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How Effective Superintendents Select and Develop Principals

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine how effective superintendents select and develop principals. Through this qualitative study, the perceptions of four superintendents explored several areas: a) the process by which principals are selected which includes qualities desired, interviewing, education, and internal versus external candidates and b) the professional development that takes place after the principal has been selected. The superintendents in the study were located in the state of Indiana and met the study criteria outlined in Chapter 3. The topics of related literature reviewed included the characteristics of instructional leaders, succession management and studies of professional development. In exploring these four superintendents, several elements emerged: a) the establishment of a clearly defined process of selecting principals, b) superintendents prefer to hire principals from within their districts but value external candidates in the process, and c) professional development for principals should be both global to the needs of the district as well as specific to their strengths and weaknesses. Insight gained from this study should assist superintendents in their efforts to create a selection process and a direction for professional development of principals that will work for their school districts.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Scholars have debated in-depth the skills and traits needed to lead successfully, and there will always be disagreement regarding this subject. It could be debated that leaders need to have a clear vision and not deviate from their plans. One could also contest that situations bring about leaders that the times demand. For instance, one could claim that the Civil War gave rise to Lincoln and the Great Depression birthed Franklin Roosevelt (Collins, 2001). Still other researchers suggest that today's diverse and complex society necessitates leaders who possess a variety of skills—those who can adapt to the current situation and overcome increasingly difficult obstacles (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009). However, analytical problem-solving, quick decision-making, and the articulation of a clear direction can sometimes impede success (Heifetz et al., 2009).

In other words, there is no conclusive list of qualities to define a successful leader. For each example one calls upon, there exists an equal counterpoint. I am concerned with leadership in education. In the field of education, most experts do agree that principals play a vital role in the success of schools. Specifically, principals foster a positive workplace for the teachers and cultivate a vibrant learning environment for the students (Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, Davis, & LaPointe, 2005). Public school

superintendents are responsible for the success or failure of the schools in their district, and, if principals are the driving force behind the success of their schools, then superintendents must select the best candidates for that role. Additionally, they must provide the requisite tools to advance student learning in an ever-changing society (LaPointe & Davis, 2006; Rammer, 2007).

Talent matters; about this, there is no question (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). Nonetheless, it is difficult to believe that talent is the only factor that matters in determining success. Training and environment also bear upon the situation (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). In very general terms, the purpose of this qualitative study is to examine how effective superintendents select and develop principals. The hypothesis is that talent alone will not suffice. How does a highly effective leader accomplish such an admittedly difficult task? The answer may lie in that today's superintendents must take intentional steps to ensure this development of future leaders so that effective change can occur now and in the future (DuFour & Fullan, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

The era of the school-building principal as simply a building manager is now gone (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). Principals now need to become leaders of learning who can help teachers deliver effective instruction (Harvey, Holland, & Cummins, 2013). The reality begs questioning: What must superintendents do in order to find the qualities most needed in a building principal?

Furthermore, researchers have discovered that, relative to school-related factors, school leadership is second only to classroom instruction regarding student achievement (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). In this new era of school

leadership, it is vital that superintendents select the best possible instructional leader available. Furthermore, research suggests that school leadership impacts numerous student outcomes. For instance, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) posited the list of dependent variables below:

- Whether a school has a clear mission and goals.
- The overall climate of the school and the climate of individual classrooms.
- The attitudes of teachers.
- The classroom practices of teachers.
- The organization of curricula and instruction.
- Students' opportunities to learn. (p. 5)

Hiring effective principals is difficult at best. There is no magic formula for matching the best candidate with the best school (Clifford, 2102). Additionally, those who appear ideal on paper might not succeed as leaders, and those whose applications seem inadequate might in fact prove the best possible person for the position (Clifford, 2012; Sessa, Kaiser, Taylor, & Campbell, 1998).

That said, how does a superintendent organize a process that attracts the best candidate for principalship? Unlike in education, a new CEO of an organization will sometimes come in to a new position with his or her own people who possess a shared philosophy (Heifetz et al., 2009). The same is not true for a superintendent. New superintendents do not often come into districts and “clean house,” meaning change the culture with the people they have. Elmore (2000) stated that an organization should be able to influence its core functions:

If the organization cannot influence what goes on in its core through how it is

organized and managed, then it can only influence the core by selections based on personal attributes of whom it recruits and retains. Hence, the success of the organization depends more on who gets in and who stays than on what happens to them while they are actually working in the organization. (p. 8)

He also further argued that this type of organization is rare:

The idea that people should acquire additional competencies over the course of their careers, that the organization should systematically invest in the improvement of these competencies, or, more controversially, that people should be expected to meet higher expectations for competence over the course of their careers—these expectations don't exist, or exist only weakly and idiosyncratically, in organizations that purport not to be able to manage their core functions. (p. 8)

Superintendents must follow a selection process that gathers instructional leaders (or what some call “organizational managers”) “into the job of a building principal” (Hornig & Loeb, 2010). Moreover, there is a need for them to develop those already in those positions.

Also, how do school districts—or superintendents—take steps to ensure that principals within a district are properly trained and progressing in a way that benefits the district? Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) suggested that successful principal preparation and development programs possess certain features that are essential in the preparation of school leaders. Those programs are needed now more than ever because current principals are “inadequately supported to organize schools to improve learning while managing all of the other demands of the job” (Levine, 2005, p. 12).

While it is generally agreed upon that there is a shortage of principal candidates, educational administration programs are graduating an increased number of licensed leaders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). Because many institutions of higher learning are not properly preparing principals to be instructional leaders, the onus then falls to the district to create support systems for principals so that they can effectively lead schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005).

Purpose of the Study

If school leadership matters, then a superintendent's chief priority is the selection and development of the best instructional leaders possible. The bottom line is that the superintendent is responsible for whom the district hires as well as implementing professional development for all district leaders. The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine how effective superintendents select and develop principals. Accordingly, this study enriched the comprehensive knowledge base of information related to what qualities superintendents seek in principals and what system they might use to identify and develop those qualities. Additionally, it informed those groups of people who offer training to aspiring and current principals.

The superintendents selected for this study met a variety of criteria:

- A number of sources throughout the state of Indiana were asked about whom the most highly effective superintendents are. These sources included (a) the Indiana State Superintendent Association, (b) the Indiana Department of Education, (c) the Indiana Association of School Principals (IASP), (d) the Indiana Principal Leadership Institute (IPLI), and (e) state universities that license superintendents such as Indiana State University, Indiana University,

Indiana Wesleyan University, and Ball State University.

- The superintendent must have been a superintendent for at least three years but not necessarily in the same district.
- The superintendent has hired at least one principal during his or her tenure as a superintendent.
- The superintendent must be from a district in the state of Indiana.
- Other factors could include size of district, type of district, socioeconomic make-up of students, gender, age, years of experience, etc.

Research Questions

1. How do effective superintendents select their principals?
2. How do effective superintendents develop principals?

The above questions were pursued through a qualitative method.

Personal Statement

When I first started in education, I thought that I would teach and coach the rest of my life. As the son and grandson of a family of educators, I had always witnessed firsthand the joy of teaching and learning. Moreover, I was deeply involved in athletics in both high school and college, so the lifestyle was a part of my identity. As I have advanced into my career, my curiosity for teaching and learning has continued, but the study of leadership has grown.

When I became a head coach at the young age of 22, I became aware of leadership qualities that I possessed and the ones I needed to develop. Over the years, with the help of colleagues and mentors alike, I have been able to sharpen those skills into my present position as assistant principal. At every stage of my career, I have looked

to those who wield the experience and authority to determine who should move into leadership positions. When endeavoring to become a head coach, I sought the guidance of other head coaches and athletic directors. When I wanted to be an assistant principal, I asked other assistant principals and principals for their counsel. Becoming more confident in my current position, I now would like to know how principals are selected and the ways in which they improve upon their current skills and competencies.

Definition of Terms

The following terms have been defined for clarification in understanding this study:

Instructional Leader: For the purposes of this study, an instructional leader is defined by using Hallinger and Murphy's definition. An instructional leader

- Defines the school mission.
- Manages the instructional program.
- Promotes the school's learning climate. (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987, p. 57)

Administrator: For the purposes of this study, an administrator is defined as a state-licensed, building-level principal, assistant principal, central office personnel, or a person identified by the superintendent to conduct administrative functions.

Coaching: For the purposes of this study, coaching is a technique used by educators to help guide inexperienced administrators with the goal of improving performance and teamwork (Reeves, 2009).

District Leadership: For the purposes of this study, district leadership is defined as the collection of administrators assigned to the school corporation, typically

referred to as central office personnel.

Leadership: For the purposes of this study, leadership is defined as the ability to affect human behavior so as to accomplish a mission designated by the leader (Brower & Balch, 2005).

Licensure Program: For the purposes of this study, a licensure program is defined as required university courses that must be completed to earn an administrative license issued by the Indiana Department of Education.

Principal: For the purposes of this study, a principal is defined as the administrator assigned to an elementary, middle, or high school.

Professional Development: For the purposes of this study, professional development refers to curricula or skills delivered to administrators through university coursework, professional seminars or meetings, or corporation-developed programs with the intent to increase student achievement.

School Corporation: For the purposes of this study, a school corporation is defined as the schools and central office that exist to educate students from Kindergarten through Grade 12.

Superintendent: For the purposes of this study, a superintendent is defined as the administrator in charge of the school corporation.

Student Achievement: For the purposes of this study, student achievement is defined as performance on standardized achievement tests.

Teachers: For the purposes of this study, a teacher is defined as a state-certified instructor for students in Kindergarten through Grade 12.

Delimitations

Delimitations of the study exist as following:

1. The data was collected during the year of 2014.
2. The research was qualitative, and only four to eight superintendents were identified.
3. The selection of those superintendents was only limited to those superintendents identified as highly effective. The study focused on outliers.

Organization of Dissertation

The exploration and themes of this research will be presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 outlined the importance of the topic, define the problem, and state the purpose of the study. Chapter 2 will present the related literature in what is being utilized by school districts and organizations in parts of the U.S. in relation to selecting and developing principals. Chapter 3 will explain the methods used, the population studied, how the data was collected, and the analysis of the research. Chapter 4 will present the themes of the research questions. Chapter 5 will summarize the themes, draw conclusions, and analyze the relevant discoveries on how highly effective superintendents select and develop principals in their districts.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The review of related literature mirrors that of the research questions outlined in the previous chapter. The first section will assess literature that examines how principals are selected. This includes generally agreed-upon attributes of principals as well as interviewing techniques used by some superintendents to uncover these attributes or lack thereof. The initial section will also account for educational backgrounds and preparation/licensing programs. Next, the second section shall cover the development of school principals. It will focus on how superintendents might develop these principals into more effective school leaders once they have become principals. The area of coaching will be explored in particular as well as cohorts and targeted training.

History of the Principal as an Instructional Leader

As outlined in the previous chapter, never before has the role of school principal as instructional leader been more pivotal. However, one must note that the idea of the principal as instructional leader is not new to education. Education is a cyclical institution that can often cause the profession to lose ground and not reap the rewards of its rich past of thought and experience (Tanner, 1983). There are several references to leaders who would fit the definition of the instructional leader in the early years of American public education. For example, throughout the first century of public education, there was a great deal of pressure from the efficiency experts or the business

community about data-driven decision-making. This type of philosophy called for administrators to be managers rather than instructional leaders (Bogotch, 2011).

Clarence Stone, a noteworthy educator in 1929, wrote,

In the midst of a multiplicity of managerial and professional duties, the easiest road for one lacking in professional training and large vision is to give first attention to the managerial duties, and to the routine, the imperative, and the emergency duties. (as cited in Bogotch, 2011, p. 5)

On the other hand, those who were in favor of scientific management in education also saw the importance of school leaders as instructional leaders. Many thought that if data-driven decision-making were implemented and used properly, both teachers and administrators would be more efficient and have time during the day to hone their craft by visiting other teachers, exploring the needs of the community, or learning about the lives of their students (English, 2011). Many of the educational leaders of the time believed that constant discussions and debates were necessary for a school to move forward. Modern educators would likely refer to that process as collaboration. For, if it does not take place, decisions will fall victim to traditions and authority (English, 2011).

The fear of fads seemed to pervade public education in the early 1900s and later in the 1980s. Tanner (1983) cautioned that readers must be wary of new ideas in education. As stated previously, ideas in education are largely recycled, and original ideas were created to fix problems. If the district's problem does not align with the problem the "new" idea was used to solve, other problems could be created. Therefore, a principal does not want to adopt a new initiative that might engender more problems (Tanner, 1983, p. 42).

Although many educational leaders have influenced modern society, several underscore this writer's research. Horace Mann, the first Secretary of the State Board of Education in Massachusetts, is credited with hiring the nation's first normal school principal in 1839, Cyrus Pierce. Pierce was Mann's sixth choice, but it seems that the position required him to complete a myriad of tasks on a daily basis. In addition to being principal, Pierce was the only lecturer, the director of the model school, and the janitor. With the public school just beginning, one of Pierce's most important duties was training future teachers at the normal school. Not much is known regarding the training early teachers received. However, the example of Pierce demonstrates that, in the early years, principals were seen as the instructional leaders of the building (Bogotch, 2011).

One could reasonably assume that, as the duties of the principal became vaster, the role of instructional leader lessened in some areas. However, those leaders who had an impact on future generations seemed to keep the responsibility of the instructional leader high on their list of priorities.

Another important individual is Ella Flagg Young. She began teaching at age 17 in the Chicago school system in 1862. In just a few short years, she was given the responsibility of leading the normal school that trained aspiring teachers. After conflict arose between Young and a member of the school board, she left administration and returned to teaching. In 1876, she returned to her previous post to train teachers and oversee the school. From her biography, written by J. McManus, she held the opinion that there should be a free exchange of ideas between teachers and students (Bogotch, 2011).

[She] championed the cause of the teachers and democracy as opposed to methods

with administered schools from the top, regardless of the ideas of the teachers. She refused to work under a regime, which reduced schoolwork to the lines of a business corporation and made mere tools and clerks of teachers and principals, and assistant superintendents. (as cited in Bogotch, 2011, p. 9)

Around the turn of the 20th century, William H. Maxwell became a prominent figure in education when he was named the school superintendent of New York City. Scholars credit him with many innovations that are now considered standard in every school such as playgrounds and school lunches. Maxwell also believed in the power of the individual teacher and sought to improve the richness of the curriculum and to put more resources into training teachers. (Bogotch, 2011). To that end, Maxwell emphasized

[the principal] should know the plan of work in every class. He should know exactly what every teacher is teaching and how she is teaching it. . . . The principal who has to wait until the end of the year to determine by written examination whether a given stint of work has been accomplished, is lazy and inefficient. . . . The principal's inspection should be hourly, daily. In it, or in allied work, he should spend his entire time during school hours. . . . The keeping of records and the like should be done outside of the regular school hours. (as cited in English, 2011, p. 13)

Maxwell also thought that principals and their teachers should collaborate to properly assess children's aptitudes and place them in the appropriate level of instruction (English, 2011).

At the beginning of American public education, the term instructional leader did

not exist—at least, it does not appear in any literature of the time. Nevertheless, the pioneers in leadership discussed above seemed to believe in the concept of the general definition: “creating a school culture that makes student learning the top priority and providing the resources necessary to support teachers’ efforts to improve student learning” (Willison, 2008, p. 1). In contrast to this philosophy, until the 1980s, principals were seen as managers rather than instructional leaders. The “effective schools” research of the time began to identify the importance of principals who function as strong instructional leaders to improve the performance of the school (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007). Partially because of that movement, educators now believe implicitly that principals should be effective instructional leaders.

Furthermore, the following research of Hallinger and Murphy (1987) identified four barriers keeping principals from becoming the instructional leaders of their buildings. The first is the principal’s education. Much of the time, university-based administrative certification programs do not offer much in the way of curriculum and instruction. Therefore, innovations in the field of instruction do not reach the principals. The further they are removed from the classroom, the greater the deterioration of the principal’s instructional skills (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987, pp. 55–56).

The second barrier is professional norms. Hallinger and Murphy (1987) argued that principals often leave all curricular decisions to the classroom teacher to appease the teachers’ association. Their report suggested that this practice creates boundaries, or, as Lencioni (2006) calls them, silos. Such impediments cause principals to reduce the number of classroom visits and the conversations regarding methodology (Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). The dynamic also surely contradicts the more traditional picture of the

school principal as the despotic manager in a hierarchical system who keeps everyone else in line (Cushman, 1992).

The third barrier originates from the district level and is an issue identified earlier in this chapter. Hallinger and Murphy (1987) claimed that most districts in the 1980s placed a higher priority on the principal's managerial skills rather than his or her ability to lead with instruction. There were very few incentives for a building principal to become a true instructional leader. This entire system posits that the sole way for principals to be successful is for them to focus on the day-to-day issues that arise as well as the politics involved in the job rather than what occurs in the classroom and with the students.

