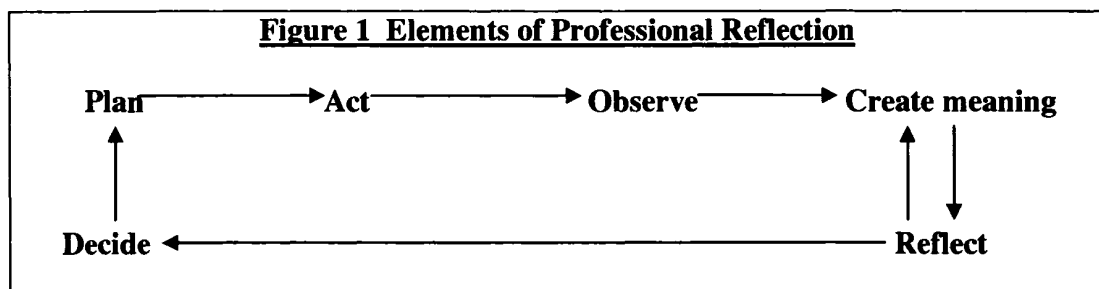
According to Schon (1983), *reflection-on-action* is what is more commonly associated with when one thinks of the idea of reflection. Reflection-on-action takes place when reviewing the action from outside of the setting. This would involve a person thinking about how they could have done something differently after a particular event.

We may reflect on action, thinking back on what we have done in order to discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected

outcome. We may do so after the fact in tranquility, or we may pause in the midst of action to make what Hannah Arendt (1971) calls a ‘stop-and-think.’”

In either case, our reflection has no direct connection to present action (Schon, 1987, p. 26).

Killion and Todnem presented the idea of *reflection-for-action* in 1991 as an addition to Schon’s first two types of reflection. “Reflection-for-action is the desired outcome of both the previous types of reflection” (Killion and Todnem, 1991, P.15). They explain that the purpose of reflection is to guide future action. It is a process that is engaged in the past, present, and future simultaneously. While examining past and present actions, we are creating knowledge that will inform our future actions. In other words, reflection-for-action is proactive in nature. Killion and Todnem used the following diagram to visually depict the steps of knowledge generation for future action.



This diagram was devised to show the stages in which classroom teachers reflect on their teaching. Teachers first plan to act, then through reflection in action observe the action as it is happening. From this reflection-in-action, teachers create meaning, in understanding the cause/effect relationship of their students and their actions. Engaging in reflection-on and reflection-for-action, teachers analyze events

and makes knowledge that will guide their future actions with her teaching (Killion & Todnem, 1991).

Grossman and Shulman (1994) acknowledge Killion and Todnem's work regarding the relationship between the three types of reflection within the context of classroom of teaching. They proposed that teachers reflect for action as they engage in curriculum analysis and planning, that they reflect in action during the active instruction, and that they reflect on action as they review and evaluate their practice. This provides a further understanding of the context in which reflection takes place. Grossman and Shulman purport that the correlation between reflection and reasoning suggest that all three types of reflection take place and are inherent in all of the intellectual processes of teaching.

One important outcome for reflective practitioners, while exploring unexamined beliefs and assumptions, is making known their own reflexive loops where unexamined beliefs affect the data they select (Larrivee, 2000). Argyris developed the term *reflexive loop* in 1990 (Larrivee, 2000) based on his earlier work with Schon defining single and double loop learning strategies (Argyris and Schon, 1974). Reflexive loop describes the "circular process by which we select data, add personal meaning, make assumptions based on our interpretations of the selected data, draw conclusions, adopt beliefs, and ultimately take action. We stay in a reflexive loop when our unexamined beliefs affect what data we select" (Larrivee, 2000 p. 295). Reflective practitioners continuously access new lens to view their own practices and alter their perspectives.

Peter Senge, in his book The Fifth Discipline (1990), used the term mental models to describe the assumptions, generalizations and images of how we see and understand the world. These deeply ingrained models often go unchecked though they drive our actions. Recognizing the need to reflect, Senge (1990) declared that the core task of the discipline of mental models is “bringing tacit assumptions and attitudes to the surface so people can explore and talk about their differences and misunderstandings” (p. 67). Senge stressed the imperativeness of this process for people who want to understand their environment more thoroughly “because, like a pane of glass framing and subtly distorting our vision, our mental models determine what we see” (1990, p. 67).

Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) reemphasized what Argyris and Schon (1974) found two decades earlier; that reflection is not an easy practice in which to participate. It is often difficult to objectively identify ones own theories-in-use which are deeply ingrained and guide our action. These actions are very powerful and elusive to identify. They are not easily changed because they are built up over years and are reinforced by our culture and experience. It is even more difficult to identify when our espoused theories, what we say we think and believe, do not match our theories in use. Our espoused theories exist at our conscious level and change with relative ease given new information. We often believe it is these espoused theories that guide our action. However, it is through reflective practices that one can identify a discrepancy between one’s espoused theories and one’s theories in action.

Behavioral change comes when new theories in use replace existing ones.

The usual method in this change is through formal education and professional development. These new methods are readily and easily accepted into our espoused theories. However, as stated previously, it is difficult to change our theories-in-use as these are often unexamined. Most people are unaware of the discrepancies between how they would describe their action and their actual practices. For actual change to take place and true reflection to have occurred, the individual must develop a conscious awareness of their theories in use and become dissatisfied with them creating dissonance. This dissonance provides the impetus for the change in behavior (Osterman and Kottkamp, 1993).

Larivee (2000) suggested that the following three practices are essential for reflective practice to occur: Making time for solitary reflection, becoming a perpetual problem solver, and questioning the status quo. By engaging in these three practices, teachers can recognize their repetitive cycles and reflexive loops, which limit their potential for tolerance and acceptance. “Approaching teaching as reflective practitioner involves infusing personal beliefs and values into a professional identity, resulting in developing a deliberate code of conduct” (Larivee, 2000, p. 293).

Schon extolled the need to find a way in which to reflect in a school setting in a 1988 chapter entitled *Coaching Reflective Teaching*. He describes how reflective teaching goes against the bureaucracy of schools with lesson plans, coverage, standard division of time, space and routines and teaching around right answers. In this environment, it is hard to take time to listen to a student, and follow-up on the student’s ideas/insights. However, there are some discretionary zones available for reflective teaching/coaching and they are expandable as individuals are willing to

take risks. “There is a large feeling of uneasiness that might force education reform in the vein of reflective teaching/coaching” (p. 27).

Boud and Walker, in 1998, continue this theme of discretionary zones where educational practitioners can create a sometimes micro-environment rich for reflection. They focus on the idea of context influencing reflection. They indicate that contextual influences permeate a learning environment and cannot be viewed objectively. It is subject to reinterpretation though often experienced as a given. Schools do not operate independently of their contexts. Reflection is often considered independently of context in an institution. It can be inappropriate to encourage reflective practice if the local context will only allow outcomes that are not useful. It is important to understand the conditions that may be needed for productive reflection to occur.

Boud and Walker (1998) asserted that people can be caught up in the overall context of an institution. Staff can create micro-contexts within institutions to challenge undesired aspects of that overall context. Micro-contexts are conducive to reflecting and have features separate from main cultural influences. One way to create this micro-context is to filter out negativity of the larger context and establish ground rules. This micro-context can be a good reflecting place for same-minded peers

According to Boud and Walker (1998), reflection can happen in circumstances that are less than ideal. However, for reflection to be productive, a micro-context needs to be created to counter factors that can automatically inhibit it. If the conditions are not right, then abuse or misuse of reflective practices can occur

Another aspect of reflective practice is the necessity for the learner to put the experience into words, even if all the dialogue is internal or for the learner only.

. . . reflection is not to be seen as a separate action to be used instrumentally in particular circumstances. It cannot be a skill taught for use in certain instances; rather, it is an ongoing process of the everyday life-world that needs to be emphasized and explicitly a linguistic event (Cinnamond & Zimpher, 1990, p. 64).

In 2001, Brown and Irby specifically identified 10 behaviors that describe a person who consistently engages in reflective behavior. A reflective practitioner is someone who exemplifies the following criteria:

- challenges accepted individual and collective practices;
- embraces change; makes time for reflection;
- seeks out and provides feedback from/to constituents;
- creates opportunities for staff to reflect; seeks personal growth;
- acts on individual and collective reflection in goal setting;
- adapts to change when needed;
- explores alternatives to challenges;
- maintains focus on goals.

Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) suggest experiential learning theory is at the root of this professional problem solving activity as the basis for reflective practice. This theory suggests that experience is the basis for learning, though learning cannot happen without reflection. Asking questions about practice begins a learning process that leads to behavioral change (when new theories in use replace existing ones). The

first step, according to Osterman and Kottkamp is identifying a problem. Educators usually identify solutions before fully understanding the problem. The reflective practitioner is then motivated by the identification of the problem and seeks out information. Though it is very difficult to do with deeply ingrained behavior patterns, he needs to become a detached observer of his own actions in order to then consider new action theories that look at the relationship between action and outcome.

Teacher and Principal Reflection Research

In 1990, Anna Richert conducted a study with preservice teachers investigating questions about what facilitates reflection in teaching. She designed four activities in which twelve teachers were asked to reflect. The activities included journal writing, portfolio-inspired reflection essays, reflective conversations with teacher peers, and portfolio-inspired conversations with teacher peers. The purpose of her study was “not to determine whether or not reflection would occur under certain circumstances, but to look at what differences arise in the reflections themselves and how the teachers perceive the opportunity to reflect under the different conditions” (Richert, 1990, p.510).

Richert’s results highlight the specific characteristics of various activities that contributed to teachers’ reflection, suggesting that the nature of an activity shaped the form of reflection. She concluded that structured opportunities to reflect, along with the necessary resources and support, were imperative for new teachers to become reflective. However, these conclusions were limited to a focus on preservice teachers to reflect in isolated activities, offering little insight as to how this would manifest itself with veteran teachers in the more complex context of a school (Richert, 1990).

The impact of reflective practice for the education field has been mostly demonstrated through the work of teachers and pre-service teachers. Day (2000) cites the research history of reflection as a necessary condition for teacher learning. However, he points out that while much has been written regarding the importance of principals in creating a learning environment conducive to continuous change, higher standards and accountability, few studies explore the nature of reflection and principal effectiveness. The needs for personal and professional growth are different with principals. The research done with teachers should not stand as the standard for principals.

In his study, Day calls for more principal research in the area of reflection. He proposes that good leadership in successful schools is closely connected to the ability and commitment of the principal to engage in reflective practice. Data from over 200 interviews in twelve schools with excellent reputations in England are the basis for his assertion.

To frame his study, Day (2000) summarized the literature regarding professionalism, reflection, and effective principals. Professionalism meant having a strong knowledge base, commitment to the students/families, professional commitment, and professional autonomy. To keep these skills from diminishing in an ever-changing professional environment, teachers/principals need to engage in reflective practice.

Day (2000) summarized data that showed the key characteristics by which stakeholders recognized principals' effectiveness. Those characteristics included, the way in which principals were reflective about their values; values of staff; progress of

the school in relation to peer schools; policy matters that impacted management and curriculum; and, conditions of service for teachers. The ability to reflect holistically was key to their leadership.

According to Day (2000), effective principals are driven by personal values and the ability to implement and carry out vision. Principals also are able to manage a number of tensions and problems that come with competing interests groups (Day, 2000).

Principals, in this study, moved beyond technical reflection (practice evaluation) and have asked their staff to do the same. They engaged in reflection in, on, about, and for the action in each context in which they worked. Effective principals are critical thinkers who are aware of their own and others' assumptions. They do not go for the quick solutions. They are able to make decisions in the complex and intense environment (due to reforms) that traditional leadership theory cannot help them address due to the non-linear nature of schools. Static, technical theory cannot be the only sustenance on which a principal can survive. The principal needs to be able to learn from his experiences because they are germane to his next experience (Day, 2000).

Bruce Barnett and Gary O'Mahony of the Australian Principals Center (APC) collected data while assisting the state of Victoria in implementing education reform. In response to education reforms, 90% of the state education budget was released to the schools, yearly progress reports were required, and self-managing schools in which principals selected their own staff were created. In 1999, APC staff developed professional development sessions, based on interviews with principals, to introduce

the concept of reflection and help educators apply it to school improvement, strategic leadership, and team development.

During a four-month period, groups of 40-120 active principals and assistant principal attended more than 20 sessions. The expectation was that each principal would 1) become more aware of his principal style; 2) understand the importance of the big picture when leading the school toward desired outcomes; 3) become aware of the make-up of effective team performance; 4) learn about colleagues successful practices; and, 5) plan strategies to implement change in the school setting.

Conclusions were drawn regarding reflection and professional development of principals. Of the conclusions drawn, the following were included; 1) self-administered inventories help principals understand their own preferences; and, 2) focusing reflection on real-life issues motivates principals to stay involved in improving their current practice.

In their 1987 study, Wildman and Niles showcased the difficulty in moving teachers in the direction of reflective practice. Their study investigated beginning teachers' transition into teaching and focused on the ability of the veteran teachers to collaborate with their newer counterparts. They asked teachers to provide a reconstructed description of classroom events from narratives, taped, and personal recollection and found difficulties with the teachers' attempts to be reflective. The teachers had difficulty separating descriptive statements and judgmental statements. Their talk also indicated that their understanding of the classroom was more functional than analytical. Wildman and Niles believed that the lack of time for

reflection, as well as the biased data-collection process when teachers are not trained in collecting and examining evidence, contributed to this style of dialogue.

Wildman and Niles (1987) also focused on the difference between teacher control and supervisor control of the reflective process. Educational reform models mostly impose change on the teacher, having little or no effect in change. However, in reflective practice, the teacher controls the process and determines the area of focus.

For teachers to become reflective practitioners, Wildman and Niles (1987) identified seven needs:

1. Observation and description of classroom events on which to reflect
2. The skills to obtain and express classroom descriptions
3. Control of the reflexive process
4. Administrative support
5. A safe environment for disclosing one's beliefs
6. Time for reflection
7. Collegial support and respect for teachers' knowledge.

They suggest that in order for these needs to be met, trainers or facilitators need to give up substantial amounts of control to promote reflective thinking in teachers; administrators have to develop a very different vision of how teachers should function; and politicians must fund efforts to have a significant amount of time for results if local educational initiatives to change teachers' professional lives are to succeed (Wildman& Niles, 1987).

Spilkova (2001) studied the impact of introducing rational analysis of college supervisors' teaching activities to student teachers to become aware of their tacit knowledge and intuitive behavior. The target of the action research project was to verify new methods in the development of student teachers through means of self-reflection and the constructivist approach to teaching. The study included 59 students in their second year of teacher education.

Spilkova's (2001) given in this study was that a teacher's conception of teaching was mainly unconscious and stable, and the main method of impacting individual teachers was through critical self-analysis. Through this self-analysis, teachers became conscious of their tacit knowledge (ideas and theories that were once spontaneous) through verbalization and rationalization.

The researcher described self-reflection in two basic activities for the purpose of the study. The first was the analysis of their own teaching attempts and reflection of the activity, i.e. what do I do, how do I do it? The second was the reflection on what was behind their activity, regarding personal views, attitudes and beliefs (Spilkova, 2001).

The instruments used for self-reflection in the study included independent writing in a diary, focused writing (essays on selected topics), and supported writing (targeted questions). Through this research study, Spilkova (2001) found that a long-term relationship between student teachers and their supervisors that utilized reflection on practical experiences created for the student an analysis of theory versus practice; an understanding of their school activity and its causes and consequences; and promoted a better understanding and a continued effort to understand their

professional self. Spilkova also found that students were more than willing to discuss, explain and defend their ideas of what teaching is and explore further the implication of educational theory and its impact on practice.

Zellner, et al (2002) looked at ways to improve the recruiting and mentoring of new school administrators and ways to support experienced administrators during a four year qualitative study. The study included reflections and survey responses from principals and assistant principals and university professors. Interview questions included principals' perceptions on their role in leadership, their role in mentoring others in leadership, their perception of reflection on practice, and their effectiveness as a school leader.

Predominant themes in the results of the study indicate that reflection is essential to successful school leadership. The participants responded that successful leaders provide time for them to reflect:

- a. On the effect of their own leadership on those they lead
- b. On how their leadership effects the school
- c. On the match between campus vision and actual practice
- d. On mentoring others into leadership roles
- e. On ways to positively create campus wide leadership (Zellner, et. al., 2002)

Zellner, et al. (2002), also pointed out in the study that the administrators, through their responses, prioritized and identified primary reasons for unsuccessful campus leadership. One of the highest rated responses was lack of reflection on leadership practice.

The Current Need for Principals to Engage in Reflection

There is a need for principals to engage in reflective practice. Their role is vital to the success of their individual schools as well as educational reform and the continuous changes that reform demands. “The belief that the principal plays a critical role in the success or failure of the school has appeared in the education literature in every decade. The basis of this importance, though . . . effectively have varied” (Beck & Murphy, 1993, p. 17).

Principals must be self-directed learners who learn not only about best practice research, but also about themselves. Principals must deal with constant changes in expectations of their role and the population with whom they work. Steadily increasing additions to their role and further accountability are foreseeable for the immediate future.

Given the flux of the nature of the job and the unpredictability of situations and people, there is no set of inert ideas that a principal can learn to be ready for every situation. Ackerman, Donaldson, and Van Der Bogert found comfort and fulfillment

in viewing leadership as a process-learning to be a principal. It is a perpetual process that entails learning to think and act as a leader, in response to the ever-changing challenges of learning and dealing with growing children and the adults who care about them (1996, p.2).

The school situation for each principal is greatly different. However, situations are similar in that each individual scenario provides opportunities for the principal to learn.

Every principal, novice and veteran alike, is in and out of 'hot water' all of the time. These situations provide all the ingredients for personal and professional growth: difficulties, a context for resolving them and a person who really wants them resolved. These moments of conflict hold great potential for learning. What the principal needs is helpful, nonjudgmental assistance in reflecting on and sharpening professional practice (Barth, 1990, p. 68)

Along with the notion that their school situations are unique and distinct, so are the attributes and styles of each principal. Ashby and Krug (1998) add that the crucial part in the learning process for leaders is self-awareness. "If we have learned one thing about effective leaders, it is that they come in all sizes and shapes. What appears to distinguish them from others isn't a distinctive set of characteristics but a distinctive approach that emerges from their personal conceptualization of the task" (p. 37). The awareness of how they view a particular situation based on their beliefs will help them understand themselves as leaders.

Principals must make sense of their own styles and contexts to contribute to their own development and adapt their learning to new situations. They work long hours and develop enormous experience in short periods of time. They need to benefit from this experience and learn from it. Barth (1990) is a strong advocate for learning from experience. This model moves from engaging in practice to reflecting on practice, to talking about practice which leads to a better understanding of practice, and finally to improved practice. Active principals need to continuously engage in professional theoretical learning to develop an intuitive professional

knowing as suggested by Sergiovanni (1991). However, they also need the opportunity to think about, discuss and write about their professional practice and utilize their craft knowledge, rather than depending on the repetition of successful past practices. Past practices and more traditional problem solving techniques are no way to provide leadership in the context of the school.

The importance of principals engaging in reflective practices and contributing to their own learning is underscored by the need for principals to be as Barth defines as “the more crucial role of the principal, head learner” (1990, p. 46). “The most powerful reason for principals to be learners . . . is the extraordinary influence of modeling behavior” (Barth, 1990, p.72). If principals want staff and students to take learning seriously and create a community of learners, he must model that daily. “Learning is the best antidote to the deadening of routinization so endemic to schools” (Barth, 1990, p. 72).

Many researchers believe that reflective practice is the key to educational reform and change. According to Osterman and Kottkamp (1993), educational reforms have failed due to their being external in nature. The “fix-it” model suggests that more money, new curriculum developed by outside experts, higher standards and new tests will do the trick. There is belief by many researchers (Sarason, 1990; Senge, 1990; Fullan, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1991) that people in organizations should be the ones to determine its needs. Therefore reflective practice is the key to educational change. Reflective practice purports that organizational change begins with people. That unless we change behaviors by examining our own behaviors and assumptions, organizations will not change.

Barth (1990) echoes that sentiment. Change comes from within an organization. It is people centered. Under this assumption, "To create change we must examine our own behaviors carefully, and carefully self-monitor our assumptions and behaviors" (Kottkamp and Osterman, 1993).

Providing time for principals to engage in reflective practice is difficult. Their days are fragmented, isolated, and continuously interrupted. However, Sergiovanni (1987) believes that reflective practice does exist in the work of school principals and needs to continue. Viewing school administration as a mix of demand, constraints, and choices, "many principals have found a surprising amount of wiggle room within areas of choice –wiggle room to adopt and embody the new leadership values described in this book" (Sergiovanni, 1987, p. 348).

Reflective practice can be the link between theory and professional practice and between professing and taking personal action to improve the quality of public education. Here is an approach to personal and organizational change and improvement that is open-ended, that encourages continued learning and growing while at the same time enhances the professional development of our colleagues, and that holds tremendous potential for working out specific improvements in very different educational contexts.

Good professionals often have difficulty articulating why they engage in certain practices. As seen in the research, it is difficult for principals (or anyone) to engage in reflective practice, as few are cognizant of the difference between their espoused theories and their theories in use. They need to further their awareness of their own thoughts and actions for further growth. Reflective practice is a means by

which principals can develop a greater level of self-awareness about the nature and impact of their performance, an awareness that creates opportunities for change in behaviors and beliefs.

As noted in several of the presented studies, principals need a structure and a context in which to engage in reflective practices. Killion and Todnem (1991), who provide workshops in the area of Personal Theory Building, urge formal training for all educators. They feel that without structure, the immediacy of day-to-day activities prevents educators from engaging in the reflective process. Killion and Todnem argue that reflection is a

gift we give ourselves, not passive thought that lolls aimlessly in our minds, but an effort we must approach with rigor, with some purpose in mind, and in some formal way, so as to reveal the wisdom embedded in our experience (1991, p. 14).

Discussion and Conclusion

Studies have shown that when educators engage in reflective practice they are more able to learn from their experience and are better able to grow in their profession (Wildman & Niles, 1987; Richert, 1990; Day, 2000; Spikova, 2001; Barnett & O'Mahony, 2002). This review of literature suggests that the idea of principals engaging in reflective practice needs to be further explored (Day, 2000).

Research studies have been conducted with educators at various levels and job descriptions engaging in reflective practice. Richert (1990) detailed the positive impact that structured reflective activities had on pre-service teachers. Pre-service

teachers are at the beginning of their professional career and with much scaffolding can develop the lifelong habit of engaging in reflective practice.

Day (2000) pointed out that principals have many different professional needs than pre-service teachers. Unlike pre-service teachers, principals are well into their professional careers and have the craft knowledge on which to derive meaning that is pertinent to their school environment and personal development. Due to the responsibilities, pressures of their role and time constraints, principals need to make meaning from their context and personal experience.

The evolution of the principalship is such that today's principal has a role that is more complex than it was originally intended. The changing expectations and responsibilities throughout the past century have accumulated thereby requiring principals to work longer hours (Ferrandino, 2002). Principals are asked to be community leaders, instructional leaders, emotional leaders, managers, social workers, politicians, counselors, and budget specialists. They are asked to lead schools, which now take on more of the social responsibilities once held by other institutions such as families, churches and other social services (Groff, 2001).

Since the 1980s and the restructuring movement of the 1990s there has been an increase in outside-in, top-down educational reforms based on legislative action. These standards have placed increasing additions and further accountability on the principal and have raised the pressures on them to deliver student performance under much public scrutiny. This public performance pressure coinciding with the additional responsibilities added over the decades leaves principals with little time for professional development. In addition to the longer hours principals must work to

meet the needs of their role, the fragmentation of their time to satisfy the competing responsibilities within that role does not afford them the opportunities for sustained periods of accomplishment (Doud & Keller, 1998).

Much has been written about the importance of the principal in regard to the effectiveness of the school (Barth, 1990; Beck & Murphy, 1993). To handle such pressures, principals needed to continue their own professional growth in a complex and intense learning environment. Theoretical knowledge is an important part of that growth. However, actual school situations rarely mirror those found in textbooks or workshops. Through reflection, principals will be able to reframe situations by embracing past experiences in order to create new and applicable knowledge (Schon, 1987).

Reflective practice is a manner in which principals can facilitate their personal and professional development in an environment rich with opportunities to learn by providing them with a process in which to engage those opportunities. This study investigated principals described by their peers as reflective practitioners to better understand how and when they engage in reflective practices in their school environment and to what extent their role as school leader is enhanced.

Summary

It has been argued in this study, through the literature, that the role of the principal is a time-consuming, demanding one for the individuals who occupy it. The accumulation of responsibilities and pressure has serious implications on the time and energy that principals can devote to their own professional learning. In chapter five, recommendations are made for principals to benefit from that time and energy and

channel it into their own professional learning and growth through the use of reflective practices.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study focused on elementary school principals and their engagement in reflective practices. It also focused on the level of importance they place on reflective practice as it relates to their job performance. The purpose of this study was to further the limited research in reflective practices of principals at the elementary level. Recommendations for continued professional learning using reflective practice for elementary school principals are recommended at the conclusion of the study.

Research Design

Qualitative Design

Reflective practice is a complex process that is dependent on its context (Boud & Walker, 1998). The nature of reflective practice and studying it in a public school that is ever changing and equally complex, lends itself to the qualitative research paradigm. “Qualitative methods are generally supported by the *interpretivist* (also referred to as *constructivist*) paradigm, which portrays the world in which reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing” (Glesne, 1999, p. 5). This study utilized a qualitative design to ascertain the benefits of reflective practices by elementary school principals.

Maxwell (1996) stated the strengths of qualitative research “derive primarily from its inductive approach, its focus on specific situations or people, and its emphasis on words rather than numbers” (p. 17). He suggested that there are five

research purposes for qualitative research. The first purpose, according to Maxwell (1996), is the understanding for meaning for the subjects. He defined meaning by anything that refers to the subjects' perspective of events, situations and their accounts regarding them.

The second research purpose and strength as seen by Maxwell, is that qualitative research involves the context in which the subjects perform and the influence the context has on them. Due to the small sample size used by qualitative researchers, researchers are able to "understand how events, actions, and meanings are shaped by the unique circumstance in which these occur" (1996, p. 19). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) concurred with that assertion. They stated that qualitative researchers "feel that action can best be understood when it is observed in the setting in which it occurs . . . they want to know where, how, and under what circumstances the actions came into being (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 5).

The third research purpose of qualitative research is that it provides opportunity for researchers to identify unanticipated phenomena and influences. This is truer in exploratory studies. Understanding the process is the fourth purpose and strength of this form of research. Though concerned with outcomes, qualitative researchers are able to get at the processes that lead to the outcomes. The fifth purpose and strength of qualitative research is developing causal explanations (Maxwell, 1996).

One practical purpose for engaging in qualitative research, particularly in a school setting, is the generation of results and theories "that are understandable and experientially credible, both to the people you are studying and to others" (Maxwell,

1996, p. 21). Bolster (1983) argued that the inability for educational research to make any direct impact on practice is that most research has been completed using a quantitative design. He claimed that this type of research does not relate to the realities of the classroom experience. Bolster suggested that practitioners would benefit more from research that examines the teacher's perspective and understands the classroom and school settings (1983). Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) echoed the importance of a qualitative study to the practitioner. It is "more likely that any generalizing to be done will be by interested practitioners- by individuals who are in situations similar to the one(s) investigated by the researcher" (p. 441). By using the qualitative method of research, this study aims to provide elementary school principals with results that apply directly to them in their setting.

Multiple Case Study Design

An exploratory, multiple-case study design with embedded units of analysis was used for this study. A deliberate and thorough review of the literature led to the development of questions that were more suited to the qualitative nature of research. "Qualitative researchers tend to ask *how x* plays a role in causing *y*, what the process is that connects *x* and *y*" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 20). The nature of the questions led to a case study design. "The researcher selects a case study design because of the nature of the research problem and the questions being asked" (Merriam, 1998, p. 41).

A case study design allows for a thorough examination of subjects and their perceptions within a complex setting. Merriam (1998) described case study research as offering a "means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Anchored in

real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon” (p. 41). Due to its capability of helping researchers understand subjects within context, the case study was embraced as a means to answer the research questions and develop an understanding of principals’ ability to reflect, and their perceptions of effective leadership.

Multiple cases were used in this study to strengthen the validity of the results. “The evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust” (Yin, 2003, p. 46). The reason for this assertion is the idea of “replication logic” (p. 46). Yin (2003) asserted that using several cases in a qualitative research project is equivalent to a quantitative researcher replicating an experiment several times. Whether each subsequent case supports or rejects the results of the first case, the qualitative researcher would follow a similar path as a scientist to draw conclusions.

Research Questions

One fundamental question encapsulates the focus of this study: How do elementary principals use reflective practices to enhance their role as school leaders? To facilitate the answer to this question, the research design answered the following, more specific research questions:

- How do selected principals conceptualize reflection?
- How do selected principals engage in reflection in, on and for action in their daily practice?
- How do selected principals benefit in their effectiveness as a result of engaging in purposeful reflective practice?

- What conditions encourage/discourage reflection within the school setting?

Sampling

The sampling for the study was done purposively. “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). Maxwell (1996) stressed finding individuals “that can provide you with the information that you need in order to answer your research questions is the most important consideration in qualitative sampling decisions” (p. 70). Miles and Huberman (1994) also recommended that samples in qualitative studies be small and theory-driven. Because this study examined elementary principals and the impact of their reflective practices, it was critical that the principals who participated in the study actually and successfully engaged in reflective practices. Merriam (1998) defended this assertion when she explained that purposeful sampling is criterion based. Established criteria for sampling need to reflect the purpose of the study.

Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) have stated that it is often difficult to objectively identify one’s own theories-in-use. These theories are deeply ingrained and guide our action. It is even more difficult to identify when our espoused theories, what we say we think and believe, do not match our theories in use. Therefore, principals selected for this study were ones who, given criteria of reflective practitioners, were identified by their peers as reflective practitioners.

The researcher utilized elementary school principals exclusive to the Merrimack Valley portion of Massachusetts for his study. The Merrimack Valley, as

defined by the Merrimack Valley Nonprofit Community Services Directory, “comprises all of the towns along the Merrimack River within Massachusetts” (2005, p. 1). Using the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) website, the researcher comprised a list of elementary principals working in 18 of the communities in the Merrimack Valley. There were 91 principals working in 94 elementary schools in those 18 communities. Five principals from the researcher’s own school district (including the researcher) were excluded from participating in the study to reduce the level of researcher bias. 86 principals were eligible to participate in this study.

A letter from the researcher (Appendix A) including criteria of a reflective practitioner was sent to all 86 principals. The letter asked them to consider recommending one of their peers in the Merrimack Valley for being a candidate for the study. If they agreed, they completed the recommendation form (Appendix B) and returned it to the researcher in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided. A follow-up email by the researcher to each principal within a week was made to insure the arrival of the letter.

Eight of the 86 recommendation letters were returned to the researcher. Twenty principals were recommended for the study, one of whom was recommended twice.

All of the recommended principals identified by their peers as reflective practitioners received an introductory/consent letter from the researcher indicating that they had been so identified and invited them to be part of this study (Appendix C). Four principals agreed to participate in the study by completing the portion of the letter indicating that they had read and understood the letter and wished to be

considered a candidate for the study. They returned it to the researcher in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided. A follow-up email was sent by the researcher to each principal within a week was made to insure the arrival of the letter.

Three principals were to be randomly chosen from the four who had agreed to participate in the study. Before the random choice could be made, one of the principals rescinded the offer to participate citing time constraints and other commitments. Therefore, the remaining three principals became the subjects of the study. Two of the subjects were employed in the same school district.

Once the subject group had been chosen, a letter was mailed immediately to each of the respondents. One letter (Appendix D) was sent to the remaining three principals. It indicated that they had been chosen to participate in the study and also provided them with more explanation of their role and purpose of the study. Another letter (Appendix E) was to be mailed to those who had not been chosen, thanking them for participating, however, that was not needed to be used.

Data Collection

There are no particular methods for data collection or analysis unique to the case study (Merriam, 1998). However, Merriam stated that primarily the choice of or the combination of three methods are used, interviews, document analysis, and observations. All three methods were utilized in this study.

Interviews

Structured Interview

According to Yin (2003), "One of the most important sources of case study information is the interview" (p. 89). Therefore, the standardized, open-ended

interview was one mode of data collection for this study. The three principals were interviewed separately during a prearranged time. Specific questions were used to guide the interview allowing for comparison across subjects. Exact wording and sequence of the questions were predetermined; however, the interviewee was made aware that they were free to respond in their own style. The open-ended questions (Appendix F) accessed the principals' beliefs about reflection, the manner in which they engaged in reflection, and the professional benefit that they have derived from engaging in reflective practices. This technique balanced consistency for cross-case analysis and flexibility for understanding each principal's unique perspective.

Each principal interview was scheduled for one hour. "Anything under half an hour is unlikely to be valuable; anything going much over an hour may be making unreasonable demands on busy interviewees" (Robson, 1993, p. 229). Each interview took place in the interviewee's work location in order to provide him/her comfort as well as for the researcher to understand the context of his/her professional environment (Seidman, 1998). Field notes were created immediately following the interview as to establish context for the setting. Each interview was audio taped with the consent of the principal. The content of each interview was transcribed. Each interviewee had the opportunity to review the transcript of the interview to clarify any statements. The audiotapes will be destroyed within a year of the completion of the study. Prior to the interview, each principal completed a brief biographical form (Appendix G).

Semi-Structured Interview

A second interview was conducted with each principal at least two but no more than four weeks after the observation. The focus of the interview centered on the principal's actions and follow-through regarding the content of the event witnessed by the researcher during the event observation. "Interviewing allows us to put behavior in context and provides access to understanding of their actions" (Seidman, 1998, p.4). This interview was designed in a semi-structured fashion (Merriam, 1998) to allow the researcher to ask questions specific to that event. The questions were guided by the research questions. Though the same questions were asked of each participant (Appendix H), "neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand" (Merriam, 1998, p. 74).

Similar to the first interview, each of the second interviews were scheduled for an hour at the interviewee's work location and were audio taped. The researcher created field notes, the interviewee had the opportunity to review the transcribed interview and the tapes will be destroyed.

Observations

The researcher conducted two direct observations of each principal to better understand each in their individual, professional contexts. "Observation seems to be pre-eminently the appropriate technique for getting at 'real life' in the 'real world'" (Robson, 1993, p. 191).

Event Observation

The first observation was an event observation in which each principal was observed while she engaged with staff during a naturally occurring event. A school council meeting and two staff meetings were the observed events. Each situation and time was negotiated with the principals. The common theme for each of the three observations was that the observation was conducted during an event where action items were generated.

Each observation was recorded on an observation form (Appendix I), which included details of the event including reflections of the researcher. Reflections of the researcher were made prior to (regarding the setting) and after the event. After each observation, the principal and researcher spoke informally about the event providing time for each principal to reflect on her action.

Shadow Observation

The second observation was a shadow observation. This observation was designed to take place over the course of a half of a school day. The researcher shadowed each principal for a period of approximately two and a half to three hours to better understand a variety of formal and informal contexts in which the principals traveled throughout their day. A record of the time and nature of each activity or event the principal engaged in was kept on a shadow observation form (Appendix J). After each observation, the principal and researcher spoke informally about the event providing time for each principal to reflect on their action.

Visual Data

Photography was another form of data collected by the researcher. Though not commonly used in research reports (Eisner, 1998), it is another tool to appropriately describe a context or setting. “Photographs and films can say things that not only would require pages and pages of words to describe, but in the end could not be adequately described with words” (Eisner, 1998, p. 187).

Each of the principals had her office and various locations in the school photographed by the researcher. The principals agreed in advance to this photography, but did not have notice of when the pictures were actually taken. The unannounced pictures captured the professional work setting of each principal as it naturally occurred. No human subjects were in any photographs.

Documents

Parent newsletters, school handbooks and staff meeting agendas were collected from each work site. Each principal was asked to select documents that they felt demonstrated examples of their reflective practice. The recording of documents followed a protocol, which included the name of the document, the significance of the document and a brief content summary (Appendix K). Data from these documents were analyzed in relation to the research questions.

Data Collection Timeline

The following timeline was used for collecting data at each research site. The structured interview was conducted first, followed by the event observation. The semi-structured interview, which related to the data collected at the event observation followed. The last event was the shadow observation. The only exception to this timeline was with Principal B. Due to a necessary rescheduling of an event due to an

unanticipated change in the researcher's work responsibilities, the shadowing observation preceded the event observation. All documents were presented to the researcher during varying visits to the research site. Photographs were taken randomly.

Data Analysis

Data was coded into thematic categories that were linked to the research questions (Bogdan & Bilken, 1998) and related to the criteria of reflective practitioners (Brown & Irby, 2001). The results of each case are reported in Chapter 4, divided into sections, by principal and are presented under each of the research question.

The researcher used the NVivo program to facilitate the organization of the data. All data from interviews, observations and documents were entered into electronic form by a professional transcriber and/or the researcher. The NVivo software program was used to store, sort and retrieve the data. This program assisted in the development of specific categories to highlight. NVivo was able to print out paragraphs with specific codes from all of the documents thereby providing the opportunity to look at specific characteristics across a range of documents in an expeditious and efficient manner. In qualitative research the use of technology, "can allow greater simultaneous access to multiple points of data and thus increase the ability to make connections" (Merriam, 1998, p. 174).

Reliability/Validity/Researcher Bias

Internal Validity

Internal validity in a study answers the question, “Are investigators measuring what they think they are measuring” (Merriam, 1998, p. 201)? In qualitative research, people are the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. Merriam (1998) suggested that when the subjects’ reality is accessed through observations and interviews then the resulting “internal validity is a strength in qualitative research” (p. 203).

To insure internal validity of the proposed study the researcher used multiple data sources. Those data sources included: two interviews with each principal, two observations of each principal, a photograph of each principal’s office, and a review of parent newsletters, school handbooks and staff meeting agendas. Called triangulation, this strategy “reduces the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that are developed” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 93). The use of triangulation can also identify the need for further study should there be inconsistent or contradictory evidence presented through the data sources.

To rule out misinterpretation of meaning during data collection, the researcher conducted member checks (Merriam, 1998; Maxwell, 1996; Robson, 1993). Each principal was given the opportunity to review and clarify the transcripts of each interview to reduce any researcher “reactivity” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 91) to given answers.

A third form of validity concerns this researcher's past training. The researcher has been trained in scripting classroom observations through the Research for Better Teaching Institute in Concord, Massachusetts. He has collected data through observations for the past eight years as necessitated by his positions as an elementary assistant principal and principal.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated (Merriam, 1998). Unlike quantitative research, "qualitative research is not conducted so the laws of human nature can be isolated" (Merriam, 1998, p. 205). Due to the context of each case study being too individualized to be replicated, the methods of the study should have a significant enough "audit trail" as to be replicated by another researcher (Yin, 2003). To provide for this replication, a case study database (Yin, 2003) was developed. All accumulated data and communications was saved. All protocols for interviews and surveys were documented. All information regarding participants was stored in a secure place.

The multi-case design of the proposed study also demonstrated the notion of replication. Each case provided information from three different settings focusing on three different elementary principals (Yin, 2003).

A chain of evidence was established in the analysis of this data to allow the reader to make logical connections from the research questions to the conclusions of the proposed case study. There is a thorough use of citations relating to the sections of the case study database. The database has been sufficiently referenced to reveal

specific and actual evidence and the context in which it was recorded. The context of the evidence is as identified in the research protocol (Yin, 2003).

External Validity

External validity deals with the generalizability of the results beyond the immediate study (Maxwell, 1996). Maxwell (1996) and (Yin, 2003) suggested that though difficult to generalize the results of a case study to a larger population, one way to address the situation is through replication logic. By using multiple cases, the replication of the study protocols produced results that are similar though not identical due to different samples and context.

Researcher Bias

The researcher is currently an elementary school principal who believes that the impact of using reflective practices has positively impacted his ability to lead his school. He believes strongly in the need for reflection as a way for principals to maximize their professional experience and knowledge in a climate of increasing demands and accountability. This stance could have influenced the way he evaluated interview and observation data, threatening the validity of the study.

To address this issue, the researcher continuously monitored himself and consulted with his dissertation committee. Another principal, not involved with the study, served as an auditor. She read the data analysis checking for researcher bias. The researcher also had the principals review the transcripts of their interviews and recorded immediate field notes (Appendix L) after observations and interviews.

Ethical Considerations

According to Stake (1994), “qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict” (p. 244). Before collecting any data, the researcher passed the University of Massachusetts Lowell Institutional Review Board (IRB)’s proficiency test for researchers. All guidelines provided by the IRB regarding research projects involving human subjects were adhered to. All subjects of the proposed study signed a letter of consent and their identities will remain anonymous. The audiotapes and all research materials are stored in the researcher’s home office. All audiotapes will be destroyed upon conclusion of this study.

CHAPTER IV RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter advances a detailed description of the data analysis results for each of the three individual principals studied as subjects of this study and is divided into six interrelated segments. The first segment provides a brief biographical sketch of each principal and her school. The following four segments are a restatement of each research question and the manner in which each principal identified with that question based on the criteria of reflective principals (Brown & Irby, 2001). The final segment summarizes the results of this study.

The results of the study are a compilation of interviews, observations, photographs taken, and documents collected. Discussion of the results drawn from this study as well as recommendations for professional development opportunities for principals is detailed in Chapter 5.

Brief Biographical Sketch of Subjects and Their Schools

Principal A

Principal A is the principal of a K-2 elementary school in a suburban school district in the Merrimack Valley portion of Massachusetts. School A is a non-Title I school with 403 students. There are four classes of kindergarten, five classes of grade one, six classes of grade two, two multi-age classrooms, one pre-first grade, and one classroom designed for students with Pervasive Developmental Delay disorder. School A includes or has access to the following special educators, one speech and language pathologist, one occupational therapist, one resource room teacher, and one learning center teacher. There are also four special education assistants. Regular

education support includes access to, two school counselors, one school psychologist, one English as a Second Language teacher, four reading specialists and one math specialist. Two secretaries, one nurse and a part time assistant principal complete the staff at School A. This school is one of 10 schools in the district including seven elementary, two middle schools and one high school.

Principal A has been in school administration for ten years, the last five of which have been at School A. Prior to becoming principal, she was the assistant principal for two years at the school. Her highest degree earned is an Ed.S, Education Specialist, in another state which is the equivalent of a C.A.G.S., Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies, in Massachusetts.

Principal B

Principal B is the principal of a Pre-K-4 elementary school in an urban school district in the Merrimack Valley portion of Massachusetts. School B is a Title I school with 265 students of whom approximately 66% have English as their second language. There are two classes of pre-kindergarten, two classes of kindergarten, two classes of grade one, two classes of grade two, two classes of grade three, and two classes of grade four. There is one classroom for emotionally and behaviorally disabled students. School B includes or has access to the following special educators, one speech and language pathologist, one occupational therapist, one resource room teacher, and one learning center teacher. There are also five special education assistants. Regular education support includes access to, one school counselors, one social worker, one school psychologist, one English as a Second Language teacher, one reading specialist and one math specialist. There is no secretary, but one clerk,

one nurse and no assistant principal at School B. This school is one of twenty-three schools in the district including fifteen elementary, seven middle schools and one high school.

Principal B has been in school administration for 21 years, the last 13 of which have been at School B. She will retire from education at the conclusion of this school year. Principal B has a Masters of Education and all but her dissertation from a doctoral program. She has attended her district's Leadership Academy every year since 1985.

Principal C

Principal C is the principal of a 3-5 elementary school in a suburban school district in the Merrimack Valley portion of Massachusetts. School C is a non-Title I school with 410 students. There are seven classes of grade three, six classes of grade four, seven classes of grade five. School C includes or has access to the following special educators, one speech and language pathologist, one occupational therapist, one resource room teacher, and three learning center teachers. There are also two special education assistants. Regular education support includes access to one school counselor, one school psychologist, one English as a Second Language teacher, three reading resource facilitators and three math tutors. Two secretaries, one nurse, and a part time assistant principal complete the staff at School C. This school is one of ten schools in the district including seven elementary, two middle schools and one high school.

Principal C has been in school administration for thirteen years, the last seven of which have been at School C. This is her third principalship. Her highest degree

earned is a C.A.G.S., Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies, in Administration, Planning, and Policy.

Research Question 1- How do selected principals conceptualize reflection?