Even though some of those barriers exist currently, it is debatable whether most superintendents would want a leader who focuses on the everyday managerial duties rather than the instructional vision of the building. What qualities have researchers identified in the present-day school leader that would appeal to superintendents?

Leithwood et al. (2004) surmised that three sets of leadership practices exist:

1. Developing people: Enabling teachers and other staff to do their jobs effectively, offering intellectual support and stimulation to improve the work, and providing models of practice and support.
2. Setting directions for the organization: Developing shared goals, monitoring organizational performance and promoting effective communication.
3. Redesigning the organization: Creating a productive school culture, modifying organizational structures that undermine the work and building collaborative processes. (pp. 8-9)

Those qualities, arguably, are reflected in the standards for the professional practice of school leaders, which was established in 1996 by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). These three standards have influenced the methods of selecting and training principals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Selection of Principals

There has been great disagreement on the subject of what principals experience prior to assuming administrative duties. In a traditional sense, those wishing to enter into school administration were required to possess at least minimal experience in the classroom as a teacher. Academic credits in various relevant topics like law and supervision were also required with the purpose of creating greater professionalism. However, some states have set lower entry barriers to attract those from non-traditional backgrounds (Clark, Martorell, & Rockoff, 2009).

Many disagree with the idea of lowering standards to attract a different candidate profile. The National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA; 2011) conducted a study to ascertain what educators can learn from schools and school systems that prepare higher percentages of students for colleges and careers. The report uncovered 20 “non-negotiable characteristics of higher performing school systems.” One of those components is that the principal selection process “should incorporate performance-based components, such as data analysis scenarios and writing exercises, to examine a candidate’s ability to perform as an instructional leader” (NCEA, 2011, p. 4).

Education and Preparation

Does the education level in the recruiting and selecting of principals matter? The

research is a bit mixed. The efficacy of graduate training in educational administration is relatively unstudied and there is little evidence of any relationship between school performance and the curriculum of study by the school's principal (Clark et al., 2009; Haller, Brent & McNamara, 1994). For those hiring the principal, the opinion is mixed at best. For example, Maher (1987) found that principals and central office administrators were generally dissatisfied with their graduate coursework. Additionally, Haller, Brent and McNamara found that the more experienced an administrator was, the more dissatisfied they were (1994). One could assume that from that particular study, the administrators might not highly value the education of those they hire.

Does the training accomplish what it is meant to, which is the development of effective principals? One study suggests that it does not. In fact, several studies found a negative correlation between school performance and the education of a principal, as measured by advanced degrees and training. However, one of those studies concluded that highly educated principals were frequently placed in low-performing schools, but it did not control for that variable (Clark et al., 2009). One goal of the present study was to determine if effective superintendents consider the amount of education or type of education of a candidate in his or her consideration of an administrator.

Despite the research from Clark et al. (2009), Christine DeVita argued in Darling-Hammond et al., (2007) that university and district-level preparation for administrators is of poor quality. The researcher cited a study completed by a Public Agenda survey of superintendents' views on the relevance of training. The analysis found that 80 percent of superintendents and 69 percent of principals believed that leadership training in schools of education was "out of touch with the realities of today's districts."

Furthermore, pre-service programs have historically focused on managerial issues such as school law and administrative requirements rather than practical needs like instructional strategies, curriculum, and shared growth (Copeland, 1999; Elmore, 2000; Usdan, McCloud, & Podmostko, 2000).

When examining the effectiveness of a principal's educational background, one should question the standards behind the coursework. How does a college or university decide what to teach? Are they based on local, state, or national standards? If colleges and universities try to "grow their own," do they reflect local concerns? Many researchers find the questions difficult to answer and the programs very inconsistent (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

One reason for the lack of consistency in leadership preparation is that, until the ISLLC developed professional standards in 1996, there was little agreement on common standards of school leadership (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). As of 2005, more than 41 states have adopted or aligned their own standards to that of the ISLLC; however, requirements for certification, professional preparation, and practice tend to vary widely across the country (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Furthermore, according to a 2003 report of the NCEI, what it takes to matriculate into and graduate from a program varies drastically by institution. Some are pragmatic while others are academic, and some require a blend of both approaches (NCEI, 2003). Best practice suggests that on-the-job training should coincide closely with coursework (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). That statement is consistent with research that suggests that adults learn best when presented with authentic situations with which to develop skills and apply knowledge.

Nevertheless, the ISLLC standards were designed to provide a solid foundation

for developing state and local standards (Turnbull, Riley, Arcaira, Anderson, & MacFarlane, 2013). Some organizations have developed their own training programs and then sought an outside partner to provide coursework that helps supplement the work experience (New Schools Venture Fund, 2008). For example, in the Principal Pipeline Initiative, a study conducted by the Wallace Foundation, researchers examined six large school districts from various parts of the United States (Turnbull et al., 2013). District participants noted their use of the ISLLC standards as well as the incorporation of state-mandated standards (Turnbull et al., 2013).

All of the districts in the Wallace Foundation study looked to clarify standards for principals and make them more usable. Moreover, three of the districts went a step further by condensing the standards to create more manageability and focus. Several districts reported in a qualitative research format that there was excessive repetition. All participants hoped that having agreed-upon local standards based on national and state standards that were pared down for clarity would set better expectations for preparation programs and more firmly align with their mission (Turnbull et al., 2013).

In the aforementioned study, some districts have had long-standing partnerships with nearby universities, and others are working to develop similar relationships. For example, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools in North Carolina has worked with Winthrop University to develop a two-year program called Leaders for Tomorrow, which began in 2008. A district official described the relationship and the results below:

We feel we've been advantaged by having a program . . . tailored specifically to our strategic plan, where we have contracted with the School of Education and said . . .

We're going to be partners in the selection of the cohort. We're going to be faculty along with you, adjunct faculty. You're going to align everything to the strategic plan of the district. And what we've seen happen, we've had three cohorts come out that are extraordinarily prepared to be principals, many of them totally jumping over the AP role and going directly into the principalship. (Turnbull et al., 2013, p. 15)

However, some districts from larger areas such as New York City are not able to engage deeply with each and every university within close proximity. In such a situation, district leaders review curricula from area universities and then identify those with whom the district would like to pursue partnerships. In each case of the study, the district standards became the driving force of the preparation program (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Because there is such disparity across the universities, some districts—rather than collaborating with universities—have opted to “grow their own” by developing pipelines of principals within their own schools (New Schools Venture Fund, 2008). For example, the New York City Schools formed an initiative called the Aspiring Principals Program to improve the instructional leadership in the schools of New York City. The program started in 2004, and, by 2007, approximately 10 percent of the 1,000 principals in the NYC school system had gone through the program. The purpose of the program is to “use teamwork, simulated school projects, and job embedded learning opportunities to prepare participants to lead instructional improvement efforts in NYC’s high need public schools” (Clark et al., 2009, p. 13).

The NYC Leadership Academy’s Aspiring Principals Program has three distinct

phases:

- Phase one: A six-week summer intensive engages participants in a standards-based curriculum that simulates the actual challenges of a New York City principalship.
- Phase two: Participants undergo a six-month, school-based residency under the mentorship of an experienced principal.
- Phase three: Participants spend the summer transitioning successfully into school leadership positions. (Aspiring Principals Program, 2013)

The number of principals trained in this program is not substantial enough to determine if it improves school performance with any accuracy (Clark et al., 2009). However, the website boasts of success stories on the qualitative level (Aspiring Principals Program, 2013).

Other school districts like the Aspiring Principals Program include Prince George's County and Gwinnett County. All three of these districts maintain that one of the major advantages of the program is that decision-makers are able to get to know candidates over a long period of time. Such familiarization improves the selection process of their districts (Turnbull et al., 2013). The goal of these leaders is "to get the opportunity to see folks who have potential, to cultivate them, so that they become school leaders they can match to the school" (Turnbull et al., 2013, p. 9).

Although there is a great deal of research indicating that principals greatly contribute to the learning of students in their schools, "there is very little systematic research that documents the impact of school leadership programs on the achievement of children in the schools and school systems that graduates of these programs lead"

(Levine, 2005, p. 12).

Recruiting and Selection

While some school districts and superintendents utilize the colleges and universities within the general proximity, others use methods to recruit aspiring principals into acquiring licensure. “Sponsored mobility” (Turner, 1960, p. 855) is a method that some administrators use to encourage talented individuals to pursue a license in administration. This method has the administrators identify potentially strong candidates in their buildings. From there, the current administrator might encourage the subordinate to pursue a license. However, in some cases, the encouragement goes further. The administrator might afford the teacher administrative opportunities that he or she might not otherwise receive. At the very least, the teacher is able to gain experience as well as learn about the role of an administrator (Myung, Loeb and Horng, 2011). Even though this type of identification can be successful, it has some issues that must be noted. Lortie (2009) found in a study done in Chicago in 2009 that three out of four principals had been sponsored by their building principal to attain their current position. Turner (1960) also recognized this phenomenon when he concluded that leaders recruited candidates based on criteria they wished to see in their peers (Turner, 1960). In other words, many of the individuals selected for sponsored mobility were white men, which became a challenge for everyone else (Myung et al., 2011).

Succession management, which is typically seen in the private sector, often results from this system. This is a system that identifies those who would be suitable administrators and trains them for future leadership roles within the district (Lieberman, Bruer, & Maki, 1996). This type of system seems to be present in most high-functioning

schools (Turnbull et al., 2013). For example, a leader in a school district with a high-functioning school told the Wallace Foundation:

[That principal] is going to follow principals who developed ownership of the school, had a vast, strong following of the faculty members, and have led them to high performance. . . . The person who follows them has to be nurturing and keep them going in the direction that they were. . . . We needed someone who isn't going to change everything. Don't even move the trash can. (Turnbull et al., 2013, p. 33)

However, a concern with this type of identification is that it involves two assumptions. Proponents of this method assume that the identification and encouragement of the administrator will work with the teacher. It may not. Also, and likely more importantly, such a process assumes that the administrator is selecting the ideal people. If the people selected do not have the appropriate skill set, the method could prove to be counterproductive (Myung et al., 2011).

The works of DuFour and Fullan (2013), however, support the idea of succession management. Many organizations, both in and out of the field of education, attest to the theory that promoting leaders from within helped sustain improvement over long periods of time (Collins & Porras, 1994). Rice (2009) cited a study that found no relationship between the number of years of experience of principal and school performance except when that principal had been an assistant principal within that same building. Some sources have reported that retention rates for internal promotions were higher than those for principals brought in externally (New Schools Venture Fund, 2008). Irma Zardoya, the superintendent from New York said, "We have to grow our own leaders . . . so that

we have a constant, ready supply of leaders, which means that we have created a continuum” (as cited by New Schools Venture Fund 2008, p. 7).

“Contest mobility” is the opposite of sponsored mobility. Under this method, each individual has an equal chance to acquire an administrative position, and selection is designed to be based on an individual’s merits rather than their relationship to a superior (Myung et al., 2011). This idea of everyone having an equal chance is more in line with the egalitarian ethos within the profession that all teachers are equal and deserve the same recognition (Lortie, 1975). This philosophy can be seen in the single pay scale of those in the teaching profession and the resistance to one that disrupts that system (Myung et al., 2011).

These two different philosophies are present in some states’ licensure programs. In a traditional sense, educators seeking promotion to a principalship have been required to serve time as teachers and assistant principals. Moreover, they must have accrued college credits to gain the required certification. In this sense, the more experience and certifications one wields, the better his or her qualifications. Consequently, it often takes many years in this system to become a principal. Recently, however, some states have designed systems that remove these barriers with the belief that such prerequisites limit the pool of talented candidates. The purpose was to dramatically change the pool of aspiring principals (Clark et al., 2009).

Along with the methods of selection and qualification detailed above, some districts and universities have implemented internships. Those involved in this type of preparation believe that the day-to-day demands of an administrator in an internship are best learned under a framework that combines mentorship and theoretical coursework.

For example, a study conducted by the Wallace Foundation cited a program at Delta State University that frames instruction in a more interdisciplinary fashion rather than the teaching of separate courses (Darling-Hammond, et. al, 2007). The course content centered on those issues and events experienced during the yearlong internship. A situation encountered by an intern might be a springboard into a deep discussion during a seminar (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Preparation for the Hiring of a Principal

When an opening for a principal occurs, what steps do some districts or superintendents take? In 2012, Clifford, along with Learning Point Associates, researched emerging practices in the hiring of school principals. The analysis revealed the following.

- **Prepare for Succession:** Planning should take place before the recruitment starts. Conversations should take place with the current principal and staff in regard to organizational goals and plans for the transition. Otherwise, the organization might not be ready to receive new leadership.
- **Allow Time:** Hasty decisions sometimes increase the likelihood of selecting an ineffective leader. Because of that, a review of large urban school districts revealed the practice of allowing one full year from the point of vacancy announcement to recruit, select, and transition a permanent replacement for a school principal. Smaller school districts allow less time, but most agree that a comprehensive review process is essential.
- **Get Board Agreement:** The roles and responsibilities of the selection committee should be clearly defined. For example, candidates often ask

members on the selection committee questions like, “What are your priorities for this position?”, “Why am I considered a good candidate?”, and “How will my performance be measured?” Committee members should be prepared to answer those questions.

- Reconsider the job description: Expectations for principals are high as well as stressful. In what way can the position be restructured to alleviate job stress?
- Document each step in the process: This practice shows that the search proceeded according to plan without bias. (Clifford, 2012, pp. 7-9)

Practices that Hinder the Ability to Attract and Hire the Best Applicants

The proposed study shall concern itself with the selection of principals and the processes that surround that practice. As such, it will be helpful to examine what current practices might limit the selection of worthy instructional leaders both in the interview stage and decision-making. Clifford (2012) identified several practices that impede the selection process.

- Failing to determine and understand the needs of the school: When districts hire search committees to help with the hiring, those committees often pay only partial attention to the needs of the school in question. The candidate search should reflect those needs and drive the search (Sessa et. al., (1998).
- Casting a narrow net: Many applicant pools only come from within the nearby districts’ teacher or administrative pools (Hooker, 2000).
- Disregarding relevant data during the hiring process: School district data and research is infrequently accessed when educators make critical decisions about personnel and instruction (Schlueter & Walker, 2008).

- **Overlooking Selection Criteria and Standards:** Hiring committee members do not often have clear expectations about school or district goals or tie them to selection criteria (Schlueter & Walker, 2008).

The research above is also supported by the findings of a study completed by the Rand Corporation. They found that making a correct match between the candidate and the vacancy can greatly affect student performance (Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton, Li, & Pierson, 2013). Therefore, it is important that the system of selection does not interfere with selecting the appropriate match.

Interviewing

The NCEA (2013) has a list of 20 non-negotiable characteristics of higher performing school systems. Characteristic 5 is that “principals are selected based on proven performance” (p. 4). The statement then goes on to claim that the selection process should include performance-based components “such as data-analysis scenarios and writing exercises to examine a candidate’s ability to perform as an instructional leader” (2013, p. 4). In other words, it is one thing to claim he or she believes that every student can learn at a high level, but it is another to demonstrate it.

Reeves (2009) arrived at three practices that will help a district identify who is the best instructional leader in the interview pool. The first has to do with classroom observations. For one, those observing the prospective principal will be able to see if he or she is comfortable around students. Of course, principals should demonstrate confidence and security when working directly with students. Also, it is important to know what the candidate took away from the classroom visit. The questions should be broad and not too specific so that the candidate does not feel inclined to give an answer

he or she knows the interviewer wants to hear. For example, instead of asking, “What did you think of the way the teacher introduced the lesson?”, ask him or her something like, “What did you notice?” (Reeves, 2009, p. 68).

The next area is data analysis. Reeves gave an example in his 2009 book of how people’s interpretation of data reveals much about their beliefs. If a candidate looks at data and inquires about instructional practices and curriculum, chances are the candidate truly believes that all children can learn at a high level. However, if, after looking at scores and demographics, the candidate talks about the challenges of ESL students or Title I schools, that might not be the case. Instructional leaders need to believe in equity and must concern themselves with the practices occurring inside the classroom. This technique is one manner of ascertaining whether the candidate possesses this ability (Reeves, 2009). This type of philosophy meshes exceptionally with the writings of Dweck (2012) and her contrast between a fixed and a growth mindset.

The last area involves the review of student work and is taken in large part from the work of Levitt and Dubner (2006) in their book, *Freakonomics*. They argued that perception of students is colored by their ethnicity. Reeves (2009) commented that an effective technique to use is to give the candidate three or four pieces of approximately equal quality of student work by the same student, but associate each piece of work with that of an ethnic student name (e.g., Jeff Chin, Natalie Martinez, or Tyrone Jackson). What should ideally happen is that each piece shall be rated to be of similar quality. If the scores differ greatly for the minority students, then a bias could be present. Some might attribute undesirable characteristics to minorities if the candidate gives those students low scores. However, an equally harmful error can occur if the perceived

minority students are scored higher than their work merits. This is what is called the sympathy error (Reeves, 2009, p. 71).

Other organizations have similar screening processes. In a study conducted by New Schools Venture Fund (2008), they examined promising practices that took place in several different types of schools in California. Many of the organizations analyzed screened future leaders for certain non-negotiable traits. Those traits are skills that the candidate must know and be able to perform. An example would be “[a] fundamental belief that all students can learn” (New Schools Venture Fund, 2008, p. 8).

However, the same study posited that many schools successfully developed non-negotiable criteria yet were unable or unwilling to develop an interview process that successfully screened candidates who exhibited desired qualities. Techniques highlighted in the study mostly included interview questions and tactics listed below:

- List evidence of a project he or she has managed: This question gives the interviewer an idea of leadership style and thought process.
- Is the candidate able to anticipate challenges and consequences of tough decisions?
- Observe the candidate teaching a class.
- Have the candidate observe a video of a class lesson and give feedback.
- Have the candidate analyze data and develop a plan.
- Participate in a teacher-led data discussion.
- Respond to difficult case study scenarios. (New Schools venture Fund, 2008, p. 9)

Professional Development of Principals

In what ways do highly effective superintendents develop principals once they select them? Many of the previous examples outline programs that begin prior to one becoming employed as the principal of a school. In each, the role of an instructional leader is emphasized. After that, what are effective districts doing to support school leaders? This area is often referred to as on-the-job learning, which generally falls into three categories: coaching/mentoring, cohorts, and targeted training (New Schools Venture Fund, 2008, p. 13). It is important for supervisors (or in this case, superintendents) to not act simply as enforcers of compliance. Rather, they must provide support as problem solvers (Turnbull et al., 2013).

Coaching and Mentoring

For this study, the most extensive category is the literature surrounding principal development through coaching. The research of Clark et al. (2009) indicated that an assistant principal who assumes the role of the principal in the same school is likely to continue the upward trajectory of the building. In this regard “it is not the turnover of leadership per se that is the problem of most organizations, but rather the discontinuity of direction” (DuFour & Fullan, 2013, p. 71). In other words, setting clear expectations and following through with them keeps a school or organization viable.

Such a philosophy leads one to believe that an effective mentor has the ability to influence an organization beyond his or her tenure at any institution. However, what happens when the assistant becomes the principal? What happens when the trusted leader leaves for another building or for retirement? What protocols exist to develop leaders who need help or who enter their first few years as the instructional leader of a

building? To answer these questions, many districts are exploring the area of coaching. In a study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007), researchers performed an in-depth study on what exemplary programs do in the area of school leadership. In Chapter 4, titled “What Exemplary Programs Do,” the researchers stated that one of the seven areas is “mentoring or coaching that supports modeling, questioning, observations of practice, and feedback” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p. 68).

According to Johnson (2013), coaching helps educators discover the answers on their own rather than seeking them from external sources. In the traditional method, a mentor or superior might offer advice or tell the school leader how to solve a problem. Under the coaching model, the coach asks open-ended questions that give the leader an opportunity for reflection with the culminating questions coming at the end of the conversation: “What are you going to do about it?” (Johnson, 2013, p. 2). This technique allows for the leader to take responsibility and ownership in the decisions rather than be able to blame failure on superiors or colleagues. In this model, the coach helps the coachee develop his or her expertise by creating practical action plans, which are then monitored and measured from results (Knight, Stinnett, & Zenger, 2008).

There are several issues one needs to be concerned with in the area of coaching. The role of a coach should not be confused with someone who mainly concerns him or herself with the emotional needs of the client. While emotional support is important, it should not be involved in this type of coaching. The chief concern of the coach should be individual and organizational performance (Reeves, 2009).

Additionally, coaches should let the coachee set the agenda. This way, the person

being coached can focus on the areas that matter the most to him or her. Several important messages are sent to the client by allowing this type of agenda:

- The coach makes the person being coached feel secure in the process.
- The coach respects the wishes of the one being coached. (Knight et. al., 2008, p. 10)

There is some debate on when the coaching model is most effective. Reeves (2009) said that coaching is useful when a change in performance is needed. Additionally, the researcher argued that implementing coaching with principals who have not agreed that improved student performance is necessary will not be effective. Essentially, Reeves (2009) claimed that coaching focuses on changing performance. In this model, the relationship is meant to conclude at some point. The main idea is for the coach to help the coachee to come to some type of resolution of specific issues. If the relationship goes on without any planned conclusion, the process would be aimless and create the potential for dependency while not achieving specific performance goals (Reeves, 2009).

On the other hand, some leadership programs maintain that coaching is necessary during the early part of a principal's career. For example, a leader of the Georgia Leadership Institute commented. "We are also coaching first year principals. I think that we are putting younger, less experienced people in the principalship and expecting them to do that high-performance work. It is a greater expectation of people with less experience" (Mattingly, 2003, p. 138). This version of coaching attempts to cultivate a long-term relationship and does not typically identify an ending point.

Coaching is implemented in two different situations. One reason would be to

develop a young and/or inexperienced principal with the help of a seasoned professional. The other would be to identify a principal in whom a change in performance is needed. However, both philosophies are based on a very important product: feedback. Whichever model one ascribes to, the quality feedback is the most valuable. For that to work, there also has to be a clear framework. Below is a framework taken from the work of Knight et. al. (2008).

- Focus the conversation: Explain what is hoped for in terms of outcomes, issues of confidentiality, and what role each person will play.
- See and explore the current state: Clarify the current situation as seen by the person being coached.
- Bridge to desired outcomes: The coach helps the person to think about what ideally would occur from that person's point of view.
- Form clear commitments and action steps: Lay out a clear, specific, doable plan with completion dates that will enable the person being coached to achieve his or her goal.
- Monitoring for results and accountability: Check to see how things are going. Establish how success will be measured and tracked. (p. 11)

One has to be careful in how coaches are assigned to principals. A natural tension can be created if the coach is also an evaluator. Because effective support for a new principal is to address weaknesses, an evaluation may lead to negative consequences. Because of that, many districts have sought to separate those roles (Turnbull et al., 2013).

Cohorts

Cohort work has to do with groups of administrators who promote collaboration,

networking, and teamwork as well as share knowledge, reflect on practice, identify weaknesses, and develop new skills and strategies; the practice has become increasingly popular (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Those who support the cohort strategy maintain that adult learning occurs best when it is part of a socially cohesive structure that emphasizes that everyone is responsible for the learning of everyone else (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000). Taken further, cohorts can often model that type of team-building that many principals encourage and sometimes require of a faculty (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2001). The actual structure of the cohort could vary from district to district, and topics of discussion could be chosen in advance by the leader—most likely the superintendent—for the purpose of finding solutions to the problems of the district (New Schools Venture Fund, 2008).

Because of the recent tension between critics of education and the defensiveness of those within education, it should be noted that the field has strengths that go unrecognized by their detractors. Furthermore, educational professionals suffer weaknesses they are not willing to acknowledge (Levine, 2005). The former is very important when it comes to the big idea behind cohorts. In the research of Fink and Resnick (2001), a cohort was led by the deputy superintendent who limited discussion to problem sharing. Problems became the “intellectual currency” of the meetings (Fink & Resnick, 2001, p. 13). This philosophy sometimes is a difficult mindset to master, and problem sharing is not treated as evidence of poor performance but rather as an opportunity to improve practice (Fink & Resnick, 2001). Conversely, those who do not participate in said sharing of problems are keeping the district from improving; silence is not viewed as neutral, but as hindering progress (Fink & Resnick, 2001).

Targeted Training

Targeted training involves thoughtful organization of a program that is meant to be tailored to the emerging needs and skills of the new principal cohort. These types of trainings could include on-site and off-site work (New Schools Venture Fund, 2008). Some school districts are very formal in professional development. For instance, Charlotte-Mecklenberg guides principals through their first five years with a structured induction sequence of professional learning that involves some participation in national programs, a partnership with Queens University, and coaching in small groups (New Schools Venture Fund, 2008). Whatever program is chosen, districts are encouraged to strategically target the specific skills leaders in that district value (New Schools Venture Fund, 2008).

Charlotte-Mecklenberg's example uses a local university for professional development; however, school districts often provide professional development for principals (New Schools Venture Fund, 2008). Once again, the programs provided by these districts make it easier to unite the district's and program's goals. Many large, urban school districts are able to provide this type of focused professional development, specific to the school district, but they are in the minority (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005).

In some cases, third-party organizations can provide services to administrators. For instance, New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) is a non-profit organization that recruits educators and non-educators to become urban school principals. The NLNS provides support, coursework, and an internship with a mentor principal. It even provides networking after students graduate from the program (New Schools Venture

Fund, 2008). The emergence of programs such as these questions the validity of the university programs discussed in prior sections (New Schools Venture Fund, 2008).

Several states also provide professional development programs. Indiana, for example, created the Indiana Principal Leadership Institute (IPLI) in the spring of 2013. The purpose of the organization is to “provide building-level principals with the skills and tools needed to increase their personal leadership capacity, as well as to increase the learning capacity of their schools” (Indiana Principal Leadership Institute, n.d.).

Programs like the IPLI have not existed long enough to judge their effectiveness.

The research of Levine (2005) attempted to identify exemplary programs. One program he identified was England’s National College for School Leadership (NCSL). Tony Blair, Prime Minister at the time, spearheaded this program in 1998. It does not award degrees or credit and has one purpose—to educate effective school leaders. It promotes 10 operating principals that define school leadership:

1. Be purposeful, inclusive, and values-driven.
2. Embrace the distinctive and inclusive context of the school.
3. Promote an active view of learning.
4. Be instructionally focused.
5. Reach throughout the school community.
6. Build capacity by developing the school as a learning community.
7. Be futures-oriented and strategically driven.
8. Draw on experimental and innovative technologies.
9. Benefit from support and policy content that is coherent, systematic and implementation driven.

10. Receive support from a national college that leads the discourse on leadership for learning. (Levine, 2005, p. 54)

This program develops several strategies that are organized around a leader's career path from a teacher seeking to become a school leader to that of a mentor. The curriculum of the program is geared for practicing leaders. It covers current problems and challenges that many school leaders face with usable knowledge (Levine, 2005). The staff is composed of both academics and practitioners who are split into teams and are not permanent employees. The college directs and trains the instructors and maintains control over the curriculum (Levine, 2005). The belief of those in charge of the program is that NCSL "wants to bind together research and practice, believing that research should drive practice and practice should fuel research" (Levine, 2005, p. 56).

International experiences are available for students as well as opportunities to partner with businesses, which would allow a student to experience a very different kind of organization. It should be noted that NCSL is housed in a facility that costs approximately \$45 million. Moreover, it possesses virtually unlimited resources that allow for the aforementioned opportunities and also keeps the cost for local school systems at a minimum (Levine, 2005).

The research of Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) also reflected the characteristics mentioned above for the qualities most desired in the professional development of school leaders. "Evidence indicates that effective programs are research-based, have curricular coherence, provide experience in authentic contexts, use cohort groupings and mentors, and are structured to enable collaborative activity between the program and area schools" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005, p. 8). As stated before, evidence for the effectiveness of

these programs is minimal (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Levine, 2005).

Autonomy Levels

In the areas of professional development of the principal, there are many avenues a school district can take. Coaching/mentoring, cohorts, and targeted training are examples of direct efforts of school districts to develop new principals. Furthermore, the very structure of the organization of the school district can be used to enhance the principal's effectiveness (Burkhauser, Hamilton and Pierson, 2013).

In order for a school to be successful, principals need to be able to make decisions that affect school conditions—what many call autonomy (Burkhauser et al., 2013). Without autonomy in some areas, principals would be hampered in their abilities to lead a school (Burkhauser et al., 2013). For example, a lack of autonomy in the area of student discipline might inhibit a principal from making needed adjustments to the school culture.

Until relatively recently, many school districts operated under limited autonomy (Burkhauser et al., 2013). In many cases, it was for good reason. Some superintendents or school districts may establish a structure that limits autonomy in certain areas for the purpose of reducing the number of decisions a principal needs to make. Limiting autonomy thus enables principals to focus on decisions that are deemed essential by the district (Burkhauser et al., 2013).

How might a superintendent create a system that expands principal autonomy in the areas that can propel a school forward while at the same time limit autonomy in those areas that might get in the way of success? For some superintendents, the level of autonomy afforded a principal has to do with the principal's readiness: More autonomy is

given to principals who demonstrate the aptitude for greater responsibility (Burkhauser et al., 2013). For other superintendents, principals might all be granted the same degree of autonomy but assessed on performance contracts. Additionally, they may or may not be given autonomy of a contract extension if those performance goals are not met (Burkhauser et al., 2013).

Summary

The review of literature has revealed that superintendents select and train principals in a variety of ways. Interviewing techniques and the selection process vary significantly depending on whether districts select from within or look outside. Districts can utilize various means to strengthen the pool of quality applicants for a vacancy; the district will suffer otherwise (Burkhauser et al., 2013). Research on the effectiveness of preparation programs at the university level is mixed; as such, some districts have opted to develop their own programs. That philosophy also extended into professional development after an individual was already in a school. Alignment seems to be the key to obtaining what districts desire. The needs of the district need to align with what any preparation or development program requires. Perhaps that is why coaching and mentoring are popular strategies. Such practices can better tailor the program for the needs of the individual and school. Development can fall into three categories: mentoring/coaching, cohorts, and targeted training. Some school districts may choose to set up a system that both expands and limits a principal's autonomy to better develop the principal as a school leader.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative study examined how effective superintendents select and develop principals. My intent was not to understand what all or most superintendents did in each of the aforementioned areas. Rather, the goal was to ascertain more clearly how the most effective superintendents choose and develop principals. To reach this understanding, I examined the very processes these superintendents employed. I chose this particular design because of my interest in the “insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing” (Merriam, 2009, p. 42).

Research Questions

1. How do effective superintendents select their principals?
2. How do effective superintendents develop principals?

Qualitative Inquiry

Merriam (2009) stated, “Research focused on discovery, insight and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making a difference in people’s lives” (p. 1). Through interviews, I sought to understand how the finest superintendents in the state of Indiana see their worlds and the meanings they construct for themselves and those around them.

In order to answer the research questions posed in this study, I followed

Merriam's (2009) established methodology relevant to qualitative inquiry. Step one involved formulating a research question and identifying a theoretical framework. Next, I performed an in-depth review of all relevant literature on the topic. Afterward, I applied criteria to establish the subjects (or units) being studied, and thorough semi-structured interviews followed thereafter. Follow-up interviews were conducted as needed to confirm themes or question new information. Next, I sought patterns and common themes. Finally, the significance of the themes was explained, and possible areas of further research were proposed (Merriam, 2009).

Strategy of Inquiry

A phenomenological study “focuses on the experience itself and how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness” (Merriam, 2009, p. 24). In contrast, most quantitative research studies attempt to categorize and reduce phenomena into laws (Merriam, 2009). Schram stated in Merriam (2009) that a phenomenological study examines people's experience of their “life world” (p. 25). Accordingly, this study explored how superintendents' worldviews shape their selection and development of principals.

Data Sources

For selection purposes, I followed the purposeful sampling model. Patton stated that “purposeful samplings are often information-rich and that they expose much about the purpose of the bounded system” (as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 77). In other words, sample subjects were chosen on the basis of their knowledge and experience.

The selection of interviewed superintendents involved the following procedures. First, data were collected from the leadership at the Indiana Department of Education

(IDOE), the boards and directors of Indiana's educational leadership organizations, and educational leadership faculty at Indiana's colleges and universities. From there, I identified Indiana's most highly effective superintendents. From this data, I chose four highly effective superintendents for the final pool of interview candidates. In order to stratify sampling, I considered three factors: (a) geographic region, (b) district demographics and socioeconomics, and (c) subject's experience and gender. In sum, the following criteria informed data source selection:

- The following Indiana-based sources were asked to identify the most highly effective superintendents: (a) the Indiana State Superintendent Association, (b) the IDOE, (c) the Indiana Association of School Principals (IASP), (d) the Indiana Principal Leadership Institute (IPLI), and (e) state universities that license superintendents such as Indiana State University, Indiana University, Indiana Wesleyan University, and Ball State University.
- The superintendent must have been a superintendent for at least 3 years but not necessarily in the same district.
- The superintendent must have hired at least one principal during his or her tenure as superintendent.
- The superintendent must reside in an Indiana district.
- Other factors included district size, type, student socioeconomics, gender, age, years of experience, etc.