Each principal was directly and indirectly asked how she conceptualized reflection through both interviews. During the coding of the direct observation, shadowing experience, and collected documents, this question was interpreted as each principal demonstrated the following reflective leadership behaviors: seeks personal growth; maintains focus on goals; embraces change; challenges accepted individual and collective practices.

Principal A

Reflection is a concept that Principal A reported that she likes, engages in and finds beneficial. She feels that “on-the job training” and experience has played an important role in her professional development and that, she believes is done through reflection. She asks that her staff reflect on their professional practice and feels compelled to model that for them. “Not only for me to grow and progress and so forth, but to be practicing what I preach, if you will. So I think that means, as I said, I run that tape all the time.” When asked what “running the tape” meant, Principal A indicated that she is continuously analyzing her actions, to shape her future actions.

Principal A has deliberately geared her personal growth and professional experience toward becoming an effective principal. She chose a specific university for its principal program that utilized practitioners in the field to work with students. “So there was a superintendent, an assistant superintendent, an elementary principal, middle school principal, so while we had all the theory and I understand that was

important, but to have the principal come in and say, okay, put the book aside. Here's the reality of my day. And these are the decisions."

When asked how she grows as a principal, Principal A said that the key was reflecting on what she was doing and finding out how she could do it better next time. One way she does that is by seeking out other principals to network and share ideas and learn from each other's experiences. Learning from other's experiences is something she did not do immediately as a first year principal, but has come to appreciate its value.

Principal A gave the example of a conversation she had with a peer who recently had a student die. While providing empathy and comfort, she also wanted to know about that principal's experience so that she would be better prepared should she be faced with the same situation. She also cited her experience at the Harvard Institute for Principals as a rewarding experience, once again, not only engaging with theoretical knowledge, but also sharing with peers.

Principal A is also, in her words, a voracious reader, this being another way in which she grows as a principal and personally. She reads articles and books in the field of educational leadership. A review of her weekly staff bulletin demonstrates her willingness to share her enthusiasm for professional reading by providing staff with recent, pertinent articles on which they can reflect. Recently she has expanded her boundaries of professional reading and has incorporated books about leaders from other industries trying to get insights into how other leaders problem solve and help their organizations move forward.

Principal A stressed the importance for her to realize the context in which

she works as she gains information from other people and sources. “. . . talking to other people, continuing, you know to read and then when I take in all, everything from everybody else I still have to make it my own and be true to myself, you know and make it work.”

Principal A has a strong sense of her goals for her schools and how to continuously articulate, support and reinforce them. She purposely tries to embed the goals of school into all communications with the staff. “This is your vision; this is what we’re all about and . . . any opportunity that I could bring that up through my school advisory council, this is what we’re talking about; through my early morning announcement bulletin and through different faculty meetings and simple things like um, very simple and that my Monday morning bulletin I always start off with a thank you (to staff for engaging in practices outlined by school goals).”

Goals are clearly written in the school improvement plan. They can also be found in written communications to parents and staff. However, keeping the goals alive is important to Principal A. She feels that you can’t just talk about something once and then have it go, improvement is ongoing. Therefore, as well as communicating with the staff at large, she checks in at grade level meetings to gauge progress by having teachers share data and strategies. She also will then meet with teachers individually to check their personal progress. By using these forums, Principal A keeps goals active and alive.

One of Principal A’s beliefs is that the staff learns from each other whether through articles, workshops or reflecting on their collective practice. By doing this, she believes, it makes them better teachers and better able improve student

achievement. She, as she articulated, “puts her money where her mouth is,” by making known her goal, providing staff with concrete avenues to engage in that goal, and to follow through with feedback. In the observed faculty meeting, Principal A reminded her staff of her belief about learning from each other. She then provided several teachers with the opportunity to share their experience from a nonfiction reading course they had taken from Fitchburg State College. In the weekly Monday bulletin, Principal A had thanked the teachers for taking the risk and sharing with their colleagues. She also had indicated that she had observed several teachers in the building utilizing several of the nonfiction strategies shared at the meeting. The message, she felt was clear, that developing a professional learning community and learning from each other was valued by her and that as a school goal will be monitored.

Photographs of School A clearly relate what goals are important. One goal detailing the code of respect and conduct of the school is ever present in the school. In the office is large banner indicating the code and what it means to be in that school. In the lobby and throughout the building the code is displayed. In front of every classroom is a three dimensional representation of the code. Posted in our around every classroom is a certificate(s) congratulating that classroom for exhibiting positive behaviors expected by all members of the school community. Also in the lobby the school improvement plans, a bookcase of educational literature, a photo album of school class pictures are also available to all visitors.

Principal A has come to have to have a healthy respect for change and the process of change. In her experience she has learned that most people “shy away

from it, are afraid of it and don't like it." That has been hard for her because she indicated that she loves change and that a fresh perspective is to be embraced. But she has learned to go cautiously and consistently and with a great deal of feedback while still trying to stay the course. The key, she feels, is to talk to people about what's coming. She will often lay the groundwork in little meetings, one-on-one or grade level meetings before any big faculty meeting.

Principal A also feels it's important to let people know the progress of these changes by having little benchmarks. "I mean if you're going to change something everyone has to know about it, has to know where you're going, why you're going, how you're going to get there, have input into the whole thing, um, but you can't wait around until everyone's comfortable. Um, but there are ways that, you know, you can make them comfortable. And you keep plowing forward. You keep staying the course."

Embracing another perspective does not mean an automatic change in how things are done, according to Principal A. Reflection on current and past practices, however, should be done continuously to further a better understanding on how to move forward.

That appreciation is seen in the work of the school improvement plan. In creating this plan, Principal A works with her staff in a formal planning process to move the school forward based on assessing past performance. This procedure is completed yearly with input from staff, district personnel and parents.

In creating change in a school environment, a principal must challenge accepted individual and collective practices. Principal A was the assistant principal at

School A prior to becoming principal. She felt it was a great opportunity to know the culture of the school before assuming leadership, one which most principals are not afforded.

Coming into her first school year as principal, she had ideas of what she wanted to accomplish regarding professional learning communities and professional conversations and sharing. But what Principal A learned and what challenged her in her own practice, was to acknowledge that she was not creating the vision in the culture of the school. She realized that a culture was in place when she arrived and that she needed to embrace it and start from there.

The existing culture did not emphasize the value of shared learning. Principal A began challenging that slowly by making her vision known and then by modeling it daily. Over the past several years, that philosophy has been embraced and kept alive by Principal A. As previously indicated, that goal is in the school improvement plan, it is in weekly communications, and it is on staff meeting agendas and modeled by other staff members. Principal A speaks with staff as a whole, by grade level and individually. She makes a conscious effort to engage with every staff member daily in an informal manner to establish a comfortable, collegial relationship. This allows her shape the culture of the school and challenge previously accepted practice of teacher isolation and move toward her vision of a professional learning community.

Principal B

Principal B thinks that reflection is something that you should do all day every day, and not just around education. It should be done around life. “We have to assess what’s happening, am I making the best decision here and is this decision really

helping us to get to the goal?" She believes the thinking piece is most important to figure out why something is not working? The thinking for Principal B is done after an event in anticipation of doing it better in future events.

She believes a lot of her reflection is not just around effectiveness, but efficiency. She doesn't want to waste a minute when the staff is working with the population that they have at their school. She feels that every minute has to count for those children while they're at school due to the often inadequate level of support at home.

Photographs of Principal B's office reflect the idea of efficiency. Neat and organized work stations at her desk, by her computer at a second desk, and on her table. Before leaving everyday, Principal B neatly arranges on her table items she believes to be working on the following day. Those items were clearly displayed through the camera lens. The two-month wall calendar and her immediate recording of new events on it clearly support her efficiency convictions.

Photographs of the school also detail her need for every minute to count for her students. Murals of historical figures, quotes and events are displayed. Drawings and posters of curriculum based themes are throughout the school as well. Reminders of behavioral expectations are in hallways and classrooms. Painted in bright colors above one of the doorways of this hundred year old building where children exit to the playground are eleven character trait words such as dependable, caring, and integrity that serve as continuous reminders of the expectations.

Principal B is committed to her own personal growth. She rarely watches television and reads something to do with education every night. She reads her

educational journals, or does her homework for leadership class (through the school district), or will read the Marshall Memo (an online memo that summarizes educational research), or she will select a book from the stack of professional books on her nightstand at home.

Through her district, Principal B has participated in Leadership Academy every summer and once a month throughout the year since 1985. The leadership academy had been previously done through a local university, and is now done with researcher/author John Saphier.

Principal B takes a graduate level course every single year, whether it's leadership or not. She has done most of the professional development with the teachers at School B. She explained that for example, she hadn't done math in a long time; she loves math, but she was more used to the traditional style of math done with the textbooks. Therefore, she went to all of the workshops provided for the teachers. She also went online to research the National Counsel Teachers of Math, getting their resources and reading all about the math investigations to better support her staff.

Principal B often spends family time increasing her knowledge on the field of educational leadership. Her husband is a current principal and former assistant superintendent. She has a sister who is a teacher, and other family members in the field. Her most recent vacation with her sister was spent on a beach in Aruba, both reading and discussing the impact of a particular educational research book.

Consulting with other peers is another way in which Principal B feels she grows. When she sees what another person is doing that is working well for their school, she engages them in a conversation around why that method was decided, and

the impact it has on students. She then relates that to her school setting to see if it is manageable and also whether it is beneficial for her own population of students.

Principal B's focus when she joined School B thirteen years ago was on providing students with an environment that supported educational excellence and prepared confident, competent and caring students. She wanted to create and maintain a school that was caring and nurturing and one that allowed students to take educational risks while holding students accountable for high expectations. Those expectations for students included respect, hard work, fairness and kindness. On the school letterhead is the quote "All Students Educated Together."

The school community for Principal B also included parents who in that city are not traditionally known for participating in school activities or in the formal educational lives of their children. Her goal, based on educational research about home-school connections and the academic success of children, was to reach out to parents in ways that they have not been reached.

To maintain these goals Principal B has had to challenge accepted individual and collective practices of the school and get her staff to embrace change with her. Her self-described style is very tight, and highly organized. "You know, a lot of control over the essential things of management. I like tight control over that." Principal B needed to see the big academic picture of her new school. By looking at the recent student assessments, it was not a very positive picture. She wanted to know why that was happening, what was going on in the classrooms, and what staff thought were priorities.

Regarding the priorities for academics, she heard from staff that being successful in academics is really difficult for the students given their socio-economic and immigrant status. It was difficult for the kids to do much in the area of academics. Principal B's experience had been in other schools that had had a much higher level of poverty; very few resources, including a school that was opened just for all the Cambodian immigrants in the city.

Principal B thought there should be very high expectations for the students, poor or not thus beginning her focus; to say they can and will do a lot better. She started by engaging the staff. "We needed to sit around the table and talk about how we were going to be able to get this done. And I think for a lot of them it was the first time that they really started to think about, oh, we really have to push these kids, even though they're poor."

Embracing change was difficult for staff. Together they started to look at everything that they did in the school. Principal B had them describe their collective focus and what they thought was important? "You know, hard work, good effort, on part of the staff and on part of the students. And that's really where we needed to go."

During this time, Principal B was looking for a lot of consensus, but realized that she was still the bottom line. If it just did not gel with what she thought was really most valuable, she would not go for it. As she said, "My job is to try and think of what's best, rather than what's easiest." The process was very complex and time consuming, but in her opinion it was what was best for the children.

Principal C

For Principal C, reflection is something “that any thoughtful, intelligent professional is doing.” Reflection is a way of looking back and forward at the same time. She thinks that most reflection is done after an action or event is complete to understand the impact on the school community. Reflection is also looking forward by creating the time to do some planning based on past events. Reflection “can be more deliberate than what happens in the real world when you reflect automatically.”

Photographs of Principal C’s office revealed that it is filled with curriculum materials and professional materials. Review of her Monday Memo to staff summarized an activity from the previous staff meeting and cited the literature from which that activity was derived. At the observed staff meeting she brought an article on student assessment for staff to read for the next meeting. At the staff meeting, she also referenced the article that provided her with the focus for the staff meeting activity. While talking with the music teacher she referenced a recent article on Beethoven that she thought the teacher might find interesting.

Principal C is a reader and that is her main focus for her personal and professional growth. Her focus for growth and professional development is dictated by her interests and needs, and the needs of the school. For example, self-described as not being a mathematician or a statistician, Principal C gravitates towards data and has over the past ten years as she has been fascinated with finding ways to get at how educators measure student progress. This path was borne from a personal and professional need.

Sometimes the direction of professional development for Principal C may come from “some professional reading that I would do in journals, very short little

snippets. I only need a short little piece of something to peak my interest and get me to explore it a little bit further and in a little bit more depth. Then if it is applicable to the needs of my school, I will jump right in.”

Principal C has always had and maintains an interest in researching instructional strategies. For half of the year, she teaches a Skillful Teacher course one night a week, for 15 weeks. The most rewarding part of that endeavor is the processing about good practice that takes place in preparation for that course with a colleague that co-teaches the course.

Ultimately, as Principal C continues her professional growth, she would like to settle into preparing teachers to enter into the classroom, and draw on her own experiences and education.

Goals for the school are created by or in teams, evaluated as a team and the responsibility of everyone. As the head of the school, Principal C’s role is to continuously communicate the goals and facilitate the process of creating, implementing and assessing them. Principal C does this in several ways. A review of the school improvement plan clearly delineates the goals, how they are to be measured and who is responsible. Principal C facilitates the implementation of these goals during staff meetings, professional days, and through assignments for staff teams. The communication of the different goals throughout the school year in the weekly staff memo helps to keep staff apprised of their status.

Photographs of the school reveal the importance of two important areas of student achievement goals, academic and behavioral. These are on display for all members of the school community who enter the building. Throughout the school

student work is displayed as a continuous reminder of academic expectations and a celebration of student academic achievement. Behavioral expectations through the school's code of conduct are evidenced in the hallways and the classrooms. Spirit Awards for classrooms meeting those expectations are prominently displayed as an affirmation and celebration of behavioral success.

At the observed staff meeting, Principal C developed exercises for each grade level around the writing improvement goal with the help of teachers. The overall message of student improvement was clear and supported by data and research. The tasks were clearly defined with their expectations. Each of the three grade levels then met in different rooms and the task was facilitated by either Principal C or grade level staff member. Principal C conducted follow-up conversations with each grade level occurred within a week. Principal C felt that the staff owned this goal and the improvement toward reaching it. She finds it easier to maintain when you have buy in from the staff.

Principal C entered a well performing School C several years ago. Her "marching orders" were not to be a change agent, but to be a nurturer. She felt she comes by the nurturer role naturally and was grateful for that direction, but understood that change in a school setting is inevitable. Regarding change, she does not believe that anybody makes change by twisting someone's arm. Though someone's behavior may change, once that change agent is gone, "then the elastic goes back to its original form." She asserts that everybody really needs to be onboard with that change, and everybody is going to be at different stages in making those

changes. “The way I do it . . . is one person at a time in private conversations and personally.”

In a school such as hers, Principal C did not have to make any drastic changes and as she said, could afford to go gradually and get consensus from staff and bring along the ones who were reticent. As she thought of the changes that the staff had actually been through just since she’s been there, she believes a lot is owed to them as the group of professionals that they are. They have made it so she can work change into the school.

The one thing that staff does demand, she noted, is the professional development in order to make those changes. Principal C sees that as her role in the facilitation of change and reaching goals as the one to provide them with the materials and expertise needed to make any changes. Though they may not be immediate, she feels obligated to provide them at least with a road map of how they will reach their goal.

One example of a gradual change that she facilitated was the examining of the students’ writing prompts from the observed staff meeting. This actually was an area in which the school felt they were underperforming. “ If I were to hand these back to the teachers, they would be amazed at what the changes were in their instruction - - not only in their curriculum, but their instruction, because a lot of the materials that they had used seven years ago that they’re no longer using, demanded a specific style of instruction.”

That change in writing instruction as well as changes in math and reading instruction over the past seven years is what Principal C referred to when discussing

challenging accepted practices. The research in these areas had been changing as well as district and state expectations. Through systematic planning and getting staff involved at the earliest stages and constant communications, these changes in practices have gone fairly smoothly. Challenging accepted practices, she feels, does not have to be a negative. It is something that educators do all of the time.

Research Question 2- How do selected principals engage in reflection in,
on and for action in their daily practice?

Each principal was directly and indirectly asked how she engaged in reflective practices through both interviews. During the coding of the direct observation, shadowing experience, and collected documents, this question was interpreted as each principal demonstrated the following reflective leadership behaviors: makes time for reflection; seeks out and provides feedback from/to constituents; creates opportunities for staff to reflect.

Principal A

Principal A believes that because she goes at a breakneck pace throughout the school day, an important time to reflect is in the quiet of home. She is constantly rerunning the day in her mind, particularly as she is jogging. Another important time of reflection for her is every Sunday when she comes into to school to work undisturbed by continuous interruptions. While in her office or home she is behaving like a good teacher “reflecting on how the lesson went, so that you can use that to assess and prepare what you’re going to do.” She uses reflection in all areas of her job including, but not limited to dealing with parents, evaluations, what she wants to follow through on with the teacher, or how did a certain program work out.

Pictures of Principal A's office bear out her description. A very organized room designed for someone working on multiple projects. Papers for several projects were neatly organized in three areas, her round table with chairs, her desk, and her computer table. Future or past projects were neatly placed on the floor against a wall. The office struck a balance between professional administrator with framed motivational posters, displayed classroom pictures, and a bookcase of educational literature and that of a person who works with elementary aged children as demonstrated by a bookcase full of children's books and pictures and stuffed animals that represent the school mascot. The fact that her coat and scarf were across her desk chair speaks to the breakneck pace as she described. The assumption, later confirmed by Principal A, indicated that she had not had time to hang up her coat and had yet to sit down. That picture was taken approximately at noontime.

Another way in which Principal A engages in reflection is finding the time to network with peers. She learned this recently and found it to be invaluable. Her first few years as a principal, Principal A felt like she was on an island by herself, alone in her job. It took her a long time to realize that it was okay to not really be sure about what to do and call colleagues, even from another district and problem-solve. She realizes that she knew reflecting with peers to be helpful from her past experiences and wishes she had begun sooner as a principal. An important note is that engaging in professional dialogue with a peer does not guarantee agreement in the solution or method of solving a problem. She has often figured out how not to proceed with a solution given a conversation with another principal. For Principal A, it comes back to make her own meaning and applying it to the context of her school setting. That is

why she appreciative of having an assistant principal, at least part-time, to brainstorm ideas with her particular school as the focus.

Professional development provides an opportunity for Principal A to engage in reflective practices. Reading journals and attending classes and workshops encourages her to rerun various school events and rethink how to move forward in those endeavors in a positive manner.

One such professional development activity moved Principal A into another form of reflective practice, journaling. Two summers ago at the Harvard Institute for Principals she engaged in an exercise where she put ideas down in writing about what she hoped to do. When that letter came back that next February, she sat down and wrote herself a response.

That was an “aha” moment for Principal A. Now she keeps a little journal where she writes down thoughts and ideas. Sometimes it is information from a book that she read that she does not want to lose or from walking out of meeting and having an idea that she also does not want to lose. She is not always sure where she is going with these ideas, but she knows that she wants to come back to them at some point.

Principal A wants to continue to step out of her comfort zone and take a little risk on goals that she’s working on. She feels that “putting it down on paper and really thinking about it, making meaning out of it that way, has been something I’ve been doing a little bit more so that takes my reflection, I think a little deeper because, I don’t know, it sort of puts me on the spot. If it’s written on paper, there it is.

Instead of you know, just a thought. So, and that's just interesting because that's just come about recently."

Another way that Principal A engages in reflective practices is by providing a continuous loop of giving and receiving feedback to and from her staff. Review of the school improvement plan for School A clearly defines in the mission statement the need for continuous collaboration to meet the needs of students. The second goal of the plan states that need for ongoing opportunities for collaboration and professional learning with several activities listed as a means to that end. Principal A is able to engage with staff in this communication loop as a large group, as a team and as individuals. In the faculty meeting, Principal A had provided feedback for staff members who had shared their thoughts on differentiated instruction at the previous staff meeting based on the feedback by other teachers. Later on in that meeting, she had shared the results of a recently given Terra Nova test and had solicited feedback from the grade level giving the test, as well as the thoughts of the staff at large regarding the results.

Individually, Principal A will circulate the building daily. It is these informal drop-ins where she gets a lot of information or concerns to come out. She usually comes back and provides feedback for staff members. She would write a comment on something she saw, usually something very well done and frame it in question. The teacher would come by later with the notes she had left and discuss that particular item. It is this feedback she feels that has created a comfort level with staff and assure them in her sincerity in helping them.

During the shadowing experience, Principal A traveled to every classroom and the cafeteria. At each stop, she provided some commentary to each staff person. She quickly gave positive feedback to a teacher as they walked together in the hallway regarding a difficult parent meeting they had together that morning. One staff member asked her for quick feedback regarding a parent letter.

Principal A gave a team level example during the implementation of a new initiative. A member of the team had shared with her the difficulty that the particular grade level would have in the implementation. Principal A met with them at their next grade level meeting, and explained how grateful she was that it was brought to her attention. A few adjustments that were made provided a successful transition for those staff and their students.

Principal A elaborated that the benefits of the climate created by having this feedback loop. When there is a frustration she likes to address it and figure it out as a team. She takes it as a compliment when a staff member will come to her with an issue and is comfortable to do so. She feels they have gotten beyond the parking lot conversation where there is griping but no resolution.

As part of the feedback loop with her staff, Principal A continuously provides opportunities for staff to engage in reflection. She asks for and receives feedback regarding building and district initiatives. Document analysis shows that she has a form where staff can provide information to be shared with staff, parents, and students through home and staff newsletters and the website. She encourages them and provides opportunities to participate in staff and grade level conversations around curriculum and instruction through the promotion of a community of learners.

She often asks staff to reflect on professional articles that she has provided for them. She does this by putting a question at the top of it and asks them what practices do you use, and which ones would you like to take a risk and push yourself to use and what sort of resources or other ideas or materials do you need to be able to do that? When she first started this practice it made staff a little uneasy. Now that they have gotten used to it, they know she will follow up. Now she has people coming in offering articles.

The most important time where Principal A feels she asks her staff to engage in reflection is during the formal observation and evaluation process. While conferencing and assessing the teacher's performance, she frequently poses questions for the teacher to think about regarding their own teaching. She feels this is a way in which they can truly be engaged with their own professional growth and development.

Principal B

For Principal B, reflection happens continuously and in different forms. Principal B has what she calls her "think time." That time takes place often in isolation. "I just have to take all that information when it's nice and quiet here (at school usually an hour before others arrive), or sometimes just at home and just think. I like to swim, swimming laps, that's' when I kind of go over all this in my head - - how do I think I'm going to do that? What is my idea for doing that? Or, if I'm walking, jogging, whatever. That's my kind of think time and sometimes that's good for me to just have my brain going around what's happening. And sometimes I have answers and sometimes I don't! I need a little more time maybe to answer some of

the questions. But I do think that you have to use resources that are available and there are lots of resources.”

Engaging in professional dialogue is also essential for Principal B when discussing time for reflection. She often calls her colleagues to talk over certain issues. She explained that she does not pretend to know everything and wants to use everything that is available to her, and sometimes she finds that one little sentence that someone else says and it gets her thinking in a whole different way. Principal B believes that’s important.

Principal B thinks that expanding her network is extremely important for principals because it provides different perspectives. The isolation that a principal feels is real. Regardless of a person’s ability to reflect and analyze, she is still trapped within her own perspectives. She feels that you need people with different perspectives of whom you can bounce ideas.

Those people do not always have to be other principals for Principal B. She often talks with her school’s social worker. “I’ll say, this is what I’m doing with this staff member or this is what I’m doing with this parent, or this is what I’m doing with this student - - I have couple of concerns? You know, am I approaching in the right way? Do you have any suggestions for me how I can deliver this news in a way that makes it more positive for them, you know, she’s like a fabulous person and has skills that I don’t have. So we’ll have that kind of conversation.”

Principal B has a unique network within her family as well to provide perspective and discourse. Her husband, who was an assistant superintendent, is now a principal. Her sister is a teacher in a different state and her mother was formally a

teacher. Therefore, professional conversations take place frequently for Principal B, even on vacation. The important point for her is that now she is in a bigger network. Her sister and husband can talk to people in their towns and schools and get an even broader perspective to certain situations. She can then digest these perspectives and think about and incorporate them into her own reflection regarding her school.

Engaging in her extensive ongoing professional development allows Principal B to reflect on her school situations in the context of the literature. These opportunities spark a different way of thinking that she finds very beneficial.

Feedback to and from staff members is an important part of the reflective process for Principal B. Providing opportunities for staff to engage in reflective practices is also critical. She feels that a principal needs to have people speak up when they don't think something is working well, and as the principal, you have to be able to take that kind of feedback. Principal B's feeling is "They may not agree, they may have another approach, or they may say, I really need to tweak what I'm doing. This is really something that I missed. And I like to set that standard, because I want them to do that, too."

Feedback from staff takes place in various ways. During the planning and implementation of a new initiative, Principal B solicits a lot of input from staff and parents. She explained an example of the process. She brings an idea to a staff meeting to brainstorm and "hash it out." She may then bring it to the school site council to get their thoughts. They typically would indicate what they think is really strong and areas of concerns.

She then goes back to another staff meeting time or common planning time, to talk about it a little bit more. She tries not to just do it before they have a lot of talking. They will go through and think what might be difficult for parents, what the community might have to say, how it's going to affect everyone in the building; including for example the custodians. There is a real need to study the effect that it has everywhere. "And then we give it a walk." It will then be revisited to see how it is going and check the impact the decision has on students, staff and parents. This communication strategy is seen throughout the school improvement plan. Opportunities for staff to engage in professional development to learn and engage in best practices and reflect with their peers are developed in that plan.

Modeling of engaging in reflective practices has been key for Principal B. Recently she addressed a letter to her staff about a course she is participating in and reminded them of how she has shared ideas with them at previous staff meetings and Open House. The letter then explains how she is creating an active listening log and how that would help her help a person with concern to come up with strategies to address the concern. She went on to share that she has set a goal for herself to understand her own emotional footprint and how she has engaged a staff member to help her with this journey. She tells the staff that she is taking a risk to improve her leadership skills and is a little frightened. When her confidence is higher, she asks staff for feedback.

Through examples like this and continuous feedback, Principal B has provided and witnessed opportunities of staff reflection. She has seen a shift in conversation in the staff room. There is now talk about educational practices where

there was little before. She sees in the morning before school, teachers huddled together in a room working together trying to look at what's happening in the classroom, how they are re implementing a new writing program so they are struggling a little bit with that. Staff can be seen sitting together and talking, helping one another.

Principal B has witnessed teachers at common planning time looking at student work and discussing its meaning and having ongoing collaborative conversations. "And there are some teachers who have just like that [snaps fingers] they get it. And then there are some that, this is very, very difficult for them. But teaming them up, I think it's helped. They're more comfortable talking about their practice. They're more comfortable thinking about, hmm, is this really getting me where I want to go, rather than just an activity based."

It is during the supervision process that Principal B finds the opportunity to have staff engage in reflective practice. Though it is principal directed, the idea is for teachers to stop, and reflect on what she is presenting as her observations. That reflection is done through questions provided by Principal B.

The follow through from Principal B after those conversations is crucial. She talks with the teacher later on to remind him/her of the questions and answers they had previously discussed to see if there was a change in behavior from the teacher if one was indicated at the conference. She continuously reinforces the importance of staff embracing the idea of reflection.

Principal C

Principal C does not have a set time to reflect, but sees it more as an ongoing activity. she prefers to try to make meaning out of each experience and take advantage of opportunities to process them as they happen. She tries to steal a few minutes during the school day, if possible so that the event is fresh in her mind. However, she finds that reflecting on the same event later, such as in her car during her lengthy commute, can have different meaning given time and distance. That's why she sees it as an ongoing activity.

This style of ongoing reflection can be seen in the photographs of Principal C's office. While being partitioned into two sections by bookcases, there is no clear delineation of workspaces. Her multitude of resources appears to be used in every area of her office including her desk and table. Through the shadowing observation, it was noted that items Principal C was searching for were not immediately found.

Principal C's preference is to reflect with another person. "I like the other kind of reflection when I sit down with someone else and talk about what went on, what could've been better, what went well, and then listen to another person . . . back and forth" It is that give and take of ideas that provides even more perspective and to her, is a lot more exciting. To engage in dialogue with someone who is in education is beneficial, such as her assistant principal, but not always necessary. According to Principal C, reflecting on issues or events requires someone who is willing to listen.

Principal C stated emphatically that she is not someone who uses a reflective journal. She has read about the positive impact that has had with people regarding reflection, yet, she indicated that it is just not for her. The manner in which one engages in reflection is a personal choice.

Getting and providing feedback takes a variety of forms for Principal C. Her preferred method of providing and receiving feedback is individually or in smaller groups. For example, while being shadowed, Principal C checked in with many professional and support staff on a variety of issues. She met with the music teacher briefly in the music room to get feedback regarding the most recent interviews for a new music teacher (different position). She wanted input on the designing of the lessons that were being implemented by the substitute music teacher. Principal C met with the custodian to praise him for the job he had been doing working with construction crews around the building. Together they decided to block an exit that the outside of which would soon be a construction site. She then stopped by the copy room to talk with an aide for her perspective on the new parent pick-up procedures recently introduced due to the construction. She praised the aide for a job well done in handling the change.

An example of reflecting in action occurred during the event observation with a group of teachers. She was working with the fifth grade team analyzing writing samples of students. She had provided a check list of criteria from which teachers could choose to engage the data. After listening to teachers discuss how cumbersome her directed process would be, Principal C opted to alter the format of the activity. Upon interacting with the teachers, they quickly came up with a better method and all were satisfied that the resulting analysis would be valuable.