Recruitment forms used for those individual the researcher contacted can be found in Appendix B.

Data Collection

I gathered data by conducting thorough and in-depth face-to-face interviews with subjects identified as highly effective superintendents. Standardized protocol guided each interview, and all subjects were asked questions listed in Appendix A, generally in the same order. I used an iPad and written notes to record each session. Coding was used to secure the confidentiality of the human subjects. Names, locations, and other identifiable characteristics were altered or omitted during transcription.

In order to refine interview questions, I conducted a pilot interview with a superintendent who was not included in the final sample. The individual was selected after I chose the superintendents for the study and acquired their consent. Because of the pilot interview, I was able to determine which questions were “confusing and need[ed] rewording, which questions yield[ed] useless data, [and] which questions, suggested by [the] respondent[s], [the researcher] should have included in the first place” (Merriam, 2009, p. 95).

The semi-structured model of inquiry guided the interview style used in this study. Semi-structured interviews blend structured and unstructured methods in that (a) questions are worded more flexibly, (b) they are deliberated in advance of interviews, and (c) they are generally asked in the same order. Such a format enabled me to better respond to developing situations and pose follow-up questions based on subject responses (Merriam, 2009). Interview questions appear in Appendix A. The recruitment letter and the Consent to Participate forms are found in Appendix C and D, respectively. The identification of investigators is located in Appendix E.

Data Analysis

I conducted basic research in the course of studying the two guiding research questions. Basic research considers the following areas:

- How people interpret experiences.
- How they construct their worlds.
- What meaning they attribute to their experiences. (Merriam, 2009, p. 23)

My central interest was learning how interviewees perceived their worlds and prioritized according to the aforementioned research questions. In part, themes relied upon participants' views and observations and the author's critical point of view (Creswell, 2009). The researcher's primary goal was to uncover and comprehend the realities of these individuals through themes and interpretations of those themes.

Establishing Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability equates to the confidence placed in the veracity of conducted research. "Put another way, validity and reliability asks the researcher if he or she would feel sufficiently secure about his or her themes to construct social policy or legislation based on them" (Merriam, 2009, p. 210). Therefore, several strategies were employed to ensure the validity and reliability of this study.

For instance, member checking was used to evaluate my interpretations, meaning participants were asked to critique the accuracy of themes. Additionally, in the qualitative sense, this study aimed for reliability, meaning the extent to which others can replicate research. However, in the social sciences, establishing reliability is problematic due to the unpredictability of human behavior. According to Merriam (2009), it is more important that results are consistent with collected data.

The investigator's ethics are arguably the most important component for a valid and reliable study (Merriam, 2009). I conducted research with the utmost integrity and ethical standards, and he attended to any conscious and unconscious biases or prejudices. For example, I attempted to be as objective as possible by not assuming to understand the motivation of the subjects without asking probing questions to clarify.

Summary

Chapter 3 outlined the research design used to determine how highly effective superintendents select and develop principals. Research questions, strategy of inquiry, data sources, data collection, data analysis, and validity and reliability assurances were all included in the assessment. Chapter 4 presents the themes of this research plan. Chapter 5 provides analysis and conclusions as well as implications for future studies.

CHAPTER 4

THEMES OF THE STUDY

I observed eight themes throughout the interviews that covered a wide array of topics in the selection and development process. Themes included areas such as district size, continuous improvement, education of prospective and current administrators, shared attributes of principals, the respect and trust of the school board, a preference of internal candidates, common practices in professional development, and the method of managing and evaluating principals.

Prior to analyzing the interviews and in addition to extensively analyzing relevant secondary sources, I identified and interviewed effective superintendents in the state of Indiana and questioned them regarding their selection and development of principals. I contacted administrative staff at the IDOE, the educational leadership faculty of Indiana's public universities, and the leadership of Indiana's educational professional organizations. I polled these experts to identify between five and 10 of the best superintendents in the state. Several respondents identified 10, but two identified only five. The pool consisted of 31 superintendents. Two participants mentioned the same two names, and one individual was mentioned by three participants in common.

In order to establish a rich and diverse sampling, I selected four interviewees from the pool of 31 according to the criteria detailed in Chapter 3

The interviews, which lasted from 90 to 120 minutes, followed the format documented in Appendix A. I presented subjects with a summary of themes upon completion of the interviews. The subjects then checked themes to assure their valid and reliable representation.

I recorded interviews using an iPad and an application called “SuperNote.” I was able to review the interviews with accuracy due to these recordings and written notes that were transcribed during the interview. Notes and recordings will be destroyed three years after the study is complete per IRB guidelines.

I referenced the Indiana School District Demographics (2009) to acquire the population statistics of superintendents’ districts.

Participants

Subject demographics were varied, which provided robust perspectives. One participant was female, and all had served for some time as a principal and as a teacher. All interviewees but one had been superintendents in districts other than the one they currently served. Their years of experience ranged from 5 to 23 years. Each subject had spent his or her entire career in education. At the time of the study, all but one served in a district with only one high school, and all but one began his or her career as a superintendent in a small school district.

The subjects resided and worked in various regions of Indiana. One was located in the southwestern portion of the state, two were from metropolitan Indianapolis, and one was from eastern Indiana. Accordingly, the districts they served also varied in size, population density, and socioeconomics. One was a large urban district, one a smaller urban district, one a medium-sized suburban district and one a small rural district.

Respective district populations ranged from 80,000 to little more than 4,700 people.

In order to safeguard subject confidentiality, quoted responses were altered as necessary for the reader's convenience and to secure participant and district anonymity.

Summary of Interviews and Observations

Background Information of S1

Superintendent One (S1) is the leader of a mid-size school district in eastern Indiana. According to the 2009 American Community Survey (2009), just over 40,000 people reside in this district, 87% of whom are White. Of the total population, 79% possesses a high school diploma, and 15.5% hold a college diploma. Additionally, 18.3% of residents have earned income within the last 12 months that falls below the poverty line—much higher than the national average.

Before becoming a superintendent in the current district, S1 was a high school teacher, a high school principal, and an assistant principal. Prior to this leader's current position, he was superintendent of a very rural district in northern Indiana. This superintendent has more than 18 years of experience as a superintendent. When S1 became superintendent of the current district, many experts in education labeled the only high school a "dropout factory" because it yielded a graduation rate of approximately 55% in 2007. What was even more troubling was that African Americans had a graduation rate of only 25%. In 2013, the graduation rate had increased to higher than 86%. At the time of study, the graduation rate of African Americans nearly equaled that of the entire student body.

When asked to describe a leadership style, S1 spoke of "opening the floor to ideas," and being "very reflective," as well as "giving people and other leaders plenty of

autonomy.” S1 also leads by example by participating in the standards and practices he expects of his leadership team. For instance, when S1 invites the team to events or meetings, S1 expresses directly and clearly that they need to attend. Additionally, for the sake of establishing common ground with colleagues, S1 explains to them the “unwritten rules” that guide S1’s leadership style. At times, the teachers in his district were unsure of these philosophies and how they fit into them, so S1 found it necessary to dialog with them in a more frank and open manner.

During S1’s tenure as the superintendent of the present district, S1 has hired 10 principals. Of those, five are elementary principals, three intermediate principals, and two high school principals. Three of the principals were scouted from outside the district, while the others were groomed from within. S1 dismissed two of the 10 principals hired for the betterment of the school and district.

Finally, S1 has never felt significant pressure to hire anyone during his time as superintendent in his current district, but was pressured to interview a certain individual while at another district. After interviewing this person, S1 concluded that the candidate did not possess the requisite qualities for success.

The process of hiring a principal in S1’s district. When a principalship becomes available in S1’s district, S1 first convenes with school staff to get a sense of “what [qualities] they are looking for, their issues . . . , what opportunities they are looking for, how their school improvement plan has developed over the years and what they are looking for that leader to do relative to that school improvement plan.” Essentially, S1 seeks their input before scouting candidates because staff work closely with principals, and it’s important to align their personal and collective goals. Although

S1 seeks collaborative input before looking for prospects, S1 is not always present during interviews. However, when the staff requests it, S1 attends.

S1 follows a process and listens to staff criticism, but must be at ease with the selection. S1 respects that the hiring committees offer “[their] best suggestion or recommendation, and honors that.” However, “ultimately that selection needs to be someone I feel comfortable with.” On two occasions, S1 strayed from the sense of who was the best candidate. Both times, “I have been sorry for that” because the hires were not advantageous choices.

In order to provide context for S1’s leadership style and hiring practices, S1 shared the example of one case involving an intermediate school with an IDOE rating of F. The principal was terminated after the second day of classes and replaced with a retired veteran principal. S1 intended for the replacement to serve for several weeks, but he performed so well that he stayed for the remainder of the year, raising the school’s rating to an A.

The search for a permanent replacement began in the spring. School staff had asked that S1 work with them through this process. Eight or nine candidates were interviewed for the permanent replacement. S1 identified one candidate whom thought to be a proper fit, then S1 polled the interview committee regarding their assessment of qualifications. Each individual polled rose concerns about the person’s readiness, so S1 felt that the individual could not be offered the position. Trust in their judgment supports the claim to a leadership style based on giving autonomy and respecting criticism. After considering their feedback, S1 informed the staff that the offer will go to someone else. However, soon after S1’s announcement, the faculty informed S1 that he had

misinterpreted their concerns. Collectively, they thought the candidate was qualified and that S1 should reconsider his decision.

S1 had learned before this incident that, when a “gut reaction . . . tells you something, have the guts or fortitude” to trust that reaction. In this case, he did not follow his instinct to trust the staff’s initial dismissal of the candidate. Going against his instincts further, he informed the staff that he wanted them to interview two more applicants before offering the position to anyone. If the original candidate was still the best option after considering alternatives, he would support their choice. After the second round of interviews, the staff did choose this person. Later on, S1’s reservations were confirmed when the recently hired principal failed to perform competently and had to be terminated.

S1 described this effort to hire a permanent replacement for the interim principal as a “total failure.” S1 then “went back to the drawing board” and chose someone who was groomed locally. At the time of the interview, the principal who was hired following the controversial replacement remained in a positive position at the district. S1’s anecdote reveals a hands-off leadership style, trust in staff judgment, and the drawbacks of both qualities. The case also suggests that “gut reactions,” or intuitive judgments, are integral in decision-making and should be valued rather than suspected as prejudicial or uninformed.

S1 discussed the engagement of other stakeholders when vetting prospects. In the district, candidate interviews involve parents as well as students when possible. In some instances, college and university personnel participate as well. Because high schools maintain so many partnerships with universities, it is appropriate that these institutions

participate in that hire. S1 does not usually participate in the interview committees unless asked. S1 does, however, require that applicants meet with cabinet members.

S1 admitted that the hiring process has undergone minor changes over the years. For example, the questions are more attuned to the standards in the RISE evaluation model (*RISE Education and Development*). Additionally, the process includes scenario questions taken from real occurrences within and outside the district. Furthermore, S1 has instituted a written component that makes the interview more dynamic. He wants to see if candidates can communicate effectively through the written word. A written portion was implemented in the teacher interview process as well.

S1 said that they always post positions publicly and conduct interviews. However, in only three cases, his district has hired principals from outside the school system. He remarked, “The rest of those people have been groomed to be administrators having been teachers in the district.” S1 feels that his region of the state is not attractive to people from other parts of Indiana or the country. Accordingly, the district identifies internal candidates because they understand stakeholder needs. S2 “recognizes that if we are going to have outstanding candidates, we need to do what we can to ensure that we are developing those outstanding candidates.”

S1 recognized his tendency to hire leaders from within, but he maintained that he does not prefer internal candidates. Indeed, he acknowledged that “there is potential harm in having an entire staff of administrators that came from within the district—particularly if they grew up in the area.” S1 stated that hiring born-and-raised leaders is problematic in part because such individuals might view current problems through the

lens of the past rather than present and future needs. Moreover, without external experiences and perspectives, “cross-pollination” might not occur.

Qualities desired in a principal in S1’s district. S1 looks for several qualities in an aspiring principal, which are listed below:

- Works with data and translates it into action. Can they identify instructional issues based on information at their fingertips?
- Communicates with an inviting, genuine, and honest style.
- Commits to the district and community.
- Facilitates collaborative work.
- Acts to dignify students.
- Commands respect of students while managing the classroom.
- Supports school initiatives enacted based on the School Improvement Plan.

Professional development of principals. Once principals are hired, S1 trains them according to their profiles, meaning that he considers their age, grade-level serviced, and whether they were an internal or external choice. Although S1 tailors plans individually, some components are uniform across candidates. For instance, the entire administrative team—central office, principals, and assistant principals—meets two times per month. The officials discuss current events at these meetings and address procedural issues. During these debriefings, leadership topics are often prompted by book studies.

Regular administrative team meetings are not the only common feature in S1’s principal training program. A second uniform practice is that each principal and a staff member from his or her school meet with S1 three to four times a year. These meetings

are focused on data and their understanding of it. The data may include topics such as student data, teacher absenteeism, and behavioral issues. These meetings are meant to help the principals and inform their answer to the question, “What is your next step?”

Occasionally, the administrative team responds to issues by enacting research assignments that may examine surface or in-depth issues. Assignees report findings to the group and sometimes the school board. S1 gave an example of assigning a prospective administrator the task of finding out the best time during students’ schooling to teach them keyboarding skills. The individual then reported his findings to the group. Such collaborative research develops a principal’s repertoire of knowledge and skills.

S1 identified several different colleges and universities that his aspiring administrators seek out for licensure and professional development, but he does not recommend one more than another. In order to better guide those who come to him for advice about further education, S1 has asked for input from teachers who seek administrative licensure. He feels that such information gives prospective administrators a full picture of district-level concerns. Furthermore, he stated, “almost all teachers working on certification [in administration have] put time in with the board,” so they have insight into policy-making at a top level.

Because it is assumed that internal staff will become building administrators, the district gives them leadership opportunities outside of their normal coursework. At one time, administrative internships were part of the district’s strategic plan, but they have fallen out of practice due to budgetary concerns. Ironically, when the internship was in place, S1 said that, in all three cases, the interns chose to return to the classroom and not pursue administration.

S1's district also utilizes collaborative thinking and problem-solving as part of developing principals. Three cohorts of principals and assistant principals are assigned in a way that provides diversity of members. Groups are assembled as dynamically as possible in order to avoid placing all fledgling administrators in one group and all veterans in another. The groups set the agenda, but S1 has given them topics to explore in the past—sometimes based on board initiatives. Topics have included the implementation of nine effective strategies (Marzano et. al., 2005), the motivational practices of Pink (2009), and cultural competencies of principals. Participants implement practices informed by their group brainstorming and share their experiences with the cohort.

Although there is no uniform plan for principal development, there is a component of the district's broader strategic plan every year that addresses their development. Specifically, S1 assigns himself and his assistant to mentor and evaluate principals, a relationship which he acknowledged as tense. In an effort to help relieve this tension, S1 conducted a communication audit. He asked the principals if they considered the meeting environment a comfortable setting. Participants felt that, in some ways, it was very difficult to voice opinions and pose questions when colleagues might view a question as "stupid." To respondents, such honest and uninhibited participation might reveal ignorance. In order to alleviate this anxiety, S1 proposed that central office personnel not be present during the first 20 minutes of team meetings in the new year. Furthermore, principals can review the agenda that S1 sets and raise questions as a group. S1 hopes that this approach will foster a supportive environment. He also plans on

filming some of his meetings so that he can view both his and others' verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

To enhance the performance of classroom teachers as well as the skill of observing classroom teachers, S1 implemented what he referred to as "clinical rounds." He, along with a group of principals, audits classrooms for a brief period of time, approximately 10 to 15 minutes. At the end, participants speak to each other in the hallway about what they saw. Usually, S1 speaks last. He said that he does not participate as much as when he first implemented the practice, but other principals have continued auditing and discussing. Additionally, the clinical rounds have become widely adopted. S1 said that teachers within the same building have been seen sitting in classes and sharing their observations afterward.

Principals who struggle. If a principal seems to be struggling, S1 investigates to see if something is "faulty within the system." He believes that, when an administrator is failing, one must examine the organization first, which might include policy and personnel malfunctions. He provided an example in which a principal at one of the intermediate schools experienced problems. It happened to be the first year of their new model for Grades 5-8. Lots of support was given to the eighth graders when in fact the school was having the most difficult time with the fifth graders. Resources were reallocated, which mitigated this problem. As additional remediation, the principal of this school was sent to observe operations at several different buildings serving Grades 5-8. S1 also developed an action plan for him to follow. In this case, the organization was examined first, not the principal's lack of skill.