During the evaluation of a staff member, she does frequent informal observations to get a clear picture of the teacher's abilities. She sits in the classroom unannounced and records her thoughts on an Alpha Smart. During the shadowing

experience, she explained after leaving a fifth grade teacher's room that she will follow up with the teacher that day to discuss the observation and ask questions around the students' grasp of number sense. She feels the immediacy of feedback for teachers is critical in the realm of supervision. First it reduces the anxiety of the staff because they are not waiting days to hear back and secondly, it's a better, more meaningful conversation when it is fresh.

Following the observed staff meeting, Principal C had met with each grade level for feedback on their experience. She wants a constant two-way conversation in her building regarding curriculum and instruction. One grade level provided her with their thoughts that they would like to continue the exercise at their next professional day. Another grade level provided Principal C with data they collected which she will review and provide them with her thoughts. She also met individually with staff members about their thoughts on writing. She also reminded her staff of her comment that she continues to need their input for staff meeting and professional day agendas as that continues to be beneficial.

In creating opportunities for staff to reflect, Principal C believes time is a key element. Though time is at a minimum in schools, she believes reflection should be a priority. "Everybody says that there isn't enough time to do that. But you know if we think it's a priority, you can find time to do that; setting the task of reflecting as a priority for the school."

Principal C feels that her staff does engage in reflection through conversations, observations and by the way they share their curriculum materials, the way they create their curriculum materials, the way they think about organizing their

curriculum. She has provided opportunities for them to engage in reflective practices through their common planning times and teaming. Along with questions and tasks that she provides for them through weekly bulletins or staff meetings, she has frequently observed staff engaged in professional conversations around curriculum and instruction. She also provides opportunities during staff meeting and professional development meetings for staff to discuss their best practices in certain areas. These conversations often spark future conversations between staff members after the meetings and have resulted in changed practices for some. The school itself is working on the professional learning communities' model for sharing best practices.

Research Question 3-How do selected principals benefit in their effectiveness as a result of engaging in purposeful reflective practice?

In both interviews, each principal was directly and indirectly asked how she benefited from reflective practices. During the coding of the direct observation, shadowing experience, and collected documents, this question was interpreted as each principal demonstrated the following reflective leadership behaviors: acts on individual and collective reflection in goal setting; explores alternatives to challenges.

Principal A

The benefits of engaging in reflective practice for Principal A are many. She believes it makes her a better principal because she is more tuned to what her strengths and weaknesses are and how they play out in her job. It also is an integral part of what she does because of who she is; she has to personalize an issue before engaging in it. She want things to be done well in order for her to feel successful,

therefore, through reflection she makes the time to think about, consult and rely on her previous experiences in similar situations or issues.

Principal A also explained that reflection makes her more accountable to herself and puts her on notice that if there is something that she really cares about; she will follow through with it to the best of her ability. To her that means she has thought a lot about it and then begins the hard work to make changes and to make things happen. In her own words, “you step out of your comfort zone or you take that risk or you go, you have to, you know, keep going forward and if you don’t stop to think about it and you don’t make a plan and you don’t get input, I don’t understand where you’re going to go.”

Principal A takes action based on collective reflection as well. The school’s code of conduct is based on a series of questions asked to all members of the school community. That code is now deeply ingrained in the way that they conduct themselves and which she feels is a vital part of their school.

Another example of taking action based on collective reflection is working with the first and second grade teachers around the initial administration to the Terra Nova test. Working with this test came straight from the school improvement document. In engaging staff, she first met with all of the second grade teachers to find out what surprised them, what information they took away. In many cases, they looked at their reading instruction and what could be done. In meeting with the first grade teachers, she wanted to find out what their perception certainly was and where they felt improvement could be made. From those discussions, her next plan was to

go back to a curriculum meeting and talk about, what are they were going to do with this information at the building and district level.

Exploring alternatives is a benefit of reflective practices that Principal A has demonstrated through this study. Whether working with individual teachers or teams, or consulting with peers or professional research, she has asked herself and others how can we improve on what we are doing. The generation of alternatives from which to choose is a vital part of that process. Reflecting on the context of the school and the particular people engaged in the situation or effort has been something Principal A has demonstrated.

Principal B

“Well, I think if you don’t reflect then you’re really not a leader! I don’t think you’re really an educated human being,” Principal B said in direct answer to the question about the benefits of reflection. Critical reflection is something she feels we have to teach children to do it. She assumes that teachers can do it. She wants teachers to reflect on their practice, look at student work and then think deeply about what they’ve done and why they’ve done it. She thinks principals have to talk about that, have to model that and, “I think it’s sort of the essence of the job. If you’re not always thinking critically about what you’re doing, why are you doing it?”

According to Principal B, the benefits of reflective thinking are also evident while taking courses. She believes that implementing ideas from courses and thinking about them from three or four perspectives and asking other people to think about and look at your work should be the norm for educational leaders. She stressed the modeling for staff again.

Throughout her 13 years at School B, Principal B and staff have been creative in their efforts to support curriculum and instruction for students as they explored alternatives to challenges and acted on their individual and collective reflection in goal setting.

For example, a collective goal for staff was to maximize the efficiency of support staff. Previously, they had paraprofessionals lined up copying papers, not in the classroom working next to students. They decided to have parent volunteers come in to do the copying and involve the paraprofessionals in more instruction. The same changes were done with support staff on bus and recess duty.

During Principal B's first year at the school, she noticed that during the literacy block many students were sent to the office because they were not paying attention, or they were not doing what they needed to do. Together she and the staff reflected on what their literacy goals were and came up with an alternative. They moved toward a model of a literacy collaborative.

By her second year, no students ever came down to the office during literacy time because everyone enjoyed what they were doing. More importantly, the model met the needs of the children and it was something that they could do and feel successful.

After a few years and certain degrees of success, Principal B and her staff realized that what they still needed to accomplish was very difficult. They had few resources. They decided to focus their time, money and energy on professional development. Collectively they explored different avenues to pursue and settled on several areas. Since then, they have put together a plan that they evaluate yearly and

stress the involvement of all teams of teachers so every person has an opportunity to engage in and share the professional development knowledge.

One of Principal B's main goals was the involvement of parents. A lot of the parents however were reluctant to come to school. Principal B worked with several parents and staff members to find alternative ways of encouraging parents to come. One way was to have several open houses so working parents could have several opportunities to come. If parents could not make it, phone conferences would be instituted by teachers. Principal B added, "And sometimes we have to go to the home and pick them up, and bring them here. But that's what we think is very important."

Photographs of the school indicate a warm and welcoming front lobby with a special area reserved for parent volunteers. Displays of community projects and student work are prominent in the area. Principal B through observation is very accessible to parents in person and on the phone. A strong working relationship was evidenced in the school council meeting that was observed. Brainstorming with parents and staff to better meet the needs of the students was unforced and appeared to be routine.

Principal C

Principal C has benefited from her use of reflective practices. She sees those benefits in the short term as well as in the long term. In the short term, it has helped to make adjustments that are beneficial for her staff, her students and herself. Those adjustments could be day to day to or week to week. But Principal C highlighted the importance of taking time to reflect during the day so that the impact of the reflection can be felt immediately. In the context of an elementary school, often times decisions

need to be made instantly and the number of people affected are many. Taking a few moments to reflect during an instance can be critical according to Principal C.

Collective reflection is also a necessity for the long term planning of the school. A review of the school improvement plan, faculty meeting and teacher workshop agendas reveal a consistency in focus for instruction. Principal C noted that through analysis and collegially dialogue, school, student and staff needs are identified as well plans to meet those needs. This cannot be solely top-down, principal-driven according to Principal C as it is in the collaboration where the best ideas and practices are discovered.

Principal C has also felt the positive effects of reflecting along the span of her career. She explained that it has helped her to learn more about who she is and how she functions and how to feel more confident. When someone is more experienced, the more they can benefit from reflection as they have encountered more situations on which to draw.

Principal C seeks input and consensus from her staff. In reflecting on goals set by the staff and parents through the school improvement plan, she facilitates activities that will further those goals. One such example is the analysis of the MCAS testing that is done annually. Staff individually, as teams, and as a staff analyze the results of the MCAS testing with regard to state curriculum standards, types of questions and types of responses. Comparisons are made to previous year's scores and individual student's previous school based assessments. The school improvement council also looks at the results as well. Principal C facilitates several dialogues

regarding the scores and their meaning. Comparing them with current instructional practices, the staff comes up with the goals for the upcoming year.

In brainstorming activities to meet the stated goals, many alternatives are generated. The alternatives are weighed by the Principal C and staff and ones are chosen to best facilitate those goals. One example is the use of professional development money. Writing was an area of needed improvement. It was decided to focus the professional development for the year including professional days and staff meetings toward achieving the stated goals. Principal C said this has been the process used for several years in terms of defining and weighing alternatives for supporting goals.

Research Question 4-What conditions encourage/discourage reflection
within the school setting?

Each principal was directly and indirectly asked about the conditions needed for reflective practices to occur within their school setting through both interviews.

Principal A

“Without a doubt, staying positive,” was the answer that Principal A had given when asked the question above. Creating an atmosphere and climate in the building that encourages open and honest communication is the best condition for reflection. She feels that her efforts to create a professional learning community and by modeling listening and providing feedback have provided her school with the positive environment necessary for them to engage in reflective practices.

The key is modeling being positive and having positive remarks for staff. The negative is, according to Principal A, that things are not always positive. The manner

in which she handles situations that conveys that the environment is designed to help people is important. Ignoring a negative situation is never an option because there is a potential for the situation to remain out there and impact moral. Though often times done cautiously, taking on the hard issues is imperative for the principal to maintain an environment that is safe and encourages risk taking.

Conditions for personal reflection for Principal A often are ideal in the silence of her office on a Sunday or after school. Exercising, jogging in particular, allows her the time to reflect on an event, her day and in which direction she would like to see her school headed. Opportunities to network with fellow principals are often fertile ground for reflection.

Principal B

Providing and nourishing a safe environment for staff are key to conditions for reflection for Principal B. That environment is created by her engaging in and modeling reflective practices, including professional growth and dialogue for her staff. That is vital. As previously stated, critical reflection is an expectation of hers for teachers. They need to continuously assess their lessons and instructional strategies. For some who are less reflective, this is very difficult for them.

Principal B feels that by teaming teachers up with clear expectations for professional dialogue has helped. They're more comfortable talking about their practice. They're more comfortable thinking about their practice and is it really getting them and their students where they need to be.

Engaging in professional literature and connecting with other educators are conditions in which Principal B find ideal for reflection. Isolation is also another

time in which she needs to think, in her words, “Think about what’s happened, and think about how I need to spend my time and energy to help us move forward.”

These times of isolation occur everyday when she gets to school by 7:00AM, or when she is swimming laps, walking, jogging, or engaging in some other form of exercise.

Principal C

Reflection can happen anywhere and anytime for Principal C. She sees it as a continuous process that happens immediately during or after an event or can happen weeks after something occurs. The conditions do not have to be constant or stable for her personally.

Her preference is to reflect with another person. That happens when she meets with her assistant principal during the school day, either informally or as scheduled. It happens often with teachers around a myriad of issues. She enjoys the professional dialogue with her co-teacher of the Skillful Teacher course that she teaches with in the evening.

For her staff, she has her teachers organized in teams. She tries to cluster grade level teachers together so they have opportunities to meet with each other. She has also designed one deliberate planning period in their schedule where they are all together to do the planning. She believes this structure provides staff with the opportunity to engage in collective reflective practice. Though this dialogue is happening, she feels she needs to structure it more for them at times ensure that it does.

Summary of Results

The results of the data collected from interviews, observations, photographs, and documents from each of the three subjects are summarized in this section. This cross-case analysis is reported under each of the four research questions and the attributed criteria of reflective principals. Discussion of the results drawn from this study as well as recommendations for professional development opportunities for principals is detailed in Chapter 5.

How do selected principals conceptualize reflection?

There were many common elements regarding how the three principal conceptualize reflection as well their actions regarding the criteria of reflective principals attributed to this question.

All three principals recognize engaging in reflective practices as something that they continuously do. All three described the act of reflection that is done after an event has taken place and view it as a useful tool for creating success in planning for the future. They see reflection as learning from their experiences. Principal B felt her reflection had a particularly strong tie to effectiveness. All three felt the act of reflection is something that all professional educators should be doing.

Regarding professional growth, there was a strong similarity in the areas they valued most. All three principals continuously read educational literature and participate in professional development. Each one values networking as a means to reflect and generate ideas. All three were sure that information gained from research or others' real world experiences, they would have to process that information and use it only if it made sense in the context of their school.

Each principal sees herself as the facilitator and communicator of the school goals. Continuous efforts on their parts are evident to keep the goals alive in the minds of the staff. Goals are communicated to and developed with the parent community. Despite different educational communities and needs, goal setting is a collaborative effort for all three of the principals. Though developed as a team, in the beginning of their tenures in their current schools, Principals A and B had to be strong leaders in defining their direction before they engaged staff in development of how to implement it.

All three principals have a healthy respect for the change process and realize it is a necessity in the school environment. Principal A went so far as to say she loved change. Given different settings, change was approached in different manners. Principals A and C took the temperature of the school culture and moved thoughtfully and cautiously. Principal B felt the need to move quickly given the status of her students' academic performance. All three acknowledge that the involvement of staff is imperative, and that "twisting arms" as Principal C said, does not work. However, waiting for everyone to get on board is not an option as well. All three kept the focus on the impact of the students with regard to any changes. In the case of Principal B, that was high motivation for staff.

During the change process, challenging establishing practices is a given. The degree to which these principals challenged was a result of their school context. Principals A and C again moved gradually and Principal B moved with a sense of urgency. The common theme in all situations was the presence of educational theory

behind the desired changes and challenges. No principal in these instances moved arbitrarily.

How do selected principals engage in reflection in,
on and for action in their daily practice?

There were many common elements exhibited by the three principal regarding how they engage in reflective practice, how they makes time for reflection, how they seeks out and provides feedback from/to constituents and how they create opportunities for staff to reflect.

All principals identified explicit behaviors that indicate that they reflect on and for action. All agree that reflection is something that they do continuously implying reflection in action. Only Principal C identified explicit behaviors that describe reflection in action. Two out of three, Principal's A and B, have deliberate times both at home and at school where they purposively reflect on action, replaying various events. Those times are always in isolation with no distractions. Principal C does not have a set time to reflect.

All three strongly endorsed engaging in professional dialogue as a means of reflection to learn not only from their experience, but from that of their peers and others in the field of education. Only Principal C said that the person does not have to be in the field, but that it was the process of dialoguing that was the key.

All three stated that they use the professional literature to reflect on their actions as well. Course work and workshops were particularly noted by Principal B.

Principal C indicated that journaling does not work for her in terms of reflection. Both Principals A and B have engaged in that through assignments for

professional development courses. Principal A began through the Harvard Principal's Institute two years ago and has continued with that practice. Principal B began this year through her district's Leadership Academy. Both Principals A and B indicated that they felt the writing portion of reflection was taking a risk.

All three principals engage in reflective behaviors to purposely improve their performance and impact their decision making ability.

A continuous loop of feedback for and from their staff is highly endorsed by all three principals. The feedback takes place at the individual, team and staff level. Daily interactions are important to all three.

Opportunities for staff to reflect are provided throughout the three schools. Individually this happens around the observation and evaluation process where the principals invite staff to reflect on their own practices. Expectations for teachers as professionals to engage in reflection regarding their instructional practices are stated by all three principals. All three provide staff with questions or articles to reflect upon. Creating common time at planning, staff meetings or professional development meetings for staff to engage in professional dialogue is exhibited in all three schools.

How do selected principals benefit in their effectiveness as a result of engaging in purposeful reflective practice?

There were many common benefits of their effectiveness among the three principals including their actions toward acting on individual and collective reflection in goal setting and exploring alternatives to challenges.

Reflection was acknowledged to benefit all three principals and their effectiveness in their position. The comments varied. Principals A and C indicated

how it has helped them to better understand themselves. Principal A feels it make her more accountable to herself and Principal C said it makes her feel more confident.

Reflection helps them to better understand the environment in which they work through the feedback process. All three indicated that reflection is imperative for making decisions, that there is a need to know why they are doing something and what was or what will be the result.

All three indicated that the act of collectively setting goals lends itself to exploring alternatives. The key for all was the idea of involving the staff and the parents in setting of the goals and for the principal to act as the facilitator and constant communicator of the progress of the goals. Principal B, given her school environment and lack of resources, explored some radically different alternatives to what had been previously done. All three principals focused on the needs of the students during this process.

What conditions encourage/discourage reflection
within the school setting?

The thoughts of the principals varied regarding the conditions within the school setting with regard to encouraging or discouraging reflection.

Principals A and B immediately spoke to either a positive or safe environment for staff to engage in reflection. Principal C, like the other two as well, highlighted the importance of scheduling and structure for staff.

Principals A and B also spoke of modeling reflective practices for their respective staff. They also spoke of having isolated time within the school setting,

specifically, when they are alone in the building. Principal C spoke to stealing a few minutes to reflect any time.

All three principals spoke to the importance of continuous dialogue with staff. Keeping the communication and feedback process open was important.

Question thirteen of the structured interview asked all three principals what is the key element within their school that can encourage or discourage reflection for their staff and them. All three spoke only of what encouraged reflection. When prompted and reminded of the question, all three continued in affirming what was working and what was needed to continue.

Emergent Themes

As the researcher analyzed the data collected from the identified sources throughout the study, three themes beyond the anticipated descriptors emerged. The first theme, work ethic, was easily endorsed by all three principals. The second and third themes of organization and physical fitness played an integral part in the professional lives of principals A and B as they described themselves as reflective practitioners.

All three principals indicated that they work long hours during the week. Principal A averages ten hours per day at school and frequently takes work home with her. Her quiet time that she indicated helps her reflect is also a convenient time to get tasks completed in an uninterrupted manner. That time is working at school on Sundays when the school is quiet. This allows her to reduce the amount of work at home during the week to be available for her family.

Principal B describes herself as the “Energizer Bunny.” She indicated that she works “fifty but no more than sixty hours per week.” She arrives at school at seven in the morning and leaves most days close to seven in the evening. The earliest she leaves is five-thirty. She usually works on her professional reading or course homework in the evening. She reports that she is on the go from five-thirty in the morning until eleven-thirty at night. She is actively pursuing employment after she retires this year.

Principal C has a long commute to and from school and prefers to frequently work at home before or after school. She works an average of nine hours per day and extends that at home by working into the late evening or rising early to work a few hours before driving to school. The focus of her work at home revolves around writing and communication. Without the interruption of the school day she can write observations or reports and can answer emails in continuous blocks of time.

Principals A and B only placed a high priority on being organized and prepared. Principal A described herself as a Type A personality. She is very organized with her time and her planning. She has created routines to her day that, when not interrupted by school situations, allow her to meet her objectives of supervising and communicating with staff around identified school goals. Principal A also indicated that in her quest to be an administrator she distinctly planned her route to toward that objective. She was a classroom teacher, curriculum coordinator, assistant principal, and has a degree in counseling. All experiences she felt would be beneficial for her role as a school leader. Through the researcher’s observations, Principal A was prepared for each event or interaction. For example, before handling

a student issue, it was observed that Principal A spoke with several adults and the students involved before communicating with the parents. The Principal's and the outer office of School A were highly organized as evidenced by photographs.

Principal B's first answer regarding reflection had to do with being efficient. That theme recurred throughout the study. Principal B is meticulous with preparing for the day by coming in early and reviewing her organized columns of papers indicating work that needed to be done for the day. Her personal goal is to touch a piece of paper or read an email only once, meaning that when she has identified a task or obligation she deals with it as quickly as possible without sacrificing quality. Through the researcher's observation, Principal B was in constant, productive motion. Anything she needed was immediately found and was replaced when finished. Phone calls were returned promptly. Events such as the intergenerational photography project and the observed school improvement council were planned for well in advance and were highly successful.

Physical activity was an unanticipated theme endorsed by principals A and B. Principal A indicated that she is an avid jogger. She uses jogging as part of a quiet time to reflect and rerun the day or week or event. She indicated that she can often tell what kind of day she has had when she realizes that she has gone beyond her usual route due to her focus on her thoughts and has to turn around to go home.

Principal B frequently exercises and indicated that she reflects on issues while doing so. Swimming laps provides her with an opportunity to try and answer difficult questions regarding schools. Though she does not always come up with answers, it is the process that she appreciates. Principal B also problem solves while walking or

jogging and feels that these times alone allows her to clarify issues. Principal B also is avid golfer.

As demonstrated through the research and the results of this study, the role of the principal has changed over the past century. The demands of past decades have simply been accumulating since the 1980s and the importance to the success of the school magnified (Beck & Murphy, 1993). The next chapter will provide recommendations for principals to successfully engage in professional learning opportunities through reflective practice despite the demands of their role.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Research studies indicate that educators who are engaged in reflective practice are more willing to challenge their own assumptions, thereby expanding their own knowledge (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993; Senge, 1990; Schon 1983; Argyris, 1980; Argyris & Schon, 1974). Ways in which principals are able to engage in reflective practice to improve their professional knowledge and performance is not widely studied and available to current practitioners.

The purpose of this study was to further the limited research in reflective practices of principals at the elementary level. The previous chapter explained how they use reflective practices to not only increase their effectiveness as school leaders, but how they conceptualize reflection as well. Elementary principals, who are described as reflective practitioners by their peers, were used. That criterion was established by the following identified behaviors:

- challenges accepted individual and collective practices;
- embraces change; makes time for reflection;
- seeks out and provides feedback from/to constituents;
- creates opportunities for staff to reflect; seeks personal growth;
- acts on individual and collective reflection in goal setting;
- adapts to change when needed;
- explores alternatives to challenges;
- maintains focus on goals (Brown & Irby, 2001).

The day of a principal is extremely fragmented and unpredictable (Quinn, 2003). Therefore, an understanding of how the selected principals create time to engage in reflection in, on and for action was also sought and gained.

The selected principals' ability to reflect in relation to their specific school settings was also explored. Reflection is often considered independently of context in an institution. However, schools do not operate independently of their contexts (Boud & Walker, 1998). By studying these principals in the context of their schools, knowledge of the conditions in which reflection is encouraged or discouraged within a school was gained.

This final chapter will discuss how principals who meet the criteria and are identified as being reflective practitioners use reflective practice to improve their leadership abilities. This will be done through the focus of the four research questions. Having established a need for principals to engage in reflective practice and having provided examples of how principals identified as reflective practitioners use these practices, recommendations will be made for professional development opportunities for principals.

Conceptualization of Reflective Practice

Given that most people are not aware of their theories in action, or how they act (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993), it is important for principals to understand that they already engage in some form of reflective practice. The importance for them is to understand their own beliefs and attitudes towards reflection, and identify when they do it and do it purposely for solving problems.

The essence of reflective practice is experiential learning (Dewey, 1933).

Schon (1983) described it as the ability to encounter a unique, real-world problem in its context, identify personal assumptions, and use past experience to reframe it. The reframing is done in terms of that past experience and knowledge, which allows the practitioner to develop a plan for future action.

The terms reflection in action, reflection on action, and reflection for action are reported in this study from the literature. The terms were not used with the three principals involved in this study. However, while discussing their conception of reflection and through other indirect questions and observations, the manner in which these reflective practitioners engaged in reflection did in fact mirror the literature.

Reflection on action is what most people think when they discuss the practice of reflection (Schon, 1983). The three principals were no different. Each one said they purposely think about problems or events after they happen. All three engage in reflection for action as each time they discussed their reflection on action, it was for the sole purpose of planning for the future action. By reporting that reflection is something that they do continuously, it is implied that reflect in action, meaning that they were thinking about their actions while still involved in the action, is done intuitively by all three principals.

By engaging in these actions, the researcher questioned whether their respective reflexive loops (Larivee, 2000), the circular process that dictates how they select data, draw conclusions, adopt beliefs and take action, were changing based on their use of reflective practices. It is believed that their reflexive loops were changing as each principal appeared to engage in double-loop learning strategies (Argyris &

Schon, 1974). Double-loop learning is the process that requires the person to reflect on their own puzzling experiences and, while reflecting, the individual needs to identify and challenge his own assumptions.

All three principals engaged in activities and demonstrated that they continuously challenged their own assumptions which, is vital to true reflective practice (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). All principals actively pursue their own professional development through literature and courses as well as actively seeking out peers to discuss educational problems and learn from others' experiences. While absorbing this information, the principals were concerned about the context in which they work and the appropriateness of ideas in that context.

The act of collective goal setting and embracing change by all three principals supports the idea that their conception of reflective practices is true to the definition put forth by this study. They are willing to maximize the benefit of their own professional experience and engage in the interactive process of thinking about, framing and reframing a problem, while challenging their own assumptions against theory and the experience of their peers and others in their school community.

Time for reflective practice in the school setting

It has been well documented in this study that principals lack discretionary time during the school day and that the demands on that time are increasing. These three reflective practitioners found the time to engage in reflective practices. Two of the three principals found deliberate, isolated time to reflect on their actions. Principal A found that time on Sundays in her school office. Principal B found that time daily at school, though it was an hour before anyone else arrived. Principal C's

reflection was embedded into the school day as she continuously found small pockets of time to “steal away” to her office to give herself time to reflect on issues.

All three principals strongly endorsed the idea of professional conversations as a manner of reflection. Each discussed the importance of these conversations, many of which happen outside of the school setting. Within the school setting, however, each principal demonstrated a great emphasis on providing and receiving feedback to staff. These interactions happened on individual, team, and staff levels. For these principals, at least some form of feedback happened daily. They saw this interaction as a form of modeling reflective practices and expectation that their staffs engage in reflection on their instruction.

Journaling or writing for reflection was important to Principal A. She has done it for the past two years and will continue to do so. Principal B has just begun it as an assignment for a class. She has put this fact out to her staff as way of modeling and getting feedback. Principal C explained that it is just not her style, and she does engage in reflective writing. This explanation is consistent with her previous description of how she engages in reflection.

Benefits in effectiveness

The benefits of engaging in reflective practice by the three principals vary. Benefits include better self-awareness, more confidence, more of sense of personal accountability. Benefits also included better understanding their respective school environments and making better decisions that impact students.

Conditions that encourage reflection within the school setting

A positive, supportive, collaborative school environment best supports and encourages reflection within the school setting. Modeling and expectations for staff to participate in reflective practices as well scheduling design also are supportive. Each principal would create opportunities to reflect based on pieces of research or teacher experiences and provide the structure in which that could occur, such as a staff meeting or common planning time.

Individually, each principal would prefer some time in isolation to reflect on past experiences. Boud and Walker, in 1998, refer to discretionary zones where educational practitioners can create a sometimes micro-environment rich for reflection. For the three principals, those zones were found at school either before, during or when school was not in session.

Professional Development Recommendations for Principals

Principals need to continuously engage in professional theoretical learning to further expand their knowledge base, but given the nature of the job and the unpredictability of situations and people, there is no set of inert ideas that a principal can learn to be ready for every situation. Therefore, they also need to benefit from their enormous work experience developed over long hours in short periods of time. They need to actively and deliberately learn from their experience. That can be done by engaging in reflective practices.

Providing time for principals to engage in reflective practice is difficult. Their days are fragmented, isolated, and continuously interrupted. However, principals are well into their professional careers and have the craft knowledge on which to derive

meaning that is pertinent to their school environment and personal development. The potential benefit of innovative, context specific solutions to educational problems makes the effort worthwhile.

The following recommendations are made given the need for and the benefits of reflective practices for elementary school principals.

Coursework- Reflective practitioners continuously access new lens to view their own practices and alter their perspectives. However, most people tend to be stuck in a reflexive loop where their unexamined beliefs affect what data they select to make decisions. Part of being a reflective practitioner means challenging one's own assumptions. Background courses can provide experience in different ways of dealing with reality. A variety of hypothetical or the principal's real world school situations can provide the opportunity for attempts at problem solving in a controlled environment. A trained facilitator would help principals examine and challenge their own assumptions in relation to their problem solving attempts. They could further explore that relationship with the principal and promote the acceptance of ambiguity and multiple answers to a single question. Assignments done in pairs or small groups would continue the idea of different assumptions given to one scenario.

Journaling- A workshop series that incorporates specific topics provided to principals by a facilitator over the course of a semester or a school year. Writing reflectively is a habit and as stated by Principals A and B, a risk. To form the habit of writing, one must have a specific focus, feedback, a sense of success and be committed for a finite period of time. Practical problems would be clearly defined,

the assumptions surrounding solutions could be discussed, and possible outcomes explored in a protected, private endeavor.

Critical Friends- A workshop series that would provide training in active listening and establishes professional networks for principals. This could be done within a school district, or sponsored by a principal association. All three of our principals valued the professional conversations they had that helped them to reflect on their problems. Learning to clearly phrase concerns and discussing them with colleagues trained in active listening could establish a reflective pattern of behavior and professional bonds for life. Each principal would have the opportunity to examine their beliefs as they are reflected back to them. They would also benefit from learning from their peer's professional experience. Training could also be explored to develop a trusted, reflective non-peer in the principals' schools to develop proximal relationships.

Collective Problem Solving- Done at the district level where professional colleagues work in study group fashion to flesh out solutions to existing problems. The district would provide time and facilitation as principals discuss an agreed upon issue and bring professional literature and their own professional knowledge to the table. The process will encourage principals to reach out to the literature and to their peers as a means for reflection.