Alternatively, S1 has had to dismiss principals when they failed to meet expectations. S1 claimed that these terminations took place because “nothing took” even after intense intervention. He commented, “When all else fails, that’s when we have had to reassign or dismiss.” To clarify the point, S1 shared a particular experience with a struggling principal. S1 performed cafeteria duty with this person to give him a very clear idea of his expectation that administrators should be involved in all activities great and small occurring within their buildings. When the principal continued to perform poorly following this intervention, S1 found it necessary to remove him from the position.

Principal autonomy. S1 was asked to talk about the level of autonomy given to principals in his district. He stated that they have the most decision-making authority in terms of building management, but it has “tightened up,” or become more regimented, in many ways. For example, the elementary curriculum has a literacy block that is relatively uniform from building to building. Semi-standardized curricula are intended to mitigate frequent school-to-school transitions that disrupt student progress. Educators must be certain that transfer students have been taught with the same or similar materials and methodologies as their previous schools. Much as literacy standards necessarily limit autonomy, safety and security procedures are identical across districts. In this area, S1 “feels bad for principals in a lot of ways When I say they are free to manage their buildings however they want, there is so little room to move anymore.”

At this point in the interview, it became necessary to address why so much autonomy has been ceded from principals. S1 explained that, by taking away some decision-making power, he frees their time and energy to better lead their buildings,

especially in the area of classroom instruction and student support. “In the competitive arena, we have to provide some support, and sometimes that support looks like reducing autonomy.”

S1’s general comments. S1 made a point to mention how much he respects the day-to-day work that the principals perform. For instance, without assistants to help them, elementary principals manage buildings with a population of 250 to 350 students. He remarked, they are “hitting all cylinders from the time they get in to the time they leave,” meaning they must function at a dynamic and constant level to resolve multifaceted problems that impact the success of the building.

Upon concluding the interview, S1 was asked if he had anything else to add. He quoted a mentor of his in regards to professional development and staff by stating, “There are lights in a faculty. You have to know whether you are casting a shadow on those lights or you are in their midst. Always stand away so you are not in their way.” In other words, superintendents should resist dominating school operations with over-participation and over-leading. They must trust that staff will make positive, competent decisions in good faith, and they must support their choices. In order to develop administrators, one must give them room to grow rather than mandating their roles and responsibilities. Self-empowerment and accountability are keystones in S1’s approach to leadership.

Background Information on S2

Superintendent 2 (S2) is the superintendent of a moderate-sized district located on the outskirts of large city that is home to approximately 20,000 residents. The community is an affluent area with a median household income of more than \$100,000

per year. The adult population is highly educated with nearly 60% attaining a college degree. About 3% of the total population lives below the poverty line. At the time of the study, S2 had been the superintendent of his current district for eight years. Before, he was superintendent of a very small district north of Indianapolis, an assistant superintendent, and a principal. During his tenure as a superintendent, S2 has hired more than 10 principals. At the time of the study, he had hired seven for his district.

S2 wanted to become a teacher early in his life due largely to his positive school experience as a “kid from the wrong side of the tracks,” a child born into a disadvantaged socioeconomic position. He stated, “Teachers taught me how to read. I had not seen the printed word other than scant looks at the Bible.” S2 recounted an experience as a third grader wherein he asked his teacher if he could read the fourth-grade books because he had read all of the fourth grade material by the end of November. The teacher informed S2 that the principal forbade him from reading the fourth-grade books because doing so would leave him nothing to read next year.

That third grader disliked that the principal had placed an instructional ceiling on his potential, and the teacher could tell that it bothered him. As a result, the teacher did something that “fascinated [S2] about this profession . . . in that she was ‘creatively insubordinate against a system.’” After asking S2 what he liked to read, the teacher would visit the library every Friday and bring back books for him. Under the condition that S2 act as though he were participating in the standard reading curriculum, the teacher gave him the opportunity to develop his passion for literacy and learning as the other students completed the normal coursework. S2 shared the following about this formative experience with his 3rd-grade teacher:

She had to be divergent in order to get me the help that I needed. That really was the defining moment in my life. It has been a key in my career to provide the best possible services in a structure that, unfortunately, does not accommodate learners as well as it should. It never has, and on [its] current chassis, [it] still does not.

What do we do as leaders? That is how I got to this position. What do we do as leaders to constantly test the bounds of how divergent elements of a system can be stretched without causing the whole thing to go tilt?

When asked about his leadership style, S2 replied that many Indiana districts are hierarchical, a fact that ultimately confines people in structures rather than making them accessible to others. His style of leadership has to do with accessibility. “The worst answer a principal can give is ‘That’s our policy.’ It is an ineffective answer, yet often true, but these are individual, idiosyncratic humans with whom we deal, and the minute we forget that, we fail.” He continued to say that his job is “about responding to one’s needs so people can go on and do what they want to in life. Nothing else really matters.” Clearly, S2 espouses a pedagogy that puts students first and standards second. He believes that leaders should be critical of policy that overlooks or ignores lived reality, and they should work to alleviate failures in the system. By negotiating tensions between the individual and the organization, effective principals enable student and staff success.

Finally, S2 recalled a case in which he was pressured to hire a certain individual for a teaching position. A board member approached him about hiring a relative at one of the elementary schools. S2 had been at his current position for only a week. He told the board member, “If you tell me to hire [this person] I will, but in the next cycle, I will look for another gig because you hired me to run your schools. That is not how we are going

to do this.” S2 needed to clarify that his role was not to satisfy staff whims; he had a stronger obligation to the students. For him, running a school means making the best choices for the community, even if the decision runs counter to individual interests. S2 has not had a problem since confronting this person. He is inclined to believe that the board member was testing him because the hiring protocols were reviewed during the interview process. Unquestionably fulfilling this person’s desire to appoint a relative would have revealed complicity and a lack of integrity because protocols forbade such practices. He recalled that, when he was principal, he had several people “foisted upon him,” so he is very protective of his principals who are pressured to hire certain people.

The process of hiring a principal in S2’s district. The hiring process in S2’s district is structured into four steps that involve a number of people:

1. An outside organization conducts the first interview, which is highly structured, based on underlying psychology of peoples’ disposition to help students grow. This well-researched format has been used to conduct interviews like this for more than 40 years. Those who are selected for the next step are chosen based on their disposition and compatibility with the district.
2. The director of human resources then hosts a “meet-and-greet” with possible candidates. Much of this step is based on personality, like the ability to look people in the eye.
3. The administrative team meets with the candidates. S2 interviews the candidates at this point.

4. The final step involves both the parents and the teachers, and it usually involves two final candidates.

S2 follows an individualized and structured hiring plan. He includes interview questions he formulated so that each candidate receives the same queries. He also selects the final two or three candidates before the culminating interviews take place. In some of these interviews, the candidate will meet with several different groups in a type of “round robin format.” However, in some cases, S2 has proceeded without open interviewing. These exceptions have worked well because “we know their talent, we know their fit, and we know how they play with the team.”

When S2 does scout for external candidates, he utilizes contacts from across the state with whom he has nurtured a relationship over the years. In some cases, he will begin searching before the position has been publicly posted. S2 made it clear that participants in these interviews are not voting on the candidates; he is looking for feedback only.

It should be noted that S2 has a very sparsely staffed central office relative to other colleagues across Indiana. As such, he has many of the principals perform work for the entire district. For example, a principal for a middle school might lead a district-wide initiative. Such dynamic use of personnel addresses what he called the “central office bloat” of many of his colleagues, meaning the inefficiency that occurs from over-allocation of human resources in positions where they are not needed. He wants to keep the district’s resources as close to the students as possible, so he removes the barriers between the principals and himself.

Qualities desired in a principal in S2's district. S2 looks for people who “are communicative, articulate, have high integrity, and someone who puts the ego behind their work, not in front of it.” He also added that “charisma can be helpful but [it's] not foremost [in qualifications].” A strong personality can help, and a passive one does not necessarily signify ineffectiveness, but a person with too much ego will not work out for S2. He wants principals who know the difference between “confidence and cockiness.” A strong ego might get someone noticed and hired under the mistaken presumption of capability, but it could engender problems.

S2 feels that superintendents and hiring committees cannot ascertain the degree of a candidate's integrity until he or she assumes the principalship. For example, a lack of integrity is apparent when one “sells his superiors down the river,” meaning publically blaming the district office for initiatives with which the principal may or may not agree. “This is even more clearly personified when a principal stands in front of the faculty and says, ‘They told me I had to do this.’” Put simply, S2 wants a candidate who refuses to implicate others and instead meets conflict by owning decisions and consequences.

S2 understands the compulsion to avoid taking responsibility because of self-serving opportunities. Blaming others signifies untrustworthiness that has no place in the relationship between principal and superintendent. S2 does understand that, sometimes, superintendents unfairly overburden principals and coerce them into making unpopular decisions. However, in his experience, “there is no game, here,” no vying for who's right or wrong. He is deliberate with “what the moves are,” “moves” referring to the dynamic between superior and subordinate.

S2 wants someone who has the ability to understand the “whole process.” He stated, “If I were to go out and get hit by a bus, [Principal X] will fill in for me at the next board meeting, and everything will be fine.” So, S2 requires a confident leader who knows the district well enough to assume greater responsibility when necessary. S2 elaborated his thoughts on trust with the following:

What is very difficult and interesting to find is a person who can lead and can be decisive and can be passionate about direction and yet yield to this amalgam that makes all of the ships rise in that particular bay. That is the most difficult “get” in this particular profession.

In other words, a principal needs to make everyone around him or her better by making the difficult decisions and listening to others. He wants high-achiever candidates who cooperate with one another toward the goal of the common good of all stakeholders. S2 privileges these qualities, but he is aware that it is difficult to find candidates who possess them.

Sometimes, the process of hiring a principal does not conclude in choosing the most suitable applicant. In one such instance, an effective assistant principal was promoted to principal. S2 characterized this person as “overflowing with good ideas.” However, 12 weeks into the job, the newly promoted principal said to S2 that he “hate[d] this job” and “cannot be the . . . principal here.” He realized that he was much better at being an assistant. There did not appear to be any weakness in character or aptitude on the part of the principal, nor was the hiring process at fault. It just simply did not work. S2 said, “I have to own that one. I am the one who installed him.” S2 replaced this

person with a middle school principal within that district who is doing very well at the time of the study. S2 described him as the “quintessential high school principal.”

The former principal, the one who served so well as an assistant, was then placed in a position that better suited his disposition. In this instance, S2 circumvented the normal protocols to find the ideal candidate for the job. “Protocols do fail,” but the reaction to that failure will determine success according to S2.

When asked whether he prefers internal or external candidates, S2 stated that “it is always prudent to be keen to a new eye in your organization.” However, he is biased in that he knows those potential leaders within his district; looking outside risks bringing in unknowns who may require more intensive scrutiny of personality and community fitness. However, he was quick to point out that “there is a fine line between thinking one has a total understanding of someone’s appropriateness and myopia.” S2’s comment suggests that familiarity can cause one to overlook weaknesses while favoring strengths. The only bias S2 acknowledged regards the team’s present needs, which he uses to focus his candidate search. Although S2 did not admit to preferring internal hires, it is prudent to know that, of the eight principals S2 has hired in his present district (he hired two more in another) and the one prior, only two were external choices.

In order to strengthen the pool of internal candidates, S2’s district identifies teachers who demonstrate leadership potential, then they work to develop those abilities. By identifying and cultivating prospects, the district can sometimes keep future leaders from leaving for better opportunities at other school systems. When possible, a pathway is provided for these people to advance their career and the profession in general. In one case, the district received a grant that allowed a current teacher to develop leadership

skills by completing a principalship preparation program. Possibly in the 2014 to 2015 school year, S2 might reassign this person into a teacher-administrator hybrid position that dedicates part of the day to each role.

Lastly, S2 is enticed by candidates who present a fresh, untainted perspective on district operations. Despite this appeal, he stated, “A person new to an organization only has new eyes for 90 days,” then they become part of the organization, including its traditions and routines. As such, in order to fully utilize external insight, S2 will come to external hires after 45 days and ask them what they see and what questions they have about the building’s everyday functions. Doing so also allows him to assess the new principal’s positive and negative acculturation. S2 is careful to nurture these external hires while avoiding “inculcat[ing] them with everything we do because that is what we have always done.” S2 wants to preserve the outsider perspective as long as possible lest external hires adopt the negative practices and views of the status quo.

Professional development of principals. In the area of professional development and certification of principals, S2’s district does not align itself with any particular college, university, or institution. S2 described their relationship with higher-learning institutions as “ad hoc,” forming out of mutual need and opportunity. He feels that his district is not large enough for institutions to target. Additionally, he is a bit skeptical of the online “diploma mills.” Those types of programs are “eye catchers” for him in a negative manner.

Principal training in S2’s district depends on several different factors, the most germane being acclimation to the district or school if he or she is external. For instance, the elementary cohort assisted the latest hire’s acclimation to the job by way of regular

meetings at S2's request. For someone who is internal, similar activities are still done, especially with S2.

The principals are not directly assigned a mentor in S2's district. Instead, he fulfills that role via frequent visits and real-time conversations about the issues that principals currently face. S2 is also the evaluator, which—one might assume—could create tension or at least discomfort between the principal and S2. However, S2 does not see that relationship as “a disconnect.” Rather, he feels that he intimately understands the ambiguities of building-level leadership, so his evaluation process is collaborative and formative. As evidence of the principal's comfort level, S2 highlighted the fact that all of his principals remained at the district despite not having a raise for six years. He added that four of his hires are highly sought after by other districts at the time of the study.

Targeted training does take place based on a team decision. For example, S2 stated that staff can become “instructionally complacent because we have DNA coursing through our veins.” Essentially, he believes it is human nature to uphold the status quo, and it is necessary to resist that tendency via continued education and collaboration. As such, teams choose a topic, study it, and implement it into their school culture. For example, literacy was a focus several years prior to the study. Now, it is embedded into the school culture, and they follow up on it periodically. The year of 2013 was an assessment that will be tracked in 2014 to monitor improvements. The professional development of principals rests on the core mission.

Finally, when asked about the type of schooling he recommends for aspiring or current administrators, S2 stated that he has suggested several different degrees

depending on an individual's goals. He has suggested MBAs, PhDs and even law school. He describes himself as an agnostic when it comes to preferring one degree over another.

Principal autonomy. Because of the current political climate, S2 feels that some of the autonomy has been removed from the principalship in the district. An example is the evaluation process. His district adopted the RISE model (*RISE evaluation and development system: Evaluator and principal handbook*) with the knowledge that they would receive federal funds for implementing it. Since Dr. Bennett has left office, the evaluation has been modified. That has been a collaborative process, but it has removed some of the autonomy of the principal.

S2 stated, "I do not want to make time to see if people can handle autonomy in running a school." He believes that he needs to judge whether a person can manage a school during the interview process. Principals are given almost complete autonomy in his district. S2 was quick to add that communication is still vital, and he expects to be kept apprised of important developments. He explained that "he would be a fool" not to give talented individuals the freedom to run their building. Consequently, S2 emphasized his belief that "selection science and art are at the crux of the success of an organization." Selecting the finest candidates makes organizational operations much easier.

Principals who struggle. For those administrators who struggle, S2 claimed that he wants everyone to be "wildly successful." Because of that, unless the principal commits an egregious act, he or she will receive a "latticework of support" and partake in "very frank discussions." If the struggle is a result of a flaw in the system, S2 assumes that the problem will be brought to him early on so that they can work through it together. If that does not happen, there is a problem with communication. If the concern is valid, it

needs to be brought forward and dealt with lest more problems develop as a result. If that conversation does not happen, it is a systematic flaw according to S2.

S2 has found that, occasionally, failure lies within an individual's inability to be "simultaneously decisive and flexible as well as inviting and firm." These leadership qualities are difficult to find and enhance, but they are the "sweet spot of getting this right." Balancing one's duty to the system and the individual is vital to principal success, but by no means is it a simple feat.

S2's general comments. At the conclusion of the interview, S2 was asked if he had anything to add. He spoke about dualities at depth. He said, "Any principal doing his or her job well is wearing multiple hats of advocacy simultaneously and making it look good," which encapsulates his views on principal selection and development. S2's comment means that principals must assume varied roles because their job is to serve diverse stakeholders with sometimes competing interests. "It is impossible to do, but [a principal] has to do it well."

Background Information of S3

Superintendent 3 (S3) works in a very small rural district in mid-southern Indiana that has a population of fewer than 5,000 residents with approximately 600 total students. The school district as a whole is more than 98% White with higher than 80% of the population having graduated from high school and 8% attaining a college degree. Of the total population, 15% live at or below the poverty line. S3 has worked for smaller districts during his nine-year tenure in three different school systems. One can assume that, given the size of his districts, she has hired the least amount of principals—six

total—of the four interviewed. Two of those principals were elementary, while four have been secondary principals.

At the time of the study, S3 is in the process of moving to a fourth district to become superintendent. S3 has spent just over 40 years in education. Little more than half of those years have been spent in the same district where she served as teacher, principal, and superintendent. S3 retired as superintendent in 2010 and returned to the present position in 2012. During “retirement” S3 taught full-time at a nearby university. At the time of study, relative to the other interviewees, S3 has been a superintendent in the most districts—four including one as interim. She began working at a fifth district in July 2014. The position is different from other interviewed subjects in that S3 does not have assistants at the central office level. In two previous districts, S3 enjoyed more central office support and is highly sought after by many smaller districts

S3 said that she has shaped his leadership style by watching others and considering how their actions affect him. S3 characterized herself as direct, collaborative, and wanting to know “who we are going to advantage.” If it is a choice between students or teachers, S3 believes that students should be chosen, but works to find a way to advantage both. She has learned that a strength is collaboration, and “top-down leadership” does not always work because of a lack of collective support. S3 credits former State Superintendent Dr. Sue Ellen Reed as a model for this type of leadership. Dr. Reed made top-down initiatives “palatable” for stakeholders because she would find a way to make them work for Indiana but still comply with federal law. Similarly, S3 wants people in the district to be “both collaborative and compliant.” By collaborating, districts and communities learn what is best for students.

S3 credits the profession of the superintendent for helping her overcome tough times by providing him with a cohort for discussing and resolving district problems. Over the years, she has developed many contacts from around the state and has many superintendents “on speed dial.” She stated, “There are not many professions like that. We have a great network of people because [we] have no peers within the schools.” Because of that, she needs to work through situations with others to navigate his “battles for kids” on all levels.

Lastly, S3 has never felt pressure to hire any single applicant, nor does she feel that her vision of a principal is at odds with that of the board. S3 did admit “it is different because they do not always have the knowledge base.” S3 feels that the board is more interested in the interpersonal skills of the candidates—how they communicate, the quality of their character, and whether or not they have integrity. They are not aware of the instructional leader aspect of principalship. S3 and the board are not in conflict; rather, stated, “We are coming from a different knowledge base.”

The process of hiring a principal in S3’s district. When considering a candidate for a principalship in her current district, S3 opens the position and then selects interviewees. Background information on the candidates is then checked before the interviews even begin. S3 has considerable connections around the state and does not hesitate to call contacts at colleges and universities for references of people who might be interested in coming to district. After S3 curates the list of candidates, they are brought forward for an interview that typically involves the board and sometimes students and parents. S3 stated that the process is not ideal, and admitted that a more time-intensive

process is preferred. However, in some instances, that would mean more money, a resource lacking in the present district.

Because S3 recommends candidates to the board, she admitted that bias might be involved in the recommendation to the board. For example, S3 researches candidates by calling contacts and references as well as tailoring the interview questions to what qualities she wants in a principal. In the current district, she narrows the candidate pool down to three candidates who are then interviewed by the board. In her previous districts, S3 has interviewed more candidates before “paring them down” and going to the board. She thinks that process might be better because it is “nice to be able to talk to people before you get them to the point where they are with the board.”

S3 is very active in the interview process. While she does not overtly endorse one candidate over another to the board, S3 is quick to inform them of “those areas of expertise or characteristics or qualities that a principal needs in order to be effective [of which most boards are not totally aware.” S3 chooses questions in the interview that target the applicant’s (a) knowledge of data analysis, (b) familiarity with standards, and (c) definition of curriculum. Lastly, S3 also poses questions that reveal what resources candidates would use to meet students’ needs.

S3 articulated that, regardless of the makeup of the interviews or how many stakeholders are actively involved, many of those involved in the interview process must understand that they are considered advisory only. They are brought in to give their perspectives. Board members must not transgress their role by advocating for their preferred candidates only. Rather, they must work together to choose the best person from among all applicants. Otherwise, S3 said that they will ask, “Why am I even here?”

They need to feel positive about their contributions whether or not “their” candidate is offered the principalship.

As the interview committee debriefs, S3 has the opportunity to highlight candidates’ strengths and weaknesses. While the final word on who gets hired comes from the board, the boards S3 has worked with have asked her for an opinion because they might lack knowledge about what it takes to succeed as a principal. S3 admits to taking a “very vocal approach” when discussing a favorite, but S3 also asks the members to verbalize what they saw in the interview. S3 never expressed being at odds with the board, but did suggest that its members might not be aware of their knowledge deficit regarding the qualities of effective principals.

When asked about any possible changes about the current hiring process for administrators, S3 mentioned a possible partnership with the New Leaders Program (NLP), an organization that produces a time-intensive hiring process, which S3 says might be the prohibitive factor. The NLP gives candidates case studies and asks them questions about those studies and what their action plan might be were they to experience the same situation. The program also requires them to analyze data for the purpose of identifying strengths and weaknesses, and it utilizes role-play to see how they might interact with different stakeholders.

This format would be especially useful in the professional development of the principal. If this process can identify strengths and weaknesses, professional development may then be tailored to the individual and more quickly implemented. As stated earlier, S3 sees this process as something that could benefit the district, but the

time-intensive requirements are problematic. To mitigate that, S3 is considering ways to acquire the same information without an equivalent time commitment.

Qualities desired in a principal in S3's district. S3 looks for a variety of qualities in a principal. She wants them to be able to analyze data, know the strengths and weaknesses of their schools, possess integrity, and be able to target areas for improvement. Ideal principals have leadership skills, are team players, communicate on all levels, and deeply understand instructional strategies. S3 wants principals to convey to the staff that they should teach one child at a time and not “classes.” Finally, they should be problem-solvers with knowledge about the law. Superior candidates will have to learn little in these areas.

When S3 began at the current district, she had to hire two principals for a high school and an elementary school. S3 stated that, at the time of the interview, one of them is doing very well and is a “quick study.” He is very young but able to learn from experiences and is “like a sponge” that absorbs environmental information. The other is in a more difficult situation. The environment upon his arrival was “toxic” and inhospitable. Although he does well in the managerial part of principalship, he is lacking in the instructional aspect of guiding teachers and having difficult conversations with them. S3 added that the ability to have those “tough conversations,”—a personality trait—is much easier for some candidates. Although this principal has done an effective job of running the building and bringing about a positive environment, S3 needs to improve the instructional side of his practice.

When asked if she has a preference for internal or external candidates, S3 responded that, if an opportunity arises, and there is someone who “you know is going to

be good,” then yes, she favors the internal one. S3 added that internal candidates have knowledge of the current system that shortens and simplifies the whole process. It should also be noted that, when S3 was in a district that had assistant principals, she made choices for those positions based on the presumption that the assistant would take the place of the principal upon his or her departure. Lastly, when it comes to coaching internal candidates or prepping them to eventually become administrators in the district, S3 is careful to not show favoritism because it is such a small district. In a larger district, preferential treatment might not be so noticeable.

Principals who struggle. When administrators struggle, they are first given support with a specific direction. Only twice in his career has S3 been in the position of dismissing an administrator. Fortunately, both retired before having to go through that process. Both terminations occurred at another district, and each was an external hire.

Professional development of principals. In S3’s district, principal training varies according to the individual. However, in one instance, S3 contacted a colleague of hers from another district who used to be a principal and had since retired. Over a period of four days, S3 had that principal visit his district, go into the schools, and observe teachers and administrators. The technique is similar to the one used by S1 for clinical visits. The goal of the principal’s visit and observation was to improve instructional strategies. The observations did not evaluate the teachers, but the school as a whole. Following the observation, the advisor debriefed with each of the principals. S3 felt that this strategy was very effective—much more so than sending them to off-campus development.

S3 is both the mentor and evaluator of administrators in his district, and all administrative staff will meet once per week. It should also be noted that, at the time of the study, S3 is very close in proximity to his administrators. They all work in the same building, which makes communication easier than if they were on separate campuses. To demonstrate, over the past year, S3 has met with one of her principals much more frequently and has focused on time management. S3 wanted him to spend more time in the classrooms observing teachers and ascertaining what administrative work could be eliminated in order to be in the classroom more. The goal is for him to be in each classroom at least once every three weeks. The plan for this principal is more extensive than for others because he is on a professional development plan.

Other forms of professional development coincide with teacher training. S3 considers it best practice for the principal to be involved in collaboration and teacher professional development. There is no organized cohort of study for principals due to district size. However, the principals do collaborate on issues.

S3 does not endorse any single educational program over another for professional development. When asked about such developmental opportunities by those supervised, S3 asks them what they want to achieve from the education. The goal of the person will depend on whether she encourages them to attain an EdD, PhD, or EdS.

Principal autonomy. S3 allows principals great liberty to decide how to manage their buildings on a day-to-day basis. S3 takes much legal responsibility away from principals, for instance expulsion and cancellation of teacher contracts. The first stages of some legal matters are given to principals, but after that, S3 usually takes over. After the process is complete, S3 will speak to the principal about how similar situations should

be handled in the future. She added that this might depend on principals' level of experience. If they get overwhelmed, S3 is in a position to help them. And, if a systemic problem arises, S3 will adjust his team accordingly.

S3's general comments. When asked if she had anything to add upon completion of the interview, S3 related that, if districts can develop better hiring processes (on every level, but especially principals), they can create better opportunities for students. She added to the list of desired qualities that it is vital to be able to prioritize issues in one's building. Sometimes, if a principal is able to address the top two or three areas that need attention, those areas farther down the list will resolve themselves. Another prerequisite is the ability to have "tough conversations." However, S3 admitted that this trait is not always easily visible in the hiring process. According to S3, hiring processes must be improved so that, when the new hire assumes the position, the correct supports can be put into action. In other words, the hiring process itself should inform the early professional development of a newly hired principal.

Background Information of S4

Superintendent 4 (S4) is the superintendent of the largest school district in this cohort. The district has over 80,000 residents, just over 76% of whom are White. Just over 80% of the population has a high school diploma, and nearly 20% possess a college degree. The poverty level is 15%, and the median income is approximately \$40,000 per year. There are nearly 20 schools in S4's district. In his four years as superintendent, he has hired seven principals. S4 has never felt pressured to hire any certain individual, but he has been asked to interview specific candidates.

The other subjects interviewed for this study might have had the eventual goal of being a superintendent, but none except S4 stated that goal. S4 related that he wanted to be a superintendent since he was a junior in high school. Also, S4 is not an Indiana native; he was raised and had his first job outside of the state. After moving to Indiana to become a principal in the northern region, he applied for and was installed in the assistant superintendent position at his current district. When the superintendent who hired him resigned, the board hired him as the replacement. He has been in that position since January 2011. With only four years as superintendent, he has the fewest years experience of the subjects interviewed. S4 is also the only participant who has been superintendent of only one district.

S4 comes from a family of educators, so he has learned from watching those around him. His father is a teacher, and his uncle was a superintendent for many years. In addition to learning what he wanted to be from others, he discovered what he did not want to be. These formative experiences made him a “student of leadership.” S4 remarked that, by following his father’s example, he has always tried to take a leadership role in the organizations with which he has worked.

The process of hiring a principal in S4’s district. S4’s process requires the most time and involves the greatest number of people relative to the other interviewees’ hiring plans. He claimed that he utilizes the same protocol for all candidates. The steps in this methodology are as follows:

1. S4 meets with school staff to gauge what they want in a principal.
2. Volunteers are sought out to serve on the interview committee.

3. Applicants are then given a screening interview that is usually conducted by the director of personnel and the director of elementary or secondary levels. Each qualifying internal candidate is given a screening interview.
4. Six to eight candidates are then selected from the screening interviews. They participate in a two-hour interview comprised of three small groups through which the candidates rotate—each sub-interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. There is also a writing prompt.
 - The groups are not expected to reach consensus on a candidate. Each evaluator is given a score sheet and asked to individually rank the interviewees. The candidates are not discussed before they are rated.
 - S4 noted that, after this stage, there is usually a “very clear delineation between the top two or three candidates and the rest.” They look for that line.
 - At this stage, S4 vets candidates’ references, which involves a background check. This sub-step can also be completed immediately following the screening if there are problems narrowing the pool to six candidates. S4 “almost always tries to find a reference that is not on the sheet.” S4 feels that this practice “better rounds-out our picture” of the candidate.
5. Candidates go to the approximately one-hour cabinet interview, which is comprised of an eight-member panel. From that interview, the committee chooses a finalist.

6. Cabinet takes the finalist to an executive session prior to the board meeting for approval.

Occasionally, S4 has altogether avoided the process by appointing someone. Sometimes, that decision is based on timing. A late retirement might be an example. S4 shared the following on the subject of appointment:

If we know that we have a candidate internally that we know is highly qualified, and we know that we cannot find somebody better suited for that position, it does us no good nor the candidates any good to go through the process.

S4 has needed to appoint principals only “a handful of times” in his career. He cited an example of his high school principal retiring in July, a situation that presented several problems. First, districts usually do not get a very deep pool of candidates in July. Second, there is very little time to follow the hiring process because school starts at the end of the month. “You need to start the year with a principal,” S4 said. In this case, he appointed an assistant principal as interim for six months only because he needed affirmation that she wanted the opportunity. S4 wanted to see how she handled the position on a trial basis. He was also quick to add that he gave this person only two hours to decide whether to accept the job offer when he first contacted her in July. S4 said that this was a “phenomenal decision.”

In addition to discussing his hiring protocols, S4 commented on the strength of his internal candidates with the following:

We have a very deep pool of assistant principals right now—especially in the elementary level. We have cultivated some truly amazing leaders within the

assistant principal ranks. There are times where we will just open it up internally because we know we have a very strong pool inside.

He also noted that it is important to go outside the district as well with the following comment:

I think there is some value to having institutional knowledge, but I also think there is a time when you can get enough inbreeding that you need a fresh perspective, so we will, on occasion, open it up.

At the time of the study, S4 was attempting to hire an elementary principal. He was following the entire interviewing process even though he had four or five promising internal candidates. He wanted to see if there were external prospects who would make an excellent fit. He stated, "There probably is a bias for an internal, which is why I like going through the process." Of the seven principals S4 has hired while superintendent, only one has been an external hire.

S4 articulated that he is not involved in the first two steps of the process at all. The first time he involves himself with candidates is during the final interview. He stated, "I do not see them before. I do not know who is on the list. That piece takes my bias out." Moreover, in the present process, there exist approximately 25 to 30 individuals who form an opinion about the candidate. S4 commented on the need for perspective by saying, "some of the bias is removed because you have so many people scoring the candidate through their lens, whatever that might be."

Essentially, S4 has two choices when there is an opening for a principalship. He can simply appoint the person he believes is best for the position and bypass the process, or he can let the process proceed on its own. He stated, "I trust the process enough that,

if we are going through [it], I am going to let it work.” For example, in the last hiring cycle, the process selected two finalists that surprised S4. Specifically, he had not considered putting one of the finalists in the pool to begin with because he thought the person completely unqualified. S4 will not exercise his authority to manipulate outcomes once the interview protocol begins. After that, as he remarked, “It is up to them.”

When asked if he plans on changing anything about the current process, S4 replied, “It has not failed us yet” because it has produced desirable results. However, he did identify a concern: The administrative team does not reflect district demographics. S4 does not feel this is due to a lack of effort to diversify. He wants to hire the best candidates but will not manipulate the process for the sake of diversifying administration and meeting quotas. S4 also noted that, in a few of the last candidate pools, they have not had a single minority applicant, which has “been a challenge.”

Qualities desired in a principal in S4’s district. S4 seeks principals who possess the ability to lead and manage. As such, honesty and integrity must also be primary requirements: Principals must possess strong moral character to succeed in any level of public education. They also need to be a “systems thinker” so that what they do works well for the entire district. On this subject, S4 remarked, “Everything they do impacts the rest of us.”

The term fit seems to be a large part of what S4 looks for in a principal. Does the candidate have the right skill set that the district seeks? Will he or she complement those around him or her? For that reason, principals and assistant principals are paired according to skill sets. No administrators in the same buildings should share overly

similar skill sets. They may possess some skills in common, but leadership aims for diversity.

S4 does not seem to feel that his ideal requirements are dissimilar to or at odds with those of others participating in hiring. In order to ensure that they do not conflict, S4 listens to the staff. He stated, “If I am not open enough to listen to what they are telling me they need to be successful, then I am not being a very good leader on the district level because my number one responsibility is to be sure that building is serving children well.” If the building lacks a leader who helps them achieve that goal, S4 feels he has not done his job. His chief responsibility is to place superior leaders in the building and help them succeed. That duty is what he likes about the system in place.

Professional development of principals. S4’s district offers several supports for aspiring administrators. Very new teachers or administrators who come to the district are required to complete 30 hours of professional development focused on learning about the district’s culture and instructional practices. New hires must finish the program sometime during their first two years, or they are not allowed to continue employment with the district. S4 also meets with new administrators four times during the course of their first year “to have social conversation and to help them feel welcome.”

In the year of this study, S4’s district had begun a teacher leadership academy. The program is not specifically designed to find administrators, but it is meant to identify and develop leadership qualities. Membership is by application only, and the group is designed for teachers who want to be leaders in the profession. Twenty to 25 teachers were selected to participate. While this group is not directly geared toward

administrators, it could benefit future administrators. Because it is the first year of the program, S4 will have to wait to see its outcomes.

To specifically target aspiring female administrators, S4 has developed a leadership academy just for women and the occupational issues they experience because of their gender. A central office administrator invites 8-10 women a year to participate. S4's district saw a need to offer this program because they were seeing women go through the interview process who "conducted themselves in ways that were detrimental to themselves." S4 said that it is acceptable to acknowledge that we live in a society that does not treat people the same regardless of their sex and gender. In order to alleviate this truism, the district first had to recognize and accept it as fact. The women's leadership program was their eventual solution. S4 did not share any concrete data, but he feels that, each year, three or four women complete the program who become district administrators.

The group meets once a month on Saturdays for approximately four hours. During one session, the group meets with central office staff in a "speed dating" format wherein they ask the administrators questions for approximately five minutes each about leadership. By using those interviews as material, each participant must create a presentation to the entire group as a culminating activity. The women's leadership academy also takes an off-campus trip each year to a seminar that is "a very powerful experience" for the participants. The seminar is not just for educators; it includes female leaders in general.

In addition to emphasizing women's leadership development, all administrators are required to complete evening professional development four times during the year.

That includes those administrators in any role in the district—not just principals. At the time of the study, recent sessions had focused on “high-leverage” strategies in leadership and ways to try to “weed the garden” and “eliminate some of the white noise that exists in our schools.” In other words, these sessions aimed to extract inefficient personnel and practices from the district environment.

Also, once a month, S4 holds meetings for all building administrators that focus on continuous improvement. At these meetings, they discuss developments that building leadership needs to know which involve the leadership and the central office. Those meetings are quite lengthy, lasting approximately three hours. Prior to those meetings, directors confer separately with their people.

The elementary principals in his district have utilized mentoring to cultivate their skills. They were paired with someone to whom they were not particularly close. Pairings were made so that each had never used the other as a “sounding board,” a source of feedback about ideas. The couplings were presented with a challenge in their building. S4 and his team asked them to “go in each other’s building for a day, have some courageous conversation,” and be accountable for each other as well as safe and non-evaluative. This mindset is a way for administrators to recognize that vulnerability is useful and necessary for growth. The hope is that this approach will help other school personnel share their ideas without inhibition. The central lesson of the program is that it is permissible to say “I don’t know.”

In addition to focus groups and mentoring, S4 leads book studies that are directly related to what teachers are doing in the classroom. For example, at the time of the study, the district is preparing to implement a one-to-one initiative, so they have committed

great time and resources to this endeavor. The intent is to incorporate the concept into daily classroom instruction rather than allowing it to rest unutilized in the repertoire of devices.

Although the book studies focus on classrooms, periodically the group chooses a text on leadership such as *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001). S4 thinks that, while it is very important for principals to be knowledgeable about best practices in the classroom, it is also beneficial to revisit the behaviors that merited principalship in the first place. In order to increase the scope of discussion, S4 has brought in members of other professions to speak to his team about leadership in their line of work.

On the subject of higher-learning institutions for aspiring administrators, S4 does not encourage one institution more than another, but he does inquire about the educator's long-term goals. For example, if one wants to be a district-level administrator, he encourages him or her to attain a PhD, a qualification which he said, "Once [attained] no one can take . . . away from you. It is better to have it and not need it than not have it and need it." He clearly stated that there is value in a degree which requires one to engage in rich conversation with people who have similar experiences in education. Alternatively, S4 believes that, if administrators do not intend to go beyond the building level, there is enough relevant and powerful professional development offered by his district to "stretch them professionally."

Principal autonomy. On the subject of autonomy, S4 asserted that principals have less decision-making authority at present than they enjoyed several years ago. He added that principals in his district own their responsibility for their school's success or failure. S4 stated, "They know that they have some autonomy in running that building

within our framework.” However, components like professional development have become more focused and district-wide, which means less independence. Before the budget crisis, each building was empowered to direct its own philosophy of professional development. At the time of the study, the system lacks the resources to support that freedom.

The current district improvement plan establishes “in some specificity what [leadership] expects in every building such as data teams, differentiated instruction, [and] clustered grouping.” S4 supports that standardized approach in part because some schools need more support than others. As part of the professional development initiative, district-level personnel will be sent into the building “without overwhelming them.” In other words, S4 seeks the answers by looking within the district rather than outside it.

Principals who struggle. If a principal struggles in S4’s district, he works with his colleagues to identify problems early and “save them.” He identifies fault and then surrounds them with the necessary supports. The initial purpose is not to terminate them; instead, the plan aims to reform their behaviors for success. However, S4 admitted that such proactive measures sometimes fail. He stated, “Even in doing that, we cannot save them.”

If they cannot be saved, he will first try to counsel them out to leave on their own terms. Some have returned to the classroom, moved to other districts, or relocated to the Central Office. And, in the event that they do not leave of their own volition, as S4 stated, “If we have to fire them, we will.” S4 has had to remove three principals in the

course of his career. Two were internal hires, and one was an external candidate. Of the seven principals S4 has hired, three were replacements due to removals.

S4's general comments. When asked if he had anything to add upon completion of the interview, S4 noted that the choice of the building administrator is critical to the success of the children. He commented, "It is exciting when you see a leader come up that you can mold and shape into that next building-level principal." It should be noted that S4 as well as other participants in this study did not imply that part of their purpose in selection and development of a successful building principal was to cast the fledgling administrator into a mold of themselves. Rather, it appeared to me that the participants wished to guide the principal in such a way that he or she could best serve the advancement of both the district and school vision.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the best practices of effective superintendents in regard to selecting and developing principals. In addition to reading relevant literature on the subject, I identified and interviewed effective superintendents in the state of Indiana for their responses, procedures, and expectations I contacted administrative staff at the IDOE, the educational leadership faculty of Indiana's public universities, and the leadership of Indiana's educational professional organizations. I polled these experts to identify between five to 10 of the best superintendents in the state. Several of the respondents identified 10, but two could identify only five. The pool consisted of 31 superintendents.

Two names were mentioned by two people in common, and one was mentioned by three. From those 31 potential interviewees, four were selected based on the criteria mentioned in Chapter 3 for the purpose of arriving at a rich and diverse sampling. Interviews with the subjects lasted from 90 minutes to 120 minutes and followed the format in Appendix A. After interviews were completed, I provided a summary of themes to the subjects, and they checked them and provided feedback to assure that themes represented their views and experiences.

I observed eight themes throughout the interviews that covered a wide array of

topics in the selection and development process. Themes included areas such as district size, continuous improvement, education of prospective and current administrators, shared attributes of principals, the respect and trust of the school board, a preference of internal candidates, common practices in professional development and the method of managing and evaluating principals.

Summary and Discussion

1. The size of a district affects several areas related to the selection and development of principals.

The size of the district directly influences the duration and scope of the hiring process. S4, superintendent of the largest district in the study, has a very time-consuming process that involves at least five stages. S4's process involves approximately 30 people—not counting members of the school board. S1 and S2 lead medium-sized districts, and their processes involve three to four stages and far fewer people. S3, the superintendent of the smallest district, involves the fewest people and takes the least amount of time. S3 stated in the interview that he would like to improve the process without adding more time to it.

The larger the school district, the less the superintendent is involved in the hiring process. Three of the four subjects make the final decision, whereas one lets the process run its course. S1, S2, and S3 were very explicit that the selection of a principal is up to them and that the recommendation to the board will be their choice. They will go through the process and follow procedure and not overtly manipulate the process, but members of selection committees are made aware that the superintendent will recommend to the board the person that he or she wants. S1 told of one example in

which he went with the staff's recommendation over his own instincts and regretted that decision by having to replace the choice. S2 stated that he "employs the leadership team." All subjects will disregard the entire hiring process if they have already decided whom they want in the position. This practice saves a considerable amount of time for their districts.

Like the rest, S4 will appoint individuals to principalships if he has a person within the district who is the best fit. However, if he does go through the process, he will not overrule the committee's decision. He stated, "It [the system] has not failed me yet." With so many people involved who bring their own perspectives to the table, he believes that bias is filtered out in the end and that he has to trust the process.

Depending on the size of the district, some superintendents identify potential administrators and provide opportunities to develop skills desired for a principalship. S4's district is twice as large as the second biggest district in this study and has the most opportunities for professional development. Others who lack resources for professional development, such as S2, have applied for grants that help fund programs for principalship preparation. However, in the case of S3, the superintendent of the smallest district in the study, he feels that, because the district is so small, he might be viewed as favoring one person over another, a perception which is reinforced by the belief that advancement in a school should be more egalitarian. In Chapter 2, this concept was referred to as contest mobility (Lortie, 1975; Myung et al., 2011). S3 did mention, however, that for those working on an administrator's license, his district does find ways to help them with requirements. Similarly, S1 organizes meetings with aspiring principals approximately two times per year.

2. The superintendents are satisfied with how their hiring processes operate but are open to possible improvements.

At the time of the study, S1 is in the process of reformulating the interview questions to align more closely with the RISE standards (*RISE evaluation and development system: Evaluator and principal handbook*). Both S1 and S3 hope to add scenario questions to the interview portion of the process. That concept was reviewed in Chapter 2 (Levitt & Dubner, 2006; New Schools Venture Fund, 2008; Reeves, 2009). The general consensus is that they are comfortable with what they have because it has yielded positive results.

3. The four superintendents value similar qualities in principals.

All subjects mentioned communication skills as one of the qualities they seek in candidates. Three out of four have a written component as a part of the interview. In addition, nearly all subjects mentioned that they want principals who can accurately analyze data. S2, who did not mention this quality specifically when asked the question, however, did refer to data many times during the interview. There is no doubt that a person who can collect, analyze, and create an action plan based on data is a highly valued commodity for the interviewees.

Several of the subjects spoke in one form or another about wanting someone who has compassion for students. S1 stated that, for a principal, “every action needs to dignify kids.” S2 wants someone who “can wear simultaneous hats of advocacy and make it look good.” S3 mentioned several times how he wants someone who can “battle for kids.”

They also spoke of “fit” for a particular school. S1 and S4 go to the staff of the

school when an opening becomes available and ask them what they think their school needs. S4 indicated that, in many elementary schools in his district, if an opening became available, there could be any number of people within the district who could take the principalship and do a fine job. However, he feels that, to get the best, he needs to find out what the school needs and follow his process to procure the best fit.

Only one subject mentioned charisma, and he did not specify it as a requirement. S2 said that charisma can be a desired quality if held in check. S2 wants the “ego behind the work and not in front of the work.” Nearly all interviewees stated in one form or another that they want a “systems thinker,” one who can be a “team player.” S4 gives principals freedom to lead their building as long as it coincides with the district framework. S2 will often put principals in charge of district initiatives that inform and educate colleagues on certain timely and relevant topics.

Chapter 2 discussed several resources to illuminate the research regarding desirable characteristics in a principal. The sources discussed the need for principals to be able to lead the school from an instructional standpoint rather than a managerial one (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987; Horng & Loeb, 2010).

4. The participants do not appear to be in conflict with the school board.

The superintendents in this study understand that the school board has a different perspective on the qualities of effective principals. The question in Appendix A asked if their preferred qualities in a principal are ever at odds with others, namely the school board. Nearly all of the subjects voiced some concern in this area. However, their experiences could not be interpreted in an adversarial manner. S1 said that at times they have conflicted, but it has been only minor. As S3 stated, school board members might

“not be aware of their ignorance in this area.” S2 explained that it is his job to convince the board that his recommendation is “what is best for kids.”

Research concerning the preparation in hiring the principal and school board approval was cited in Chapter 2 (Burkhauser et. al, 2013; Clifford, 2009, 2012; Hooker, 2000; Schlueter & Walker, 2008; Sessa et al., 1998).

It is rare that subjects experience pressure to hire a certain individual for a principalship. Only S2 gave an example of pressure to hire a certain individual. One could assume that all subjects have the reputation of following through with what they feel is best for their districts and will not yield to external pressures. A possible explanation could be that the board trusts the judgment of these particular superintendents. It is possible that ineffective superintendents do not inspire that kind of trust.

5. All subjects seem to prefer internal candidates but are open to the talents of external candidates.

Out of the 31 total principals hired by the four subjects, 24 of them have been hired internally, while seven have been external candidates. The subjects seemed to agree that, if there is someone within their school district who is talented and seen as the right fit, they will likely choose that person without going through the process by simply appointing an internal candidate to a vacancy.

They adhere to the succession management model outlined in Chapter 2. The internal hires know the culture and likely what a school needs to improve. Additionally, S3 believes that, the faster a superintendent or supervisor can pinpoint strengths and weaknesses, the easier it is to target professional development. All subjects felt as though

they maintain a sharp understanding of what an internal leader can contribute to one of their schools.

However, all subjects indicated that they don't like to limit their candidate pools and, as S2 said, they are "keen to a new eye" in their districts. S2 even stated that there is a difference between "well-settled and myopia" regarding internal candidates. S1 stated, "There is potential harm in having an entire staff of administrators that came from within the district, particularly if they grew up in the area."

Literature concerning succession management was reviewed in Chapter 2 from a variety of sources (Collins & Porras, 1994; DuFour & Fullan, 2013; Lieberman et.al., 1996; Myung et al., 2011; Turnbull et al., 2013; Turner, 1960).

6. None of the subjects have formal partnerships with colleges and universities nor encourage a specific degree.

In Chapter 2, I identified several districts that partner with a college or university as a way to develop present and future leaders within their district. In some cases, standards were aligned with national organizations and local needs. I did not find this type of relationship in the study. The superintendents did speak of guiding certain individuals into certain programs based on future goals and aspirations. In addition, none of the superintendents encourage a specific type of degree, but they will suggest a course of study based on the needs of those who ask. Chapter 2 indicated that the college or university attended does not affect the hiring, success, or failure of a principal (Copeland, 1999; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Elmore, 2000; Usdan et. al., 2000).

7. Principal professional development involves several common components.

Many factors influence the training that superintendents provide their principals.

S3 stated several times that the quicker he can assess the strengths and weaknesses of a beginning principal, the faster he can determine what training he or she needs. Hires external to the school, and especially the district, will require more training than those promoted from within. The age and experience of a principal can also be a factor in training. None of the subjects indicated that they have an established curriculum that all new principals complete upon entering a principalship.

S2 mentioned that principals coming from outside of the district had “new eyes” for only 90 days. He wanted to check in with them at around 45 days to find out what sort of questions they had regarding operations at both a district and school level.

Each superintendent has targeted training on timely issues within his district. All subjects meet with each of their principals on a regular basis—at least once a month. Some of the topics relate to professional development, but some material centers on broad-level topics and district idiosyncrasies. All subjects endorsed book studies that address various timely topics of discussion. Some authors mentioned were Mark Edwards, Allan November, and Daniel Pink.

Unless the district is failing, the superintendents interviewed for this study tend to look inward for answers by undergoing professional development. S1 utilized several outside organizations when he first entered his district because the school system was labeled a “dropout factory.” S4 sometimes utilizes outside assistance primarily due to his proximity to a large city and financial resources.

While the research in this study did not reveal targeted training protocols as specific as those outlined in Chapter 2, targeted training did take place in all of the districts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Levine, 2005).

Mentors are typically administrators at central office, but cohorts are often determined by grade level and experience. In each subject's district, new principals are assigned mentors who are located at the central office. Depending on the size of the district, the mentor is the superintendent or an assistant (or called a "director" in the case of S4). This arrangement creates tension in some cases because some leaders are reluctant to reveal weaknesses to those assigned to evaluate them.

To address this issue, all of the subjects place principals in cohorts of varying sizes. For example, in S3's district, there are only two principals in the entire system, so they are obligated to be in the same cohort. S2 and S3 have cohorts based on levels: elementary, middle, and high school. In each case, agendas are set for them, and the climate is designed to foster the asking of difficult questions and work toward solutions. It is also acceptable for them to be vulnerable.

This study yielded no examples of coaching that fit the criteria outlined in Chapter 2; however, examples of mentors and cohorts were revealed. The subjects also did not discuss mentoring from retired administrators or administrators of outside districts that some organizations like the IPLI utilize (Barnett et. al, 2000; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2001; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Levine, 2005).

8. The participants manage and evaluate principals in similar ways.

Autonomy has become limited within recent years. Each subject related that they give a great deal of autonomy to their principals when it comes to building management. However, all qualified this claim by suggesting that some autonomy has been taken away in recent years for a variety of reasons, one of which is the law. The standards also play a role. Two of the four superintendents mentioned that they were on the RISE model

(RISE evaluation and development system: Evaluator and principal handbook) and must therefore comply with its stipulations. S2 argued that these adaptations limit principal autonomy, but they also make it “less onerous” for them.

In all cases, there seems to be a more systematic approach in the school. For example, in S4’s districts, they once allowed buildings to operate as they saw fit, and building leaders had almost complete autonomy. Now, S4 allows them to operate their buildings based on the expectations of the district. S2 has reduced autonomy but has done so under the consideration of principal input. In other words, the principals have helped make the choice on what is “tight” and what is “loose,” meaning what works and what does not. Research regarding autonomy was reviewed in Chapter 2 within the scope of Burkhauser et al. (2013).

All subjects have the final say on the evaluation of a principal. The feedback for a principal is frequent with the subjects of this study because all meet with them or have a subordinate meet with them on a regular basis.

All subjects have, at times, been quick to dismiss a principal if the offense was egregious enough. However, they all indicated that they want all principals to be successful and will give them support before recommending non-renewal of a contract. Terminating a principal is not easy, and it time-intensive. Therefore, the subjects of this study first attempt to save failing principals by giving them various supports. Such remediation may include resources from Central Office or a very specific professional development plan. S2 referred to a “latticework of support” that includes long, frank discussions. If that does not work, the subjects suggested reassignment or retirement. The last resort is a recommendation to not renew a contract.

All of the participants have a profound respect for the profession of principalship. There is no question that the subjects of this study believe that a principalship—especially one at the high school level—is a very difficult job that should be filled with hardworking people. Each superintendent was, at one point in his or her career, a principal and can therefore empathize with the issues that principals encounter on a daily basis. One may therefore reasonably infer that they dedicate much time and energy to finding the best candidates and supporting them.

Implications

Superintendents should work to develop talent within their own school districts and, when possible and prudent, promote principals from within. Succession management, outlined in Chapter 2, has been used by each superintendent in this study. This methodology allows superintendents to quickly and effectively determine what developmental programs and supports fledgling principals need. More practically, it saves the district time and money. If a qualified applicant resides in the district, why go through the entire process? The work of DuFour and Fullan (2013) supports this concept of succession management. Many organizations, both in and out of the field of education, have attested to the theory that promoting leaders from within helps sustain improvement over long periods of time (Collins & Porras, 1994).

However, that is not to say that internal candidates should be hired exclusively. S2 stated, “There is a fine line between thinking one has a total understanding of someone’s appropriateness and myopia.” An external candidate can be an asset to the district and give a fresh perspective on the current culture.

When deciding on the vacancy of a principal, it is important to involve other people in the process. Effective superintendents of this study respect the opinions of stakeholders in terms of what type of leader they need. That does not mean that they yield to popular opinion. Instead, it does suggest that stakeholders' opinions will be listened to but not necessarily followed. As such, superintendents must have a firm idea about the qualities they want in a principal, and they must articulate clear expectations to principals after they are hired. Finally, the hiring process needs to align with district and school needs. For example, if administrators are evaluated using the certain model, the hiring and development processes need to mirror those standards.

When discussing the attributes needed in a principal, the subjects of this study identified qualities found in a true instructional leader: managerial aptitude and analytic skill. Subjects want a principal who has vision and can move buildings instructionally through analysis of data and compassion for students. The implication is that superintendents should have a portion of their interview devoted to data analysis.

None of the participants of this study have experienced real pressure from the school board or the community to hire a certain individual as a principal or teacher. One might assume that one of the reasons for this commonality would be that the board and community trust them. Perhaps those who experienced pressure in this area might not have established this trust in the position or the process.

Communication skills should be emphasized as well. Can a principal communicate complicated and controversial issues effectively in both the written and spoken word? In order to test this skill set, written components should be commonplace in the interview process.

Hallinger and Murphy (1987) noted that leaving all curricular decisions to the classroom teacher for the sake of appeasing teachers' associations hinders a principal's ability to effectively lead instruction. Capable superintendents should remove this barrier and support the instructional leadership of principals.

Developing one's own leaders and hiring from within has been very important in the careers of the subjects studied. Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of new principals helps set the trajectory for professional development much more quickly. Consequently, there are aspects of principal development that need to be individually tailored.

Regular communication needs to occur for a clear, consistent dialogue to take place between the evaluator and the principal. The subjects of this study have mechanisms in place that encourage—and in some cases require—principals to communicate among other schools and central office to present a clear district vision.

Superintendents should tailor professional development based on experience, grade level, and individual needs as much as possible. For example, external hires might need more of an introduction to the culture and climate of the school as opposed to an elevated assistant principal within the same building. That said, it is important for principals to be connected with the mission of the entire school district. Timely analysis of district-wide issues should be discussed and acted upon by the entire leadership team.

Cohorts should be established to provide an opportunity for principals to remain systems thinkers. Also, in many cases, principals have no equal within the schools, so it is important for them to dialog with someone who shares similar responsibilities and

experiences. Principals need to feel free to ask for help and expose vulnerability within these cohorts.

If principals struggle, it is important to confront problems immediately and provide necessary supports. Superintendents should provide the support at the onset of struggle so that serious problems in leadership do not result. However, once a superintendent feels that the principal will not succeed, he or she should consider termination or reassignment. Non-renewal of a contract should be the last resort.

Limitations

Generalizations from the study were limited to the degree that:

1. Those organizations and individuals contacted in an effort to select the most highly effective superintendent might maintain differing views on what it means to be highly effective no matter how specifically the term is defined. There might have been bias in who was selected.
2. Those interviewed might not have accurately articulated how they select principals. What actually occurs in their district might not correlate with what they perceive.
3. The bias of the researcher might be a limitation. Every effort was made to be fair and objective, but predisposed opinions due to life experiences might have tainted the themes.
4. It was difficult to generalize the themes of the research to a larger population.
5. The behaviors of the interviewees might not have been a true representation of behaviors otherwise exhibited. The researcher's presence may influence the subjects.

Implications for Further Research

The themes of this study indicate a need for greater research in numerous areas. This study was qualitative and included only four superintendents in the state of Indiana. There were many areas in which the subjects shared identical or similar opinions. A quantitative study could better analyze what is being done on a larger scale in superintendent selection and development of principals. For example, are effective superintendents looking for the same qualities as those considered ineffective? Is the hiring process similar across districts? Does the size of the district affect the hiring process? In this study, the size did inform the process. Is this a trend on a broader scale?

While this study sought to interview superintendents, similar inquiry could analyze the processes effective principals utilize to select and develop classroom teachers. Is there a connection between the processes these principals use and the success of their schools? How do they parallel or differ from superintendents' methods for choosing and developing principals?

This study concerned itself with the field of education—specifically the role of the superintendents in the hiring and development of principals. A future study might consider if other high-performing leadership groups value the same qualities privileged by superintendents. Athletic organizations, the military, Fortune 500 companies, and the government all warrant such research, as do many other entities.

Chapter 2 noted several districts that partner with colleges and universities for professional development and licensure. I concluded that none of the subjects interviewed engaged that resource. A case study on the effects of said partnerships could be conducted to provide a more complete assessment of stakeholder interests.

Lastly, this research addressed removal of principals and the steps leading to such action. By conducting a quantitative study, one could discover other means of addressing ineffective or struggling principals. One could analyze the reasons why principals are terminated. Such an investigation could better inform professional development for current and future principals.

Conclusion

S2 commented, “A bad principal can poison a school district.” Others interviewed during this study would likely agree with that statement. Therefore, it is crucial that superintendents choose proper candidates and develop them after selection. An unwise choice in this area can hinder a school or district for years.

Consequently, superintendents need to maintain a precise vision regarding the type of leader who could guide a specific school in his or her district. That insight manifests itself in the superintendent’s outlook for the district and the conversations and relationships he or she has with stakeholders.

The superintendent ensures that a thorough process is followed when selecting principals. This process better informs central office leaders about appropriate forms of professional development for individual principals. That said, training should involve looking at the entire system, not just their particular school.

Managing these dynamic responsibilities and processes is an exceedingly difficult task, but for a district to succeed, it must be done. I agree with S2’s statement that “any principal doing his or her job well is wearing multiple hats of advocacy simultaneously and making it look good.”

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How does the school district select an individual for a principalship?
2. What role do you play in the process of hiring a principal?
3. Tell me about your district's recent selection of an individual for a principalship. Were you happy with the choice?
4. What qualities does your district look for when hiring a principal?
5. What qualities do you look for when hiring a principal? Are those ever at odds with one another?
6. Has there been any internal or external pressure to hire or not hire a certain individual?
 - a. If so, how have you handled that?
7. Do you have a preference toward internal or external candidates? Do you have a preference regarding current assistant principals?
 - a. Do you do anything to coach internal candidates?
 - b. Is your district partnered with a nearby college or university?
8. Does the district plan on changing anything about the current hiring practices of principals?
9. What improvements would you make to the process?
10. How does the school district develop your principals once they are hired?
 - a. Is the training different for the principal who is an internal or external candidate?
 - b. Is the training different depending on the grade-level/type of the

school to which the principal is assigned?

11. Are the new principals assigned mentors or coaches?
12. Are they placed in cohorts?
13. Is there targeted training?
14. What areas do you give the greatest amount of autonomy? How does the freedom and limits help develop them as a school leader? In what areas might you limit autonomy for your principals for their own benefit?
15. Do you encourage coursework with a particular college or university once the principals are hired?
 - a. What degrees? Ed.S? PhD?
 - b. What is involved with that?
16. Who evaluates your new principals?
 - a. What do you do if a principal struggles?
17. Is there anything you would like to add?

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT FORM/EXPERTS

Polling Letter to Determine Highly Effective Superintendents

My name is Rob Willman, and I am a Ph.D. candidate at Indiana State University who is conducting a research project entitled *How Effective Superintendents Select and Develop Principals*. I would like for you to be involved in the study.

Your involvement in this research study would consist of a list that you compose of five to ten superintendents in the state of Indiana who you feel are the best at what they do. After receiving this letter, I will contact you by phone and inquire as to whether or not you are interested in participating. If you are interested, we can discuss the topic at that time or choose another time that is best for you. The time commitment to this process will include the time it takes for you to prepare the list as well as our correspondence.

Your participation in this research would be greatly appreciated. Again, I will follow-up this letter with a phone call to discuss the topic and your participation as well as answer any questions you might have. Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to the future of educational leadership.

Sincerely,

Rob Willman
Ph.D. Candidate
Indiana State University
4708 Wolford Drive
Floyds Knobs, IN, 47119
Telephone: (812) 987-1705
E-Mail Address: rwillman@nafcs.k12.in.us

APPENDIX C: RECRUITMENT FORM/SUPERINTENDENTS

My name is Rob Willman, and I am a Ph.D. candidate at Indiana State University who is conducting a research project entitled *How Effective Superintendents Select and Develop Principals*. I would like for you to participate in the study.

Your involvement in this research study would consist of a semi-structured interview at your choice of location that is intended to last from one to two hours. A minimum number of four and a maximum of eight effective superintendents are being asked to participate in these interviews. From the criteria determined by this researcher, you were selected as a possible participant.

After receiving this letter, I will contact you both by phone to inquire as to whether or not you are interested in participating. If you are interested, we will choose a time and place that is convenient for both of us. The interview is designed to last between 60 and 120 minutes. I will email the interview questions to you prior to the interview.

Your participation in this research would be greatly appreciated. Enclosed is a copy of the Informed Consent form for your review. That document includes the potential risk and benefits of agreeing to the interview. Again, I will follow-up this letter with a phone call to discuss the Informed Consent process, the exact time commitment, and any questions you might have. Thank you for your time, consideration, and service to the future of educational leadership.

Sincerely,

Rob Willman
Ph.D. Candidate
Indiana State University
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APPENDIX D: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH/SUPERINTENDENTS

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH*How Effective Superintendents Select and Develop Principals*

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Rob Willman and Dr. Todd Whitaker, from the department of Educational Leadership at Indiana State University. This study is being conducted for a dissertation of a Ph.D. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you were identified by the researcher as an effective superintendent.

- After the names were collected, the researcher then took the names and both eliminated and selected superintendents from the following criteria
 - The superintendent must have been a superintendent for at least three years but not necessarily in the same district.
 - The superintendent has hired at least one principal during his or her tenure as superintendent.
 - The superintendent must be from a district in the state of Indiana.

Other factors for inclusion or exclusion could have included size of district, type of district, socioeconomic composition of students, gender, age, years or experience, etc. The purpose of the previous criterion is that the researcher hopes to assemble a rich and diverse group of effective superintendents from different types of districts

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This qualitative, phenomenological study seeks to understand how effective superintendents select and develop principals. This will be accomplished through interviews with superintendents. This study will focus on the process used for selection, readiness and what professional development takes place after a principal is hired.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

- You will choose an email address to exchange information on last minute details of the date, time, and place of the interview.
- A copy of the semi-structured interview questions will be emailed in advance to you.
- When the interview takes place, you will have the opportunity withdraw as well as refuse to answer any questions which make you feel uncomfortable.
- The interview will be recorded with the use of an IPAD or iPhone.
- The researcher will take notes during the interview.
- The interview is intended to last between 60 to 120 minutes.
- When the interview has concluded, the researcher will summarize the interviews either at his home or place of employment in Floyds Knobs, Indiana. He will be the only person who will have access to the interview recordings or the summarization.
- Once the summarization has taken place, a copy will be sent to you electronically or hard copy. That choice will be left up to you.
- If you happen to believe that you have been misquoted or there was a misunderstanding in the summarization you will be given the opportunity to change the language within 14 days of receiving the summarization.
- The summarization interviews will be destroyed after 3 years per IRB regulations.
- Your name and place of employment will be kept confidential and will be coded in the summarization and the dissertation.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

The possibility of breach of confidentiality cannot be guaranteed when using technology/computer/internet to collect or transfer data. However, the likelihood of breach is minimized because password-protected servers/software are being utilized access is limited to the researcher

Potential risks do not exceed those presented in the daily work and conversation of a school superintendent. So, the risks potential of risk for each individual of participating is minimal. The potential risks do include the release of confidential information with regard to selection professional development practices in school corporations.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

The potential benefits of this study will focus on providing an understanding of how the very best superintendents select and develop principals. Although this research cannot be generalized, it will give insight as to how these particular superintendents see and interpret their world as it relates to the selection and development of principals.

- **PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

There will be no payment for the interviewees.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Interviews will be recorded on either an iPhone or an IPAD. The recordings will be password protected. The researcher will personally transcribe all interviews. Summarizations will be emailed to the superintendents to ensure accuracy of statements. Any desired corrections from the participant will be requested within 14 calendar days of the original interview and will be sent back through email.

The following research records will exist: master list of effective superintendents including contact information and pseudonyms, listing of any coding or confidential information, audio files on iPhone or IPAD, summaries, and field notes. After each record below is listed where the information will be stored, who will have access, what will happen when and if a person with draws and what will happen to the record after three years.

(a) The master list of effective superintendents will be kept in the private files of the researcher's home and destroyed after three years. Only the researcher will have access to those records. These lists will be destroyed after 3 years. Electronic files will be deleted and written copies will be shredded.

(b) The master list of any coding or confidential information will be kept in the private files of the researcher's home and destroyed after three years. Only the researcher will

have access to those records. These lists will be destroyed after 3 years. Electronic files will be deleted and written copies will be shredded.

(c) Audio files on the iPhone or IPAD will be kept for three years and will be password protected. Only the researcher will have access to the audio files. They will be deleted after three years,

(d) Only the researcher will have access to the summaries of the interviews. The summary notes will be kept by the researcher and stored on a password-protected computer of the researcher's workplace and will be deleted after three years. Summaries will not be handwritten.

(e) Only the researcher will have access to field notes. They will be kept at the private residence of the researcher or at his place of work. They will be shredded after three years.

• **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participants can elect to pause or withdraw at any time during the study. The following will be shared with all of the participants.

- Participants have the opportunity not to answer any questions during the interview or ask to be released from the interview.
- All research evidence that participants provided will be destroyed after three years in accordance with IRB guidelines. That said, only summarized data will be destroyed. Digital data cannot be completely destroyed.

You can choose whether or not to be in this study. You can elect to pause or withdraw at any time during the study. You have the opportunity not to answer any questions during the interview or ask to be released from the interview.

• **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact Rob Willman at rwillman@nafcs.k12.in.us or (812-987-1705) or Dr. Todd Whitaker at todd.whitaker@indstate.edu (812-237-2904)

• **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Indiana State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) by mail at Indiana State University, Office of Sponsored Programs, Terre Haute, IN 47809, by phone at (812) 237-8217, or e-mail the

IRB at irb@indstate.edu. You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with ISU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Printed Name of Subject

Signature of Subject

Date

APPENDIX E: IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact

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