Shadowing- A principal shadowing another principal for a day with an opportunity to reflect collectively and individually is a powerful experience. Principals work in isolation. The chance to observe another principal in action provides continuous opportunity for reflection. The person being shadowed has the

opportunity to reflect on events and decisions made during the day with a colleague who was present in the context of their happening. The people shadowing get the opportunity to submerge into a unique school community and continuously reflect on how the same procedures or events are conducted in their school in comparison to what they see, as well as, to discuss the assumptions behind the decisions made by the host principal. They also get the benefit from learning from each other's professional experience.

Epilogue

This study paints a portrait of how intense and multi-faceted the role of the principal has become. Principals must now more than ever focus on their own personal learning in order to keep up with continuous changes in expectations during this climate of reform and increasing accountability. To do this, principals must continuously engage in professional theoretical learning to develop a deeper understanding of current research and best practice. However, they also need the opportunity to think about, discuss and write about their professional practice and utilize their craft knowledge.

Principals work long hours and develop enormous experience in short periods of time. As defined by the research and suggested through the results of this study, they need to benefit from this experience and learn from it. Creating habits of reflection as indicated by the professional learning opportunities in this chapter, moves principals from engaging in practice to reflecting on and talking about practice, which leads to a better understanding of their own assumptions and beliefs that drive their behavior. The ability and willingness to change behavior upon

examination of ones own beliefs and assumptions are indicative of true professional learning.

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Appendix A

Research Study Introductory Letter

Dear Colleague,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Frank Tiano. I am an elementary school principal in Chelmsford and am currently working on my doctoral dissertation at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. I am conducting a study regarding the reflective practices of elementary school principals and their impact on effective leadership. Elementary principals in the Merrimack Valley will be used for my sample population. I would be grateful if you would consider assisting me by recommending one of your peers in this area who meet the criteria stated later in this letter.

This research study is designed to determine the extent to which elementary principals engage in reflective practice, the context that supports such practice and the impact it has on a principal's leadership capacity. Training initiatives in reflective practice for elementary school principals would be recommended should this study determine the benefits in school leadership related to experiences in reflective practices.

A reflective practitioner is someone who exemplifies the following criteria: challenges accepted individual and collective practices; embraces change; makes time for reflection; seeks out and provides feedback from/to constituents; creates opportunities for staff to reflect; seeks personal growth; acts on individual and collective reflection in goal setting; adapts to change when needed; explores alternatives to challenges; maintains focus on goals (Brown & Irby, 2001).

Should you know any elementary principal in the Merrimack Valley who demonstrates all elements of that criterion that you wish to recommend, you would need to complete the attached recommendation form and return it to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope. From the returned forms, three principals will be randomly picked to proceed with the study.

It is my hope that this study will demonstrate the impact and potential of reflective practice in providing elementary school principals a means in which to develop into more effective leaders. Given the increasing demands on the role of the principal, reflective practice could provide the bridge for practitioners to benefit from the knowledge generated on a daily basis by their own continuous actions and interactions.

Whether you are able to recommend someone or not, I thank you for taking the time to read this letter. Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me directly (978) 251-5188 (work), (978) 244-0353 (home) or the chairperson of my committee, Dr. Patricia Anthony at the university, (978) 934-4612.

Sincerely,

Frank A. Tiano
Principal, Westlands Elementary School
Chelmsford, MA
Doctoral Candidate, Graduate School of Education
University of Massachusetts Lowell

Appendix B**Recommendation Form**

Having read the criteria regarding reflective principals and the description of this study provided in the attached letter, I respectfully submit the following elementary school principal(s) worthy of your consideration:

1). Name: _____

School: _____

District: _____

2). Name: _____

School: _____

District: _____

3). Name: _____

School: _____

District: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

(Printed)

School: _____

District: _____

Appendix C

Research Study Introductory Letter /Consent Form

Dear Colleague,

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Frank Tiano. I am an elementary school principal in Chelmsford and am currently working on my doctoral dissertation at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. I am conducting a study regarding the reflective practices of elementary school principals and their impact on effective leadership. You have been recommended by one or more of your peers in the Merrimack Valley as a principal who exhibits the behaviors of a reflective practitioner. I would be honored if you would consider being a participant in my study.

This research study is designed to determine the extent to which elementary principals engage in reflective practice, the context that supports such practice and the impact it has on a principal's leadership capacity. Training initiatives in reflective practice for elementary school principals would be recommended should this study determine the benefits in school leadership related to experiences in reflective practices.

Should you wish to be considered as a participant in this study, you would need to complete the Informed Consent Form that accompanies this letter and return it to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope. From the returned forms, three principals will be randomly picked to proceed with the study. The final three participants included in the study would be asked to fulfill the following requirements in the following sequence:

1. Participate in an audio taped, structured interview with me. The interview will be conducted at the participants' school during a mutually agreed upon time. The duration of such interview is expected to be no more than an hour.
2. Be observed by me during a naturally occurring event in which action items will be developed. One example would be a faculty meeting.
3. Participate in a second interview that is semi-structured in design. The interview will be conducted at the participants' school during a mutually agreed upon time. The duration of such interview is expected to be no more than an hour.
4. Allow me to photograph the participant's office and school. The times of the photography will not be disclosed prior to my arrival. No photograph will include any people.
5. Be shadowed by me for half of a school day with exact times to be negotiated. The time and nature of activities and events in which participants engage will be recorded.
6. Provide copies of documents to me including school handbooks, newsletters, and staff meeting agendas that you would select that are examples of your being a reflective practitioner.

The data collected during this study will be used for the sole purpose of this dissertation research. Pseudonyms will be used for participants whose real names and schools will be known only to myself. Participants will have the opportunity to

review the transcripts of taped interviews to insure accuracy. All field notes, audiotapes and transcripts will be kept at my home.

It is my hope that this study will demonstrate the impact and potential of reflective practice in providing elementary school principals a means in which to develop into more effective leaders. Given the increasing demands on the role of the principal, reflective practice could provide the bridge for practitioners to benefit from the knowledge generated on a daily basis by their own continuous actions and interactions.

Once again, if you wish to be considered a participant in this study, please sign and date the Informed Consent Form, and return it to me in the envelope provided. Should you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me directly (978) 251-5188 (work), (978) 244-0353 (home) or the chairperson of my committee, Dr. Patricia Anthony at the university, (978) 934-4612.

I am painfully aware of the limited amount of discretionary time that you have during the school day. This study is designed to be principal friendly while potentially providing some wonderful insight into our profession. I thank you for taking the time to read this entire letter, and wholeheartedly thank you for your consideration of this study.

Sincerely,

Frank A. Tiano
Principal, Westlands Elementary School
Chelmsford, MA
Doctoral Candidate, Graduate School of Education
University of Massachusetts Lowell

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent Form

Date Prepared/Revised: October 6, 2005

Project Title: The Reflective Practices of Elementary School Principals and Their Impact on Effective Leadership

Principal Investigator: Frank Tiano

APPROVED FOR USE BY THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
 INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

 Signature of IRB Chairperson

 Date of Approval

This Informed Consent Form is valid for a period not to exceed one year from the Date of Approval appearing above.

Purpose

You are being asked to participate in a research study that is designed to determine the extent to which elementary principals engage in reflective practice, the context that supports such practice and the impact it has on a principal's leadership capacity. You have been identified by one or more of your peers as a reflective practitioner and therefore would be a viable candidate in which to learn more about this topic.

Procedure and Duration

The researcher would interview you on two occasions. The researcher would also observe you twice. The first time will occur during a naturally occurring event, such as a staff meeting. The second would entail the researcher shadowing you for half of a school day. You would provide the researcher with public school documents and let him take a picture of your office and various locations in the school. Our relationship would be limited to these events plus communication for scheduling and checking of accuracy of interview transcripts and should last no more than three months in duration.

Risks and Discomfort

There are no significant risks involved in being a participant in this study.

Incentives/Compensation

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

Informed Consent Form (continued)

Page 2 of 2

Project Title: The Reflective Practices of Elementary School Principals and Their Impact on Effective Leadership

Benefits

There is no benefit other than knowing that we are potentially discovering ways in which principals can maximize their craft knowledge to further their professional growth.

Refusal or Withdrawal of Participation

Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and your participation or non-participation will not affect other relationships (e.g., employer, school, etc.). You may discontinue your participation in this research program at any time without penalty or costs of any nature, character and kind.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Every precaution shall be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of the records and data pertaining to your in particular and the research program in general, disclosure of which may contribute to identifying you specifically to persons not related to this research program.

Additional Information

If you do not understand any portion of what you are being asked to do or the contents of this form, the researcher or faculty advisor is available to provide further clarification. Please find them at the following:

Frank Tiano
1 Spruce Street
Chelmsford, MA 01824
Home # (978) 244-0353
Work # (978) 251-5188

Patricia Anthony, Ed.D
Graduate School of Education
O'Leary Library, Room
University of Massachusetts Lowell
Campus # (978) 934-2222

I have read, understood and had the opportunity to ask questions regarding this consent form. I fully understand the nature and character of my involvement in this research program as a participant and the potential risks. Should I be selected, I agree to participate in this study on a voluntary basis.

Research Participant (Printed Name)

Research Participant (Signature)

Date

Appendix D

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to complete the consent letter and return it to me. By doing so, you indicated that you wished to be considered as a participant in my study regarding the reflective practices of elementary school principals and their impact on effective leadership.

As noted in my initial letter, I would be randomly selecting principals from those who returned the Scale. Your name has been chosen as one to continue with my study. As you may recall, the final three participants included in the study will be asked to fulfill the following requirements in the following sequence:

1. Participate in an audio taped, structured interview with me. The interview will be conducted at the participants' school during a mutually agreed upon time. The duration of such interview is expected to be no more than an hour.
2. Be observed by me during a naturally occurring event in which action items will be developed. One example would be a faculty meeting.
3. Participate in a second interview that is semi-structured in design. The interview will be conducted at the participants' school during a mutually agreed upon time. The duration of such interview is expected to be no more than an hour.
4. Allow me to photograph the participant's office and school. The times of the photography will not be disclosed prior to my arrival.

5. Be shadowed by me for half of a school day with exact times to be negotiated.

The time and nature of activities and events in which participants engage will be recorded.

6. Provide copies of documents to me including school handbooks, newsletters, and staff meeting agendas that you feel are examples of your being identified as a reflective practitioner.

I will contact you by phone within a week of mailing this letter to reconfirm your commitment to this study. At that time we can discuss a timeframe in which to complete our interactions.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your interest and initial participation. I look forward to working with you to further examine the impact of reflective practices of elementary school principals.

Sincerely,

Frank A. Tiano
Principal, Westlands Elementary School
Chelmsford, MA
Doctoral Candidate, Graduate School of Education
University of Massachusetts Lowell

Appendix E

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to complete the consent form and return it to me. By doing so, you indicated that you wished to be considered as a participant in my study regarding the reflective practices of elementary school principals and their impact on effective leadership.

As noted in my initial letter, I would be randomly selecting principals from those who returned the Scale. Your name unfortunately has not been chosen as one to continue with my study.

Once again, I would like to thank you for your interest and initial participation. This topic is one that I feel is an important one to our profession. I encourage you to seek out the research in this area as it impacts elementary principals. Feel free to contact me should you have any questions. Have a great school year.

Sincerely,

Frank A. Tiano
Principal, Westlands Elementary School
Chelmsford, MA
Doctoral Candidate, Graduate School of Education
University of Massachusetts Lowell

Appendix F

Questions for Standardized, Open-ended Interview

Interviewee: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Time Start/Stop: _____

Interviewer: _____

As you are aware, my study is examining reflective practices of elementary school principals. The questions on this interview will deal with your experiences here at school and move into questions regarding your leadership and decision making style, with some specific examples, as well as your thoughts on reflective practices. Please feel free to ask me for a clarification on any of the questions.

1. How many hours a week do you work and in what areas/activities do you devote much of your time? Does this include working at home?
2. How do you manage your typical workday, including time of arrival/departure (work at home), most frequent areas of your attention, time for planning or reflection?
3. You've said that you have been at this school x years, how would you describe the climate of your school community, and how would you say that has changed since your appointment as principal? What role have you played in that change?
4. How would you describe your leadership style? How has that style evolved and what has impacted/influenced it the most?
5. Given your role as principal, what experiences have helped you to prepare for what lies ahead for you today, tomorrow, and for the foreseeable future in this role?
6. How do you grow as a principal? Specifically, what do you do to continually better yourself to meet the daily challenges of being principal?
7. Describe for me the planning and implementation process for a school initiative used by you. Please provide for me a specific example including the

impetus for the initiative and the decision making process through its implementation and evaluation.

8. How do you facilitate change in your school community?
9. I'd like to switch gears for a few minutes. Given the topic of this study, I would like to get your thoughts on the idea of reflection. How do you conceptualize that word in the context of your role as principal?
10. Given your ideas on reflection, how do you engage in reflective practices, how do you make time to reflect?
11. How has reflection impacted your leadership ability?
12. Is your staff using reflective practices? How do you know?
13. What is the key element within your school that can encourage or discourage reflection for you and your staff?
14. For the next few questions, let's take you out of your school. How would you describe yourself?
15. How would you have answered that question in the past? What has precipitated the changes?
16. How do you see yourself changing in the future?
17. One last question for you: What question(s) should I have asked you that I didn't to gain more insight into the impact of your reflective practices on you leadership capacity?

Appendix G

Brief Biographical Sketch

Principal: _____ Date: _____

Please answer the following questions regarding your professional and educational background.

1. How long have you been in school administration?
2. How long have you been principal of this school?
3. Do you have an assistant principal?
4. Where have you had your practical and academic administrative training?
5. What is the highest college degree that you have earned?

Appendix H
Questions for
Semi-structured Interview

Interviewee: _____

Date: _____

Place: _____

Time Start/Stop: _____

Interviewer: _____

As you know, this interview is a follow-up to the (event) I observed on (date/time of event). I would like to spend a few minutes discussing the happenings of that (event) as well as discuss the follow-up to the action items that were generated.

1. Review for me the objectives of that (event).
2. Do you feel that this meeting met those objectives?
3. I noted several action items were generated from that (event). Could you review them with me to make sure that I am accurate?
4. Recall for me how and why these items were generated?
5. How was it determined who would facilitate the implementation of these action items?
6. How are you able to follow the progress of these action items?
7. (Recalling each item), what is the actual progress of these action items?
8. Have they met (or are meeting) the criteria established at the (event)?
9. How will you (did you) communicate the success/failure/progress of these action items?
10. Will you receive a response on this communication? If so, how will that impact your next decision regarding these items?

Appendix I

Direct Observation Form

Observation Site: _____ Date/time: _____

Observer: _____

Observation
Participants: _____

Situation Observed:

Observation Notes (*attach pages as needed*):

Initial Reflection of Observation (*done onsite*):

Appendix J**Shadow Observation Form**

Principal Participant: _____ Date: _____

Observation Site: _____ Observer: _____

| Time | Description of Activity/Event |
|------|-------------------------------|
| | |

Appendix K

Document Review Form

Site of document review: _____

Date/time of document review: _____

Reviewer: _____

Document Reviewed:

Relationship to Study

Review Notes (*attach pages as needed*):

Impressions of Document Review:
