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WHAT HIGHLY EFFECTIVE LEADERS DO

DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine what the most highly effective leaders do during difficult times to be successful. The backdrop of the study was the 2009 $300 million cuts to the Indiana K-12 education budget, a uniform crisis that affected all 293 public school districts at the same time. The subjects in this study were those identified as the most highly effective public school superintendents in the state of Indiana. Education authorities across the state were polled and provided recommendations. The results were tabulated and five superintendents distinguished themselves as outliers among their peers.

On-site structured interviews were conducted with each of the superintendents. The initial generalized summary findings were then given back to the superintendents for their review and member data checking. The superintendents confirmed the summary findings as accurate representations of their individual philosophy and behaviors. The five outlier superintendents all shared the same basic philosophies and behaviors in relation to leadership during difficult times.

The first most telling finding was in regards to crisis leadership. The research found that highly effective leaders do not have a different style of leadership during difficult times. Highly effective leadership behaviors and actions are universal regardless of the circumstance.

Highly effective leaders share core philosophies when faced with a difficult time, however once again, these are their philosophies at all times. They believe that within any crisis lies opportunity. They believe that difficult times define leaders and their organization. They believe in finding the best people for the job, communicating their vision, giving autonomy, and

then getting out of the way. They believe in the value of networking, collaborating, and the input of their community, including criticism. They believe in leading by example and from the front. They realize that people are looking to them for guidance, leadership, and direction.

Highly effective leaders also share universal leadership behaviors. They are constantly planning and preparing for the future. They have a defined process of how they lead and do business and they do not deviate from it. They have a laser-like focus on their organization's core business and do not deviate from it. They build trusting relationships with their staff and community. They get out in front of situations by being highly visible and communicating clearly. They are positive and poised. They share accolades and own mistakes. They do not attack problems as a whole, but instead break them down into smaller manageable pieces. They ask a lot of questions and take the time necessary to make a good decision, and then take decisive action.

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CHAPTER 1

Rationale for the Study

Throughout history, leadership during difficult times and moments of crisis has been admired and respected. Situations where leaders thrive in instances where others would fail, or at best merely survive, have been chronicled time and again.

Winston Churchill seemingly singlehandedly led England through the Battle of Britain to eventual Allied victory during World War II (Sandys & Littman, 2003). President John F. Kennedy stared down the Russians during the Cuban Missile Crisis with the world on the brink of nuclear war (Kennedy, 1968). Mayor Rudolph Giuliani first turned around a besieged New York City and then shepherded it through one of our nation's greatest tragedies in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 (Giuliani, 2002). Hannibal of Carthage crossed the Alps in winter to attack the Romans on Italian soil (Forbes & Prevas, 2009). General George S. Patton led his army farther and faster than any in the history of warfare, all in the face of unrelenting weather and fierce resistance from the enemy (Axelrod, 1999). Lee Iacocca rescued a flailing Chrysler Corporation (Forbes & Prevas, 2009), while Jack Welch turned General Electric into the most valuable business during his tenure (Welch, 2005). John Wooden created a basketball dynasty at UCLA whose accomplishments have yet to be challenged (Wooden & Jamison, 2005). More recently, Mike Kryzyzewski not once, but twice, rebuilt his program at Duke University to win

numerous championships and has consistently kept his teams in the top tier of the highly competitive world of Division I basketball (Kryzyzewski, 2000).

These, and countless other instances, have been told and retold. Books have been written and movies have been produced. Legends have been made. Much has been made of our business, political, military, and sports leaders during difficult times.

Today's educational leaders are faced with more challenging circumstances than in any other time in our nation's history. Increased scrutiny from the federal, state, and local level has led to an environment of accountability that has never before been seen on the educational landscape. No Indiana school district is immune from the high stakes atmosphere set in motion by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2001) and Public Law 221 (PL 221) (Indiana Department of Education [IDOE], 2006).

The No Child Left Behind Act mandates that all schools make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in all demographic areas. This means that schools must show marked improvements in each and every student demographic group in both language arts and mathematics. Just one student group, such as free and reduced lunch, special education, African American, or Hispanic, not making significant progress in either one of the testing areas, labels the school as failing. AYP not only applies to individual schools, but to districts as a whole (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001). In 2009, only about half of all schools in the state of Indiana made AYP (IDOE, 2009).

For districts with Title I schools, a failing label opens another myriad of challenges. Federal mandates outline free tutoring services to students in failing schools. Districts with schools that continue to fail must offer school choice. This is a process of allowing students at failing schools to attend other schools. For all the cost and logistics associated with this process,

students very well may be travelling to schools that are performing no better, just schools that are not Title I. The failing label also entails progressive increased federal and state oversight up to takeover (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001).

That is just the federal side of things. Each school and district in Indiana also falls under the province of Public Law 221. This law is very similar to No Child Left Behind. Each school in Indiana is given a grade based upon its improvement school wide on the ISTEP test. However, the bar and grading system is not the same as the one set in No Child Left Behind. So, in theory, a school can survive the gauntlet of NCLB only to find themselves still labeled deficient by the IDOE (IDOE, 2006).

As is evidenced, the typical educational leader is faced with many challenges on a daily basis. In this age of accountability, increased oversight, unfunded mandates, tight budgets, non-academic responsibilities, and a rapidly changing student demographic have all become the standard hurdles standing between school leaders and success. In this landscape, only a few seem to truly succeed and thrive where most fail, or at best survive.

However, these now typical challenges of modern Hoosier educational leadership only paled in comparison to the financial obstacles created by the economic crisis they would face in 2009 (Carden, 2009). Starting in 2007, the United States and the world plunged into an economic crisis of a scope not seen since the Great Depression (The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2010).

As a result of overly inflated real estate valuation and risky sub-prime mortgage loans made by banks and investment firms, the stability and strength of the financial markets appeared to be extraordinarily robust. Mortgage loan standards had been routinely ignored because of the rapidly increasing value of homes and real estate. More and more loans were given to

increasingly riskier buyers as the housing market soared. In 2007, this unsustainable housing market bubble burst, creating rapid real estate devaluation, widespread foreclosures, and investment firms and banks scrambling to create liquidity to cover the many outstanding bad loans they now had on their books. Investors hastily pulled their money from what they now considered uncertain markets and put their assets into traditionally safe, but low growth funds. This ensuing panic sent the United States economy into a tailspin from which the nation has not yet recovered (The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2010).

Many notable, and traditionally strong, banks, investment firms, and corporations were quick casualties of this sharp and sudden downturn. Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch, and Bear Stearns all faltered, and ultimately failed as corporations, either being acquired or disappearing all together. Automakers General Motors and Chrysler were forced to request and take government loans, without which they would have gone bankrupt. Since late 2007, the Federal Reserve has consistently cut interest rates and the United States government has attempted multiple stimuli and bailout packages in attempts to reinvigorate the economy, however at this time the nation is still in the midst of the crisis (The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2010).

In the wake of this financial crisis, the American labor market has been dramatically affected. Since 2007, the unemployment rate in the United States has essentially doubled. As it now stands almost 10% of the available workforce in Indiana and the nation is without a job. In real numbers, that equates to over 14 million Americans out of work (United States Department of Labor, 2010).

It was seemingly only a matter of time until the financial crisis trickled down to K-12 education in Indiana. In 2008, the state of Indiana took over the General Fund. This fund had

previously been financed by property taxes in the school districts. It would now be funded through state sales and income tax (Haynie, 2010).

The General Fund is one of the seven funds used by districts in the state of Indiana as part of their financing structure. In fund accounting only certain funds can be used for certain expenditures. Most notably the great majority of the General Fund, by in large, it is used for salaries and benefits (Ellis, 2010).

In the fall of 2009, it was announced that for the entire year state tax revenue had substantially missed projections (Ruthart, 2009). Indiana public school districts would be the next to feel the pain of financial crisis. In December 2009, Governor Mitch Daniels announced that Indiana K-12 education could no longer be spared from cutbacks already faced by other state funded agencies. Effective January 2010, $300 million was slashed from the state's K-12 education budget. Essentially every district had an across the board reduction in their General Fund (Carden, 2009).

This sudden budget reduction left every Indiana school superintendent in the same precarious predicament. They were forced to make dramatic cuts and crucial decisions in a very short time frame (Ellis, 2010). Many school superintendents were faced with difficult choices and unpopular options.

In an attempt to recoup lost revenue and retain solvency, several Indiana school superintendents actually entertained the idea of charging a fare to students who rode the school bus. Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller struck down this option in a written opinion, saying that it violated the Indiana constitution (Marshall, 2010).

One Indiana superintendent cut 21% of his district's labor force, or essentially almost every non-teaching teaching position in the corporation, in an effort to balance the budget

(Stewart, 2010). Other school leaders have cut extra-curricular programs, charged fees for sports; stopped offering summer school, closed schools, sold buildings, and indefinitely laid off teachers (Haynie, 2010).

Across the state, superintendents have attempted to slash their budgets in a myriad of ways. Some have offered early retirement in an effort to push out higher paid experienced teachers to replace them with inexperienced teachers lower on the pay scale, or not replace them at all. Several superintendents vowed to not replace any positions that occurred through attrition. Others cut or consolidated administrators. Buildings are being under-staffed. Some have reduced the amount of custodial and maintenance work done throughout the district. Others have eliminated overtime all together. In some districts, field trips have been abolished (Ellis, 2010).

Teacher work days have been reduced. School nurses have been purged. Programs such as physical education have been cut from the curriculum. Junior varsity sports have been eliminated. Employee benefits have been slashed. Fifth graders have moved into middle schools. One district actually held a shut-down for an entire week during the summer, reducing a week's worth of pay from the budget for year-round employees (Ellis, 2010).

Teaching position after teacher position has been cut. Classroom sizes have increased. Class offerings have decreased (Ellis, 2010). All in all, the Indiana State Teachers Association estimated that up to 5,000 teachers lost their jobs (Associated Press, 2010).

Modern educational leadership has definitely become a high stakes endeavor; however the recent financial crisis is not the norm. It has tested the leadership of Indiana's state school superintendents. Through adversity it has identified those who can be highly effective in the face of overwhelming difficult times.

Significance of the Study

Along with almost all governmental, public, and private institutions, schools are facing unprecedented uncertainty. Schools now not only face high stakes accountability, but the threat of economic ruin. The survival of some school districts is in real jeopardy. Educational leaders everywhere are experiencing difficult times. By determining what highly effective leaders do to succeed during difficult times, this study holds significant impact for the way educational leaders approach their work in order to prosper during times of crisis. Additional significance is gained through the impact this work could have on the preparation of future leaders/

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what highly effective leaders do during difficult times to be successful. In Indiana, and across the nation, education leaders are faced with seemingly impossible scenarios and unworkable solutions. Yet, some educational leaders thrive in this atmosphere. They exhibit effective leadership during these trying situations. They not only survive, but prosper in what could only be described as times of crisis.

Using Indiana Governor Daniel's $300 million education cuts of 2009 (Carden, 2009) as a uniform crisis that each of Indiana's 293 public school districts were forced to deal with at the same time, this research identified Indiana's most highly effective superintendents and determined what philosophies and behaviors they brought to this and other crisis situations.

Research Questions

1. What is the leadership philosophy of highly effective leaders during difficult times?

2. What leadership behaviors do highly effective leaders exhibit during difficult times?

3. What are the differences, if any, between highly effective leadership and highly effective leadership during difficult times?

Definition of Terms

Difficult Time / Crisis: For the purposes of this study difficult time / crisis is specifically defined as the $300 million K-12 public education budget cuts of 2009 in Indiana. However, it could refer to any unforeseen situation or circumstance that is not expected as part the regular accepted agenda of daily operations of a school district.

Highly Effective Leader: For the purposes of this study a highly effective leader is defined as an Indiana public school superintendent that has been identified by credible authorities in state government, higher education, and professional organizations as an outlier in regards to their efficacy and success in their role as a school district's chief executive officer.

Delimitations

Delimitations of the study exist in the following manner:

1. This study focused on a specific phenomenon. The research centered on school superintendents that have been identified as being the most highly effective in their roles as leader of a school district in the state of Indiana.

2. The time frame in which data was collected was the 2010-2011 school year.

3. Out of 293 public school superintendents only five were identified for in-depth research.

4. The population of this study was limited to only those leaders that have been identified as being the most highly effective superintendents in the state of Indiana. The research was specific to outliers.

5. The study was based on only five of the most highly effective superintendents in the state of Indiana. After the pool was identified, these five were determined by geographic region, demographic make-up of the district, experience, gender, and

socioeconomic make-up of the district in an attempt to provide the greatest cross-section of highly effective leaders.

Limitations

Generalizations from the study are limited to the degree that:

1. The definition of highly effective and success can be unique to different people. Even though those polled were given very specific criteria for highly effective leaders, they still may define it through a predisposed lens.

2. The subjects' ability to attribute specific leadership characteristics and behaviors to themselves could be a possible limitation. They may not be able to explain or articulate what they do or how they do it.

3. The bias and objectivity of this researcher may also be a limitation. Although every effort was made to be fair, unbiased, and objective, predisposed opinions and experiences run the risk of tainting the findings.

4. Because this study is researching outliers, only five subjects were interviewed. Given the nature of qualitative research, it may be difficult to generalize the findings of the research.

Organization of the Dissertation

The research and findings of this study is presented over five chapters. Chapter 1 outlined the importance of the topic, defined the problem, and stated the purpose of the study. It provided the research questions, defined the terms, and provided the delimitations and limitations of the investigation. Chapter 2 reviews the related literature in effective leadership theory, effective leaders, and crisis management. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology, the population to be studied, data collection instrument, and analysis of the research. Chapter 4

presents the findings in regards to the research questions. Chapter 5 summarizes the findings, draws conclusions, lays out the pertinent discoveries in relationship to the success of highly effective leaders during difficult times, and makes suggestions for further research inside and outside the population studied.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature

The review of the literature reviews three main areas that reference how effective leaders succeed during difficult times. The first portion of the chapter centers on effective leadership in both theory and practice. This includes attention being given to relevant works focusing on both organizational and educational leadership. Examination is given to the characteristics and behaviors exhibited by leaders that have been deemed effective. This includes both scientific research and anecdotal observations into what are the distinct traits that makes a leader effective.

A second significant segment of this work delves into specific individuals that have been proven as successful leaders in difficult times. This includes both autobiographical and biographical works focusing on the actions of these leaders, with a clear emphasis on their behaviors as they relate to difficult situations, crisis, and extended periods of change and unrest.

In addition, the topic of crisis management is examined. Germane texts dedicated to this subject are outlined to provide a basis for best practice in time of crisis.

One seemingly lean component to this list is the area of executive educational leadership, especially that in crisis or difficult situations. There are two main reasons for this. First, the rationale for researching this area is to discover this knowledge. Secondly, the topic of executive educational leadership appears to be falsely rich in content. Although myriad texts have been written on educational leadership, when it comes to the behaviors and characteristics of effective

leaders, many of these works typically cite those outside of education. They are filled with reference to leaders and authors that are already featured in this review of literature from other professions and backgrounds: Drucker, Collins, Murphy, Buckingham and Clifton, Fullan, Churchill, Kouzes and Posner, Covey, and Heifetz and Linsky, as well as other notable authors and leaders not featured, such as Louis Gerstner of IBM, Attila the Hun, Bill Clinton, Dwight Eisenhower, Malcolm Gladwell, and Gandhi (Blankstein, 2004; Reeves, 2006; Schmoker, 2006). However, due and diligent attention has been paid to educational leadership research relevant to this study.

Seminal Texts and Research on Effective Leadership Theory and Practice

Harris and Chapman (2002) researched effective leadership in schools facing challenging circumstances. Using empirical data, case studies, prior research, and sponsored by the National College for School Leadership, the researchers identified the following main characteristics of those effective school leaders.

- They remained focused on their core values and goals in the face of adversity and did not allow themselves to be distracted from what was most important.

- They focused on relationships. People were their most important asset and they did put positive relationships aside in efforts to move the schools forward.

- They collaborated. They were able to bring in many points of view to get the best decisions.

There were other research findings pertinent to leadership during difficult times, as well. Effective leaders used a variety of styles depending on the situation. They were resilient and not afraid of conflict for the good of the cause. They were able to see the big picture. They valued

the input of those within their organization, as well as the community (Harris & Chapman, 2002).

Marzano, McNulty, and Waters (2005) performed a meta-analysis of almost 70 studies focusing on effective school leadership. In their work, they identified 21 behaviors and characteristics of effective leaders that correlate positively with the success of their schools.

- They celebrate success and they show attention to failures.

- They are willing to make necessary changes.

- They are willing to reward to those who excel. They build a sense of community.

- They shield their staff from distractions.

- They are flexible and can adapt to new and different situations.

- They have a laser-like focus on their goals and objectives.

- They have strong convictions.

- They are not only open to, but encourage collaboration from their staff.

- They keep their staff abreast of the latest trends and best practices.

- They are directly involved with implementation of practices and have a working of knowledge of those practices.

- They actively monitor the work being done.

- They are innovators and encourage their staff to innovate.

- They create a uniform process and protocols that are understood and followed.

- They promote and politic within the community and with all stakeholders.

- They put people first. Relationships are their priority.

- They make sure their staff has what they need to do their job.

- They are up-to-speed and in-the-loop with what is happening.

- They are visible and accessible to their staff and community.

Farkas and Wetlaufer (1996) interviewed 160 of the world's most effective Chief Executive Officers (CEO's). Their study determined that this diverse group of leaders could be grouped into five identifiable leadership styles or approaches. Almost all of the leaders had aspects of the different styles listed below, but the most successful were those that adhered most closely to one core style. In other words, their core style was not compromised by the others.

- The Strategic CEO. The Strategic CEO is constantly looking at the current state of the organization and weighing this current state against the vision and goals that it has the future. The Strategic CEO is constantly trying to develop strategy to get the organization from the current to future state. CEOs that face difficult decisions with many possible ramifications tend to employ this style.

- The Human Assets CEO. The Human Assets CEO believes that the best people are the key and spends the great majority of time on their people. Concern is focused with getting the best people, keeping the best people, and developing them.

- The Expertise CEO. The Expertise CEO focuses time and energy on using his expertise to run the organization. This would be akin to micromanagement in a way, with the Expertise CEO attempting to manage and oversee all facets of the organization.

- The Box CEO. The Box CEO leads like the title would suggest. The Box CEOs spend their time creating and maintaining organizational policy. They are not concerned with keeping per se the status quo, but definitely the company line and way of doing things.

- The Change CEO. Change CEOs are almost completely the opposite of the Box

  CEO. They are committed to change and encourage this type of behavior throughout

  the organization.

Fullan (2001) identified five traits that he felt were necessary for leaders to be effective in

complex times. Although his study was aimed at education, it also relied heavily on examples

from the business world.

- Moral purpose. This describes the will and drive to do good both at the micro and

  macro level. The focus is on the individuals around the leader and also on the aims

  and ideals of the organization.

- Understanding the change process. This skill is necessary for effective leaders to

  know the steps and anatomy of change in an organization. The leaders must be aware

  of the process, culture, and climate that change creates and demands.

- Relationships. Relationships in this context speak to building trust, not always

  friendship, in your organization. Relationship building is paramount. Fleck (2005)

  also notes relationship building as his first trait of a successful educational leader.

- Knowledge building. This is creating an understanding of the organization and its

  processes throughout the organization. It is more than simply having information. It

  is a culture of collaboration and sharing.

- Coherence making. Simply put, this is making sense of it all. The leaders must be

  able to dissect complex situations in a way that they can understand and explain to

  others.

Collins (2001) identified Level 5 Leadership as the highest, most effective type of

organizational leader. A Level 5 leader is humble, yet ambitious. Level 5 leaders have the

ability to confront the brutal facts of their organization's current situation while remaining realistically optimistic (Collins, 2001).

However, the ambition that the Level 5 leader exhibits is not personal ambition. That is what differentiates the Level 5 leader from those the author designates as Level 4. A Level 4 is highly competent and skilled. In fact, a Level 4 is a good leader and can be highly effective in motivating and moving the organization. Most leaders, three quarters of the companies researched (Collins, 2001), could be characterized as having Level 4 leaders. Again, these leaders can be quite effective, but unlike a Level 5, their ambition is personal.

In contrast to the Level 4 leader's personal ambition, the Level 5 leader's drive and motivation manifests itself as ambition for the organization's goals and mission. Abraham Lincoln's drive to save the Union during the Civil War at any cost is such a leader (Collins, 2001). The Level 5 leader is in many ways a paradox of *professional will* and *personal humility* (Collins, 2001). The leader is driven, passionate, and intently focused, while exhibiting modesty, humility, and a predisposition to shun the spotlight. It should be noted that Collins was intent on not studying leadership during his experiences. Nevertheless, he discovered an overwhelming preponderance of similar leaders, what he later noted as *Level 5*, in the most successful corporations (Collins, 2001).

Subsequently, Collins (2005) spoke to the role of the Level 5 leader in public service, non-profit organizations. He found that Level 5 leaders were ideally suited for the unique needs of the social sector. Level 5 leaders' ability to focus on the goals of the organization; get the right people in the right positions, do whatever necessary to accomplish these goals, and lack of personal ambition made them effective when working in an organization that had a *diffuse power structure* such as a school district (Collins, 2005)

Covey (1989) identified seven habits that are the keys to being highly effective.

- Be proactive. Proactive is the opposite of being reactive. Proactive people not only take control of their situation. Moreover, they feel as if they have control over their situation. They recognize and spot potential pitfalls prior to falling victim to them. They prepare for contingencies and crisis.

- Begin with the end in mind. Beginning with the end in mind ties in neatly with being proactive. People who begin with the end in mind know what they want to accomplish and are able to identify and enumerate their goals. They are aware of what they want the end results to be. In essence, this is back planning. The effective person starts with an end result and then plans strategy and tactics to reach the desired end.

- Put first things first. Putting first things first is simply prioritizing. However, the type of prioritizing the author is describing is very strategic. The effective person breaks down tasks into a quadrant of importance and urgency. Tasks and commitments are purposefully laid out according to their relevance and significance. The effective person has the ability to stick to this methodology in their professional and personal life.

- Think win/win. Thinking win/win is the ability to create situations where all parties involved benefit from the outcome of decisions, deliberations, and initiatives. Although this is not always a possible result, it is a mindset that effective people bring to their interactions with others.

- Seek first to understand, then to be understood. At face value, this is the principle of active listening, but furthermore it is the principle of putting other people first.

- Synergize. Synergy refers to the idea of teamwork. In action, it is the culmination of many of the above habits, most notably thinking win/win and seeking first to understand. It is taking into account and applying the unique perspectives and talents of all.

- Sharpen the saw. Sharpening the saw is a course of constant regeneration in all facets of life. Highly effective people take time to renew themselves. Renewing is self-improvement, spiritual reflection, exercise, and relaxation. They balance their lives.

Goffee and Jones (2000) investigated inspirational leadership. To them, inspirational leadership was key. There were ordinary, mundane traits that all leaders needed to possess, but they found that truly inspirational leaders possessed four distinct qualities.

- They show weakness and vulnerability. This show of humanity is strategic in nature. Inspirational leaders give those around them the opportunity to see that they are not perfect, however the flaws they expose are endearing, not signs of weakness.

- They have great situational instincts. They have learned to read situations and know how to respond appropriately.

- They have tough empathy. The researchers explain this as not having false concern or overt caring. Empathy is a true compassion for the work and people doing it. It is exhibited by being honest and direct with people through this sense of compassion.

- They are distinctive. The inspirational leaders differentiate themselves from those around them. Distinctiveness can be shown in a variety of ways, whether through pedigree, skill set, or even dress. Just as inspirational leaders show that they are human, they also celebrate and advertise the fact that they are unique and distinct as the leader.

Bossidy and Charan (2002) used both practical business world experience and educational theory to identify the key to successful leadership in an organization. They identified *execution* as the critical factor in organizational success. The ability to execute effectively is to the ability to lead effectively. Successful execution is broken into three distinct, but interconnected components: the people process, the strategy process, and the operations process.

Effective leaders honestly appraise their people. They make it a priority to place the right people in the right jobs. They train and educate their people to have the capabilities needed for success in those jobs. Effective leaders develop strategies that are straight-forward and disseminated throughout the organization. The strategies are driven by those who are affected, not from a planning committee that is removed from the operations process. The operations process has an action plan that is easily understood and fosters common sense. Throughout the entire organization the process is followed, but is modeled and led by the leader. Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, was noted as exemplar of these principles (Bossidy & Charan, 2002).

Kouzes and Posner (2002) identified traits exhibited by effective leaders, "When getting extraordinary things done in organizations, leaders engage in these Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership," (p. 14)

- Model the way. Exemplary leaders model the way for others. They set the example for conduct and behavior in their organizations.
- Inspire a shared vision. Exemplary leaders can see what the finished product will look like and can make that vision real in their employees' minds as well.

- Challenge the process. Exemplary leaders are not afraid to shake up or challenge the status quo or try new methods. In short, they innovate.

- Enable others to act. Exemplary allow others to make significant contributions. They are not threatened by the success of those with whom they work. They encourage and foster the leadership of others.

- Encourage the heart. Exemplary leaders look to build morale and lift up the people in their organization. The authors give the example of Rudy Giuliani wearing the hats of different emergency services after 9/11 in a show of solidarity and support for their sacrifice (p. 14).

In addition to these five traits, the ability to forge and maintain meaningful relationships was once again noted as a necessity of an effective leader (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Bennis (1998) also emphasized the importance of shared vision, clarity, morality, and the ability to adapt as essential elements of leadership. In addition, he shared his views on what creates effective leaders.

Leaders learn by leading, and they learn by leading in the face of obstacles. As weather shapes mountains, problems shape leaders. Difficult bosses, lack of vision and virtue in the executive suite, circumstances beyond their control, and their own mistakes have been the leaders' basic curriculum. (Bennis, 1998, p. 146)

Murphy (1988) also made similar findings in his assessment of what it took to be a successful educational administrator. However, his insistence was that leaders need not be heroic figures, as had been portrayed through the ages. Although from a different angle, his views, again, did not differ greatly in many ways from what had been reported from the previous literature reviewed (Bennis, 1998; Covey, 1989; Fullan, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Where he does differ are in the characteristics that are not typically associated with leaders. Murphy (1988) asserted that leaders confront and embrace their weaknesses, as well as those of the people who report to them. They should complement their weaknesses with the strengths of their employees and vice versa. They should listen and learn to be able to depend on others.

In closing, Murphy (1988) also advocated for the practice of letting things go. Letting things go can be illustrated in two ways. First, trust your people. If they have been given the responsibility, let them do their job. Secondly, give them the responsibility and authority to do their jobs. Leaders cannot do everything and will be unsuccessful if they try. They must be able to step back and rise above.

The idea of identifying weaknesses is a view also shared by Buckingham and Clifton (2001), whose work in focusing on strengths also conversely meant that leaders must know their weaknesses. They contend that leaders spend too much time trying to become well-rounded. For most, becoming well-rounded is an impossibility. There are very few well-rounded individuals. The best leaders can hope to do is become competent in their weaknesses. This way they are not a liability. It is the job of leaders to be cognizant of those weaknesses and find people around them that can complement and shore up their deficiencies. Buckingham and Clifton (2001) go on to say that with their weaknesses accounted for, leaders then have the freedom to concentrate on and excel within their strength areas.

Heifetz and Linsky (2002) spoke to the metaphor of leaders getting a "balcony perspective" (p. 53) of the issues and situations they face. This means that effective leaders are able to put things in perspective in the big picture, not just from the view from where they are sitting. This grand perspective is not disengagement, but rather the ability to be engaged at a

ground level while also seeing a situation as if it were being looked upon from above. There is important information to be gained in both arenas. Just as leaders are limited if they cannot see the big picture, they are equally ineffective if they cannot relate to the situation on the ground, as this is where the action takes place.

Drucker (2001) believed that it was crucial that leaders saw themselves as care-takers of their organizations. He stressed that organizations must have clear objections and that the leader's job was to marshal resources and energy toward their accomplishment. He used the example of a flight plan for mapping out what needs to done. In addition, he felt that leaders should spend their time developing their top performers, instead of wasting time on their below-average employees (Drucker, 2001).

Drucker (2006) described effective leaders and their organizations as boring or "dull" (p. 42). That is because effective leaders manage future events instead of wasting time cleaning up the past mistakes. Effective leaders foresee issues and build in contingencies. According to Drucker, effective leaders experience very few surprises and very little in their organization happens by accident. An effective leader has not only the ability, but the wisdom, to see many perspectives on the same issue. Although the leader may have a predisposed course of action, time is always given to exploring the pros and cons of alternate decisions.

Most telling, Drucker (2006) believed that effectiveness was not a predisposition. He asserted that it could be learned. He further stated that the only purpose of a leader was to be effective and that the future of productive organizations, and society-at-large, was that leaders become effective. "Effectiveness must be learned" (Drucker, 2006, p. 174).

Numerous other researchers have investigated the challenges of leadership and the characteristics of effective leaders (Duffy, 2003; Public Impact, 2006; Rost, 1993; Sousa, 2003).

Their findings, while insightful, did not dramatically differ from the seminal and unique texts on leadership that have been reviewed thus far.

Effective Leaders

Welch (2005) outlined his methodology for successful leadership. Welch was CEO of General Electric from 1981 to 2001. When Welch left General Electric, it had become the most valuable corporation in the world. He was chosen by *Fortune Magazine* as the manager of the century and a 2004 Financial Times survey listed him as the respondents' number one choice of all time to serve on a corporate board (Welch, 2005).

Welch (2005) advocated that organizations need straightforward and common sense mission and values. These must be embraced and exemplified by the leader of the organization. The mission and values must be easy to understand, so in turn, they can be easy to practice. Welch's mission was that General Electric would only compete in arenas where it had the ability to dominate the competition (Welch, 2005). Once again, the responsibility for communicating these values lies squarely on the leader.

Welch (2005) believed in candor. Candor is saying what needs to be said and doing so in a frank and candid way. "Lack of candor basically blocks smart ideas, fast action, and good people from contributing all they've got. It's a killer." (Welch, 2005, p. 25). The culture of candor allows the organization to function at a high level because people are being told what they need to hear, not what they want to hear. The candor he spoke of was not mean-spirit, but honest and direct, confronting issues facing the organization and the leader. Candor also allows the leader to give sincere, deserved praise to individuals and teams that are achieving, without that praise seeming to be false or generic.

Welch (2005) implemented differentiation throughout his company. This process rewarded and promoted the highest achieving while identifying and penalizing those not performing at acceptable levels. Welch credits differentiation with creating success for the company. Underperformers are not hidden, and therefore cannot hurt the organization because they either improve or are replaced.

Welch (2005) also made an effort to get the opinions and input of employees and stakeholders at all levels of his company. To him, it only made sense that people on the shop floor were experts in their field. Their input was critical to implementing and leading successful initiatives while avoiding catastrophic mistakes.

In addition, Welch (2005) asserted that leaders must be able to make unpopular decisions and ask questions relentlessly that motivate thinking and action. This questioning coupled with candor allows the leader to keep the status quo at bay.

According to Welch (2005), the leader should lead by example, especially in the areas of innovation, risk taking, and learning. He feels if the leader is not out front in these areas role modeling, then it will seem like rhetoric and not practice.

Welch (2005) was very adamant about never abandoning the process, whatever an organization's process may be. Welch implemented Six Sigma into General Electric. This process of continuous improvement and data-driven decision making was put into operation throughout the company. It became the way they did business. Regardless of the situation or crisis, everyone knew what to do because Welch and General Electric worked their process (Welch, 2005).

Lee Iacocca (Forbes & Prevas, 2009) led the Chrysler Corporation back from the brink of bankruptcy and almost certain demise. He used his personality and both an ability and

willingness to innovate to turn the company around. Iacocca became the spokesman for Chrysler and led from the front. He placed his reputation on the organization by not accepting a paycheck until Chrysler made money and personally vouching for the quality of their automobiles.

Iacocca (2007) credited his success like that of other effective leaders with was he called the "Nine C's of Leadership" (p. 5).

- Curiosity. Effective leaders should have an innate desire to be informed. This curiosity should extend the beyond the leaders handlers and inner circle. Leaders should always be searching for all sides of a situation and new sources of data and information.

- Creative. Effective leaders should be willing to explore all options and change if necessary. The status quo must always be questioned.

- Communicate. Effective leaders should be honest and forthright with information.

- Character. Effective leaders must have integrity.

- Courage. Effective leaders must exhibit the willingness to do the right thing.

- Conviction. Effective leaders must have enthusiasm for their work and be able to sell that enthusiasm to those around them.

- Charisma. Effective leaders must have a personality that makes people know they are a leader. A charismatic leader does have to be extraverted, but it must be evident that the person is a leader.

- Competent. Effective leaders must have the ability to do the job. They must have a skill set and demeanor that befits the role.

- Common sense. Effective leaders must not only have ability, but a practical knowledge of people and situations.

Finally, Iacocca (2007) argued that leaders truly show themselves effective in crisis situations. Leadership is not difficult when things are going well. It is only in difficult periods that leaders can prove themselves.

Winston Churchill served as Prime Minister of England during the World War II. Churchill is most famous for his defiance and persistence in the face of overwhelming odds during the Battle of Britain and throughout the war. His dynamic speaking and unwavering public persona characterized by an attitude of certain victory motivated an entire nation and the world. His leadership traits and characteristics have been chronicled by Sandys and Littman (2003).

Churchill (Sandys & Littman, 2003) was a man of courage. Not only did he exhibit courage as a soldier and statesman, he believed in innovation and did not fear failure. He believed in streamlining processes and constantly finding better ways to do things. He was one of the first leaders to embrace the airplane and the tank, unproven and untested at the time, as weapons of war. As a leader, Churchill was willing to go back on previous decisions and courses of action if they later proved to be unwise, untenable, or wrong.

Churchill (Sandys & Littman, 2003) believed in reaching out to those in opposition, when possible. He made overtures toward Irish leader, Michael Collins, and actually befriended him. He looked for ways to create commonalities between himself and those who opposed him. In fact, like Lincoln (Phillips, 1992), he placed those with whom he had political differences in his war cabinet. However, at the same time, he would not stand to be threatened. Churchill was one of the first people to speak out against Hitler, years before his aggression turned toward England (Sandys & Littman, 2003).

Churchill (Sandys & Littman, 2003) did not lead from above. He was out among the people and his staff. He looked for opportunities to hear from those below him, see conditions firsthand, and personally gauge progress toward goals. He boosted the morale and spirit of his people, not only by being dynamic, but by being accessible. This visibility and accesibility was best exemplified by his insistence to be at the scene of bombings during the battle of Britain, on the ground in France just days prior to its fall, and in his many summits and battlefield visits during the war.

Churchill (Sandys & Littman, 2003) also took time to enjoy life outside of leadership. He was an avid painter, often taking his supplies along on business trips. He was religious about relaxing and socializing. He reveled in entertaining. He believed in purposefully conserving energy and recharging, so he could be at top form when on the job.

Like Welch (2005), Churchill believed in data-driven decision making, using candor to drive execution, and rewarding and promoting those who achieved. Also like Welch, Churchill believed clear and easily understood goals and objectives were vitally important. He always put his orders in writing as to leave no doubt of their intent and to insure effective delegation (Sandys & Littman, 2003).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Churchill exhibited a perseverance, optimism, and sense of defiance in the face in the face of difficult situations, not only during the Second World War, but throughout his professional life. Without this trait, it is very unlikely Churchill would have never reached the identity of an effective leader (Sandys & Littman, 2003).

Hannibal of Carthage accomplished one of the most amazing feats of the ancient world. In the dead of winter, he led his entire army, replete with battle elephants across the Alps and then attacked the Romans in their homeland (Forbes & Prevas, 2009).

Hannibal exhibited many of the leadership traits that today have been described as the hallmarks of effective leadership. Hannibal innovated in the face of the difficult times. He showed a resolve and determination that his forces would succeed regardless of the circumstance. He led from the front and by example. Instead of defending his home city of Carthage against Roman onslaughts, Hannibal conversely set out to attack the Romans. By taking the fight to his enemy, Hannibal was able to keep Roman armies on the Italian peninsula and away from Carthage, thus allowing Carthage to grow and prosper during this time (Forbes & Prevas, 2009).

Augustus Caesar is arguably the most effective leader of the ancient world. He inherited a Roman empire in the midst of a civil war. Caesar consolidated power while surrounding himself with other effective leaders. He worked to create a government that was purposeful and deliberate. He grew Rome into the largest, most powerful nation in the world and set in motion a period of 200 years in which there were no major wars throughout the empire (Forbes & Prevas, 2009). Caesar initiated a process of creating stability and order within the empire by concentrating on innovation, processes, and infrastructure. His deliberate, yet boundless leadership style is best explained by his favorite quotation, "Make haste, slowly" (Forbes & Prevas, 2009, p. 9).

Both Hannibal and Caesar also showed an amazing humility and modesty regarding their own accomplishments. They both were much more concerned with the accomplishments of the nations they led. This selfless leadership is what Collins (2001) described as Level 5 Leadership. Both of these effective leaders from the ancient world sought glory and success for those they led instead of for themselves.

Rudolph Giuliani was mayor of New York City from 1994 to 2002. Prior to his tenure as mayor, Giuliani was a United States District Attorney. Giuliani not only led New York through the aftermath of September 11, 2001, but up to that time led a renaissance of the city turning around its image and crime epidemic (Giuliani, 2002). In many ways, Giuliani's leadership following the attacks of September 11 has been directly compared to Churchill's leadership during the Battle of Britain (Sandys & Littman, 2003).

Giuliani (2002) credits much of his success to creating a process and persistently following it. Along with an unambiguous vision, the flagship of this process was the morning meeting. Each morning Giuliani would assemble his top staff to focus on the mission, initiatives, and problems facing his administration. Staff would report on what they were working on and report progress, or lack thereof. Giuliani, using candor, would hold the staff accountable and demand improvement. This unwavering protocol was the case almost every working day of his administration as mayor and U.S. District Attorney. Giuliani extols the virtue of hiring quality people to make the process effective and having a clear, articulated purpose to drive the organization's efforts.

Giuliani (2002) also credits the process of the morning meeting, and an unwavering adherence to it, as the momentum for his administration's success in the aftermath of September 11. On the morning of September 12, Giuliani and his staff met at 8:00 A.M. just like any other day. There was no confusion as to how to proceed because the precedent, protocols, and procedures were already set.

From experience, Giuliani (2002) recommended waiting as long as possible to make important decisions. His waiting was not procrastination. Waiting was the avoidance of hasty, poorly thought out choices. Waiting allowed him to think through the options, and seek counsel

and guidance before making up his mind. In essence, Giuliani was warning against snap judgments. If there is time, use it to collect information.

Like Welch (2005) and Churchill (Sandys & Littman, 2003), Giuliani (2002) believes that the leader must set the tone. Giuliani believes that leadership requires the leader to be out front and among those who follow him.

During difficult times, Giuliani (2002) drew upon past experience, his own and that of others. During the tragedy of September 11, one of the first things he did was to recall and evaluate other crises that he had been through and the steps and missteps he had taken. Beyond that, he looked to the example of former New York Mayor LaGuardia and how he dealt with massive fires throughout the City. He also tried to model himself in the image and personality of Winston Churchill during the Battle of Britain.

William Bratton served as Rudolph Giuliani's first Chief of Police in New York City (Bratton, 1998). Prior to that, Bratton served as Boston's Chief of Police, as well as Chief of New York City's Transit Police. Bratton is credited with turning around a culture of crime in New York that was pervasive in the early 1990s. Bratton's leadership style also relied heavily upon accountability and candor. He held each of his subordinates directly responsible for the crime in their areas. Using crime data, he pinpointed areas within the city that were in need of extra policing and attention. His real-time, data-driven analysis of crime patterns allowed him to be intimately aware of what was going on in his administration. His attention to detail and, moreover his attention to the little things, are what he credited for the turnaround. Bratton shared a vision that small crimes must not be ignored and the law must be enforced. By concentrating on the small crimes, more serious, violent crimes also decreased (Bratton, 1998).

Abraham Lincoln was President of the United States during one of its most tumultuous periods. He led the nation through the Civil War and accomplished his goal of saving the union. Lincoln exhibited effective leadership during this difficult time. He had a certainty of purpose and made it explicitly known. Lincoln surrounded himself with those who did not necessarily share his views, but did however share the same core purpose and goals. Lincoln made it a point to get out amongst the troops and see firsthand what was occurring. During difficult times, he was not afraid to change course, replacing commanding generals several times. In contrast, he tried to persuade rather than order strategy and tactics (Phillips, 1992).

Colin Powell served as Secretary of State, Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, and National Security Advisor, in addition to his over 30 years of service as an officer in the United States Army (Harari, 2002). Much of his career was spent leading during difficult times. He led a platoon in Vietnam, served through the Cold War, united a coalition to undertake Operation Desert Storm (Powell, 1995), and then dealt with the aftermath of September 11 (Harari, 2002).

Harari (2002) chronicled the leadership traits of Powell. In many ways, Powell's thoughts on leadership are no different than the other leaders previously reviewed. However, Powell's military background and varied job responsibilities within public service make his perspective noteworthy. One of Powell's secrets was to always make himself available to soldiers and staff below him in the chain of command. Powell trusted the views of the frontline soldiers. He was distrustful of experts that had no field experience or did not honor the views from the field. He asserted that it was essential to hear what the lowest soldiers had to say and what they were going through. Without this insight, he felt it was impossible to gauge if plans and strategy were actually being carried out and filtering their way through the organization. This type of accessibility breeds accountability throughout the organization.

Powell believed in flexibility and innovation. A leader should not get stuck in a rut of always doing things in a particular manner. A leader should not wait until permission is granted. Leaders should constantly be improving and finding better ways to accomplish their goals. Moreover, Powell believed that different situations demanded different styles of leadership. Leaders should guard themselves from handling everything the same way (Harari, 2002).

Furthermore, Powell believed that leadership sets the example for others to follow. Many times leaders find themselves alone. They must be willing to make enemies, set vision, and have attention to detail. Most of all, the attitude of leaders permeates the organization. Optimism by the leader can filter throughout the organization.

A study of General George Patton's command of the United States Third Army during World War II (Axelrod, 1999) is a primer in one style of effective leadership during difficult times. "Patton's army went further and faster than any other army in the history of warfare" (Axelrod, 1999, p. 10). General Patton believed in discipline and training, even more so than is typically military. He felt that through training and the discipline that ensued, leaders could prepare their organizations for greatness. Patton was a voracious student of his business, studying tactics, history, and methodology.

Patton believed in looking and acting a like a leader. He would practice speeches, and even certain looks, in front of a mirror (Axelrod, 1999). He wore distinctive uniforms and held himself to a higher code that those under him. He also believed that leaders could not lead from the office. He got out in front of his men as often as possible and made every effort to be in the field when they were (Axelrod, 1999).

A hallmark of Patton's leadership philosophy was to always be on the offensive. Moving forward was the only option in Patton's mind. When once asked to take a defensive position, he

said that he would rather be relieved of duty. Patton's insistence to constantly remain on the

offense was a way to keep troops focused during difficult times. With this ground rule, it also

forced his army to make due, plan ahead, and make multiple contingencies for action. This

complete focus on positive action is best illustrated in his ability to shift troops and resources

during the Battle of the Bulge. Patton already had troops moving toward the battlefield even

before he was asked to send them there.

Bold and sweeping moves that took others by surprise were, in Patton's mind, the key to

victory. However, further investigation showed that although these moves seemed bold to

others, they were part of Patton's contingencies all along. It could be said that this method of

planning ahead was a way of preparing for the worst while anticipating the best. Furthermore, it

showed that as a leader Patton was continually contingency-building for any conceivable

scenario that may or may not happen. If he could imagine it realistically happening, then he

prepared a plan for how to deal with it (Axelrod, 1999).

John Wooden was arguably college basketball's most successful coach. His UCLA

teams won 10 national championships, and at one point 88 straight games. As a leader, his focus

was building a team through fundamentals and values. He felt that the values of a team would

attract the right players. He made a point to lead by example. He believed in being enthusiastic,

but not in showing emotion (Wooden & Jameson, 2005).

He felt it was essential that all members of the team knew their roles and the contribution

that they made. This was part of his almost fanatical attention to detail. The first day of practice

he would train the team in the proper way to put on their socks. Like many of the leaders

previously mentioned, he felt that the small details added up to excellence in the organization.

Along that vein, Wooden felt that leading was more about rewarding excellence that punishing

incompetence (Wooden & Jamison, 2005).

Wooden encouraged his players to expect the unexpected and prepare for the

opportunities that may result from unexpected circumstances (Wooden & Jamison, 2005). He

pushed them to have the initiative to seize unexpected opportunities and turn what could be

negative situations into positive outcomes (Wooden & Jamison, 2005).

Wooden wanted his staff to question his ideas, but never to do so in an impolite or

disrespectful manner (Wooden & Jamison, 2005). He asserted that new ways of thinking were

good, but he would not stand for those who questioned him to make themselves look better

(Wooden & Jamison, 2005). He wanted candor, not self-promotion. Wooden warned that the

casualty of being successful and having a successful team is that it breeds complacency (Wooden

& Jamison, 2005). This complacency can then breed crisis.

When difficult times arrived, Wooden would recall the example of his father when he lost

the family farm (Wooden & Jamison, 2005). Wooden said that his father could have blamed

others and fallen into a depression, however, he moved on and became resolute to succeed.

> We do not control the unwelcome twists and turns that are part of our leadership. At
>
> those difficult moments, I have drawn strength from Dad's example as well as his
>
> suggestion to worry only about those things over which I have control. We can't control
>
> fate, only our response to it. (Wooden & Jamison, 2005, p. 222)

Wooden felt that tough times should be expected. Since they could be expected, a leader should

then develop a plan to deal with them (Wooden & Jameson, 2005).

Mike Kryzyzewski not only has coached multiple national championship basketball

teams at Duke University; he has twice had to rebuild his program after disappointing and

debilitating seasons (Kryzyzewski, 2000). Kryzyzewski (2000) believes that leadership is a matter of heart and optimism combined with discipline and preparation. He believes that a proven process must be followed.

Kryzyzewski (2000) believes in recruiting and hiring the best that fit in his program. Talent alone does not predetermine selection. The person must fit the program. They must exhibit the qualities and characteristics of the team. Kryzyzewski believes, when appropriate, to reassign team members to new responsibilities and roles as a means of developing leadership and redundancy in times of crisis. He believes leaders should feel comfortable delegating to those on their team. If they do not, there is either a problem with leadership or the team members.

Kryzyzewski (2000) often prepares his team for difficult situations ahead of time. He practices tense situations and schedules difficult opponents and back-to-back games during the middle of the season to mimic the stress of the NCAA tournament.

He believes that accountability ultimately lies with the leader, and that he must take responsibility when things go wrong. In modesty, however, the team gets credit when things go right (Kryzyzewski, 2000).

In times of crisis, he feels that leaders must remain optimistic and not allow themselves to become disheartened or negative, especially in public. Leaders must remain focused on the goals, while making every effort to streamline the way for their teams' success (Kryzyzewski, 2000).

The Cuban Missile Crisis placed the world on the brink of nuclear war. President John F. Kennedy was faced with a seemingly impossible task of leading the country, if not the free world, through this difficult time. In his journal turned book from the era, Robert Kennedy

(1968) shared the leadership wisdom that was garnered while working through this potentially catastrophic situation.

Kennedy (1968) felt that it turned out to be crucial that the President and his key advisors were able to meet privately and without scrutiny on the front end of the crisis. Having the ability to work through potential scenarios and strategies without the interference may have been the key to success. They also felt that it was vital to have a "devil's advocate" (Kennedy, 1968, p. 86) in the room during deliberations to point out alternate schools of thought. Other insights included the need for broad representation from stakeholders who could provide different perspectives and the broad implications of the crisis, including the perspective of the other side, the Soviets in this case (Kennedy, 1968).

In August 2005, Tulane University, located in New Orleans, was decimated by Hurricane Katrina. Tulane President Scott Cowen used the opportunities created by Katrina to not only rebuild, but revitalize his university. Cowen changed perspective and saw the conditions created by the aftermath as a clean slate instead of a disaster. He embarked upon creating new initiatives and ending programs that no longer proved of value (Reingold, 2006). Borrowing a page from Jack Welch, Cowen announced that Tulane would now marshal its efforts in "areas where it has attained, or has the potential to achieve, world-class excellence … and suspend admissions to those programs that do not meet these criteria" (Reingold, 2006, p. 93).

Cowen utilized, and some say exploited, the tragedy of Katrina to make sweeping changes in an environment that typically resists change. Cowen remarked, "I wouldn't wish this on anybody…but out of every disaster comes an opportunity. We might as well take the opportunity to reinvent ourselves" (Reingold, 2006, p. 90).

Crisis Management

Numerous works have been dedicated to the topic of crisis management (Dezenhall &

Weber, 2007; Fink, 1986/2002; Harvard Business, 2004, 2007). Much of these texts primarily

deal with all types of crises. The primary emphasis of this review will be situations that can be

avoided or planned for.

A key to managing a crisis is avoiding it all together. One of the ways to avoid

preventable crisis is think of what it may be, not in a casual way, but through a formal process of

auditing and brainstorming potential threats (Harvard Business, 2007).

If the crisis cannot be avoided, Harvard Business (2004) recommends a priority list of

what could happen and what would be done about it. Organizations should have detailed

contingency planning with strategies documented for potential crises. These plans should not

just be on paper. They should be circulated, and tested when possible.

If a crisis does occur Harvard Business (2004) gives four rules for leaders to follow to

contain and manage the crisis.

1. Use quick decisive action. If a crisis is taking place or has occurred, the plan should

   be implemented immediately.

2. Put people first. Other considerations should be secondary to the well-being of

   employees.

3. Be physically at the scene. People want to see the leader.

4. Communicate liberally. A communication plan should already be in place. It should

   be put in action. Share all relevant and available information.

Fink (2002) also encourages leaders to have a systematic methodology of proactive

preparation for a potential crisis. They should formally brainstorm how a crisis will be handled

and exhaust as many potential pitfalls as is feasible. He also echoes the message of having a

clear, well established communication plan in place.

Dezenhall and Weber (2007) have a slightly different take on crisis management. In fact,

the subtitle of their books is "why everything you know about crisis management is wrong."

They recommend going on the offensive, similar to Patton (Axelrod, 1999), saying that

defensiveness in the face of a crisis only tends to make matters worse.

Dezenhall and Weber (2007) also make a case for personality over planning. They assert

that the right leader in public can spawn more goodwill and sway popular support than formal

plans. They argue that every crisis cannot be planned for, but an effective leader can always get

in front of this situation and use their talents to gain a foothold.

Welch (2005) focused a chapter of his book on effective leadership solely to the subject

of crisis management. One of the first points that Welch makes is that crises will happen. If this

can be accepted and embraced, then when the inevitable occurs leaders will not be surprised and

will be prepared to act. Welch also emphasizes leaders should target the crisis with all of their

available efforts, but at the same time try to maintain a sense of normalcy. That is why expecting

that there will be times of crisis is so vital.

From experience, Welch (2005) created a set of five assumptions to remember and

practice when the inevitable crisis did occur. The first assumption is "The problem is worse than

it appears. " (Welch, 2005, p. 153). By not expecting the best, and underestimating the problem,

a leader is able create the mindset necessary to throw all necessary resources and effort into the

difficult situation. The second assumption is "There are no secrets in the world, and everyone

will eventually find out." (Welch, 2005, p. 155). As much as possible, Welch advocates sharing

as much about the crisis as possible. He warns that usually most details of a crisis will

eventually surface. If the leader can share all that is possible as early as possible, the chances of

misinformation spreading both inside and outside the organization are greatly diminished. In

addition, the more open a leader is the less likely the implication that secrets are being kept and

that people are being kept out of the loop as to the real severity of the crisis. The third

assumption is "You and your organization's handling of the crisis will be portrayed in the worst

possible light." (Welch, 2005, p. 157). Welch asserts that there is no obligation to those in the

media, the public or inside the organization to expect the best or share the great ways the

problem is being handled. Building on the prior assumption, the leader must state a position and

be visible. Although counter-intuitive, Welch states that a leader must fight the instinct to

hunker down and get out into whatever venue the crisis mandates, whether that be public

statements or in-house staff meetings. The bottom line is not let someone else tell the story. The

fourth assumption is "There will be changes in processes and people." (Welch, 2005, p. 159). If

the leader can go into the crisis already assuming that the way the organization functions may

have to change and that people in the organization may be at crucial fault, then the job to the

leader is much easier if this does come to fruition. In other words, the way business is done may

have to change. A team member may have to reprimanded, suspended, or even dismissed.

Neither are pleasant outcomes, but in Welch's experience both typically happen during a crisis,

regardless of the size (Welch, 2005). The fifth assumption is "The organization will survive,

ultimately stronger for what has happened." (Welch, 2005, p. 160). Welch emphasizes that

every crisis is a learning opportunity and gives examples of major lessons learned from each

debilitating crisis he faced as General Electric CEO. Welch stresses that crises must be

evaluated. Leaders have to fight the urge to just move on when a crisis is over. They must take

the time to search out the mistakes made and wisdom gained.

Summary

Although the context is varied, common themes arose through the review of related literature, whether it be in theory and research, actual effective leaders, or in crisis management documents. Clear mission and vision is essential. Leaders then must create a process of doing business for the entire organization. Leaders must lead by example with candor, optimism and integrity. Leaders must lead from the front. They must get the views and input from all levels of the organization. They must communicate often and openly both inside and out. Innovation and change must be not only accepted, but embraced. They must prepare and practice for the unexpected. They can learn how to navigate difficult situations from the examples set by those who have gone before them.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methods

In the fall of 2009, in the face of one of the worst financial crises since the Great

Depression, the state of Indiana's government faced overwhelming shortfalls in revenues.

Although K-12 education spending made up over half of the state's budget, up until this time it

had been spared from cutbacks in funding. In December 2009, Governor Mitch Daniels

announced that he could no longer continue funding education at its present levels and that an

across the board 3.5%, or specifically $300 million, would be cut from the state's K-12 education

budget (Carden, 2009).

To only exacerbate matters, this 3.5% figure was based on the assumption of full funding,

which had not yet occurred. In some cases this caused the cuts to be actually closer to 5% of

actual monies received. In addition, this cut to funding would lower the base rate in the funding

formula for 2011, which would mean less funding in the subsequent years to come, even if state

shortfalls in revenue were to be recouped. Lastly, these cuts would have to be made from the

General Fund, which is primarily used for employee compensation and benefits (Ellis, 2010;

Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation, 2010).

At one time, in one instance, all 293 superintendents in the state of Indiana were faced

with exactly the same crisis – the requirement to make dramatic cuts and reorganizations to their

budgets. The purpose of this study was to determine what the most highly effective leaders did

during these difficult times to be successful. This study did not specifically delve into the minutia of funding formulas and accounting wizardry. However, the intention of the study was to investigate and inquire into the philosophies, mindsets, and behaviors of the most highly effective superintendents in the state of Indiana in the face of what could be an insurmountable crisis.

Research Questions

1. What is the leadership philosophy of highly effective leaders during difficult times?

2. What leadership behaviors do highly effective leaders exhibit during difficult times?

3. What are the differences, if any, between highly effective leadership and highly effective leadership during difficult times?

Methodology

The methodology of this study was qualitative. "Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data; it builds grounded theory" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 150). Basically in essence, qualitative inquiry is "asking questions about people's lives, the social and cultural contexts in which they lived, and the ways they understood their worlds" (Merriam, 2009, p. 6). Creswell (2003) describes the fact that qualitative studies allow for both analysis and interpretation to occur simultaneously. Through on-site interviews, this study sought to draw conclusions and theories from the most highly effective superintendents as to their similar, or different, leadership philosophies and behaviors during difficult times.

This research follows a similar pattern to research by Collins (2001). Collins (2001) looked to identify which distinct attributes set great organizations apart. Likewise, the lens of

this study was phenomenological looking to identify the experiences and distinctions that make these leaders outliers in their field (Merriam, 2009).

Moustakas (1994) laid out the methodology for doing such phenomenological research. First, a question should be formulated. There should then be an extensive review of all pertinent literature on the topic. This literature review should determine if the study is of an original nature. Scientific criteria should be established to identify research subjects. In-depth structured interviews should be conducted with each subject. Follow up interviews may be necessary to confirm aggregate findings or question new information brought up in subsequent interviews. The research data is then analyzed and organized into common themes. The common themes are then summarized and the distinct findings of the study are enumerated. The significance of the findings are then explained and possible areas of further research are suggested (Moustakas, 1994).

Procedures

The design of this study involved the following procedures. First, data was collected from polling the leadership at the IDOE, the boards and directors of Indiana's educational leadership professional organizations, and educational leadership faculty at Indiana's colleges and universities. From this polling (Appendix A), Indiana's most highly effective superintendents were identified. From this data, five highly effective superintendents were selected on the basis of geographic region, demographic and socioeconomic make-up of the district, experience, and gender in an attempt to provide the greatest cross-section of highly effective leaders. Using the 2009 Indiana K-12 budget cuts as a uniform crisis faced by all public school superintendents, the leadership philosophy and behaviors of these highly effective superintendents was determined by on-site, structured interviews.

Data Sources

The sources of data, the pool of superintendents to be possibly researched, were determined through the polling of educational leaders throughout the state of Indiana. This data was verified through the various respondents to insure an unbiased selection of candidates. A tally of the identified highly effective superintendents was recorded.

From that data pool, highly effective leaders to be interviewed were then selected through purposeful sampling, a method of predetermining the most useful subjects for the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Purposeful sampling was done in an effort to choose the subjects that were most valuable for the study, and thus guaranteeing the widest possible cross-section of highly effective leaders. Factors that were used as conditions of selection included geographic region, demographic and socioeconomic make-up of the district, experience, and gender. In all, five superintendents were selected.

Data Collection Process

Data was gathered through on-site, face-to-face interviews with the identified and selected highly effective superintendents. Each interview lasted approximately two hours. The interviews followed a standardized protocol (Appendix F). Questions were asked in the same order with each subject, with possible follow-up questions as a result of the subject's responses. Each interview was taped using an audio recording device. Each interview was then transcribed by the researcher in its entirety.

The confidentiality of the human subjects was insured through coding. Their names, locations, and any other overtly identifiable characteristics was changed or omitted during the transcription process.

Data Analysis

The basis of the analysis was phenomenological (Merriam, 2009). The study looked for distinct patterns that appear in highly effective superintendents' leadership philosophies and behaviors. Using the literature reviews in-depth study of a) effective leadership, b) data on effective leaders, and c) best practice in crisis management, this researcher attempted to triangulate, or use multiple methods, to gain knowledge of the phenomena of highly effective leaders (Denzin & Lincon, 2005). These different categories of analysis were coded thematically as patterns emerged. At all times, as new categories occurred or themes appearred, confidentiality was respected and preserved in all matters to insure the anonymity of the human subjects.

Establishing Validity and Reliability

Merriam (2009) stated that "all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner" (p. 209). This was assured by using proven methods and tactics.

Validity means that the findings of the research actually mirror what is occurring in reality (Merriam, 2009). Validity can be achieved through triangulation which is affirmed by numerous sources (Creswell, 2003; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009). In this study, triangulation, using multiple methods of analysis, was achieved through analyzing the interviews against the different facets of the literature review. In addition, member checking (Creswell, 2003) was used. Member checking is a process of taking the refined cumulative findings and asking the subjects to then critique them for accuracy. In this case, the subjects reviewed and responded to the generalized findings from the composite data of the individual interviews and confirmed the findings.

At the conclusion of the interviews, the data was combined and an initial set of summary findings was compiled. The process consisted of analyzing each interview and its raw findings against the others. Through this process, common habits, themes, behaviors, and characteristics became clear.

This initial list of the characteristics of highly effective leaders was sent to the five subjects (Appendix G). They looked over the initial summary findings and were asked to make comments, corrections, or suggestions. Each of the five said that each of the 23 characteristics was representative of their leadership style. Two actually thought that it was a written description of their own personal style and did not initially realize that it was the compilation of all five.

Reliability means that the results and findings could be replicated if the study were done again (Merriam, 2009). Reliability was achieved through using a standardized interview process, consistent coding, objective analysis, and meticulous recording of the data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

However, perhaps most important, Merriam (2009) notes, "To a large extent, the validity and reliability of a study depend on the ethics of the investigator" (p. 228). In addition to conducting this study with the utmost integrity and ethical standards of research, this researcher was constantly vigilant to any biases, leanings, orientations that were consciously or subconsciously present. This purposeful effort and self-reflection is known as reflexivity (Denzin & Lincon, 2005; Merriam, 2009).

Summary

This chapter established the design of the research for this study to determine what highly effective leaders do during difficult times. It included the research questions, methodology,

procedures, data sources, data collection process, data analysis, and validity and reliability assurances. Chapter 4 presents the findings of this research. Chapter 5 provides the analysis and conclusions to be drawn from the research, as well as implications for future studies.

CHAPTER 4

Findings of the Study

In addition to extensive research of pertinent literature on the subject, the researcher

looked to identify and interview the most highly effective school superintendents in the state of

Indiana in regards to their responses, characteristics, and behaviors during the recent state

mandated school budget cuts and other difficult times. The researcher contacted the senior

administrative staff of the IDOE, the educational leadership faculty of Indiana's public

universities, and the leadership of Indiana's educational professional organizations. The

researcher polled these educational experts to identify five to 10 of the most highly effective

superintendents in the state, true outliers. Only two respondents identified 10. Most respondents

only identified five or less. Through polling these educational authorities, experts, and leaders

across the state, 10 superintendents from the 293 public school corporations were tabbed as

being the most highly effective school leaders. From those 10, five had scores and

recommendations that further distinguished them as outliers among this group. With the

overwhelming distinction of these individuals and a suitable diversity of background and

demographics, as mentioned in Chapter 3, those five were selected as the subjects of this study.

Structured interviews were set up and conducted face-to-face, on-site in their offices with each of

these school leaders. These interviews, which lasted from 50 minutes to two hours, followed the

protocol in Appendix F. Upon completion of the interviews, a compilation of summary findings

was provided to the subjects. The subjects then provided feedback through member checking to assure that the findings were representative of the group.

Participants

Achieved through the initial polling and recommendations, the make up the subjects was varied. One was female. Two had served as high school principals. One was an elementary school principal. Two surprisingly were never building principals. Even more interesting, one of the five not only was never a principal, but was never even a K-12 classroom teacher. Four held a doctoral degree. One was an Army veteran. One coached college basketball. Only one's entire career had been spent in the same district. Four of the five started their careers in relatively small districts. All had early meaningful positions and opportunities that they credited as crucibles and test labs for their leadership styles and acumen. Their experience in the role of superintendent, as a chief executive officer, ranged from as little as three years to almost 30.

The location of the subjects was also of note. One subject was in northwestern Indiana. One subject was in southwestern Indiana. Two of the subjects were in the metro Indianapolis area, or central part of Indiana. One was from the east central area of the state. Three of the locations were metropolitan urban areas, while one was a town and the other suburban. The district sizes varied from just over 5,000 students to almost 23,000 students.

To protect the confidentiality of the school leaders, all subjects are referred to in the male gender. Quotations were only altered for readability and to insure the anonymity of the subject and persons and schools mentioned by the subject.

Summary of the Interviews and Observations

Superintendent One (S1). S1 is the leader of one of the largest school districts in the state. Located in a large city, it has over 22,000 students and a poverty rate of over 50%. The

district is predominately White at 74%. He was also the subject with the least experience as a chief executive. However, that is not to say that he was short on leadership experience. In his 20-year career, he served as a classroom teacher, varsity basketball coach, athletic director, assistant principal, principal, and assistant superintendent. He served in districts both small and large. His tenure as principal was spent at a suburban moderately-sized high school and then at one of the largest high schools in Indiana. The budget cuts in S1's district did not affect student programs, or teachers. No one was laid off. The majority of the cuts were achieved through finding efficiencies, divesting real estate, strategic use of the different funds, and stopping practices that had nothing to do with the core business of the district. S1 personally took a cut in pay.

S1 described himself as a "learner, always seeking new knowledge, looking to better myself." He felt that the best leadership is helping the leaders around you grow.

When asked about his leadership style, he described himself as not being a micro-manager. He felt that a leader should hire smart people with similar interests as his own and let them do their jobs. He said, "I am going to hold people accountable, but you have to give people the latitude to innovate. You can stifle creativity very quickly and you have to create an innovative organization." S1 further remarked, "Innovation. We don't know what innovation looks like. If I could tell you, it wouldn't be innovation. You have to give the best people the ability to innovate."

He also said that "leadership evolves and I think you experiment" and there are all kinds of effective styles. He felt that he was a blend of styles and that a leader has to find the style that fits him and the situation best. He said, "Situations require different kinds of leadership and the primary issue of leadership is how you deal with specific situations." He went on to say that in

his mind that was one of the factors that differentiates effective and ineffective leaders. The less effective leaders in many cases do not use the right style of leadership that fits them or the situations. It has to be a style that makes the leader comfortable and confident.

He told a story about early in his career when he was a varsity basketball coach. He tried to emulate coaches that he looked up to, including former Indiana coach Bob Knight. Finding himself frustrated and uncomfortable, he came to this realization,

> I am not Bob Knight. I don't feel good about this. This is not the type of leader I want to be. I am not a moody person. I don't want people to 'tip-toe' around me. Through your own maturation process you come to realize that there are types of leaders you don't want to be like. I would be a much better coach today.

He said this did not mean there were not times when he could be matter-of-fact and felt that you should always be clear and decisive, but again that there were different ways of getting there and it had to fit the leader and situation.

He went on to say, "The most important thing that I can do as a leader is model for others." He felt that it was vitally important that leaders set the tone for their organizations.

> Organizations…leadership to me is about creating solutions, and too often people make excuses. People will complain, criticize. That's not leadership. Leadership is looking at the circumstances and creating the solutions that will allow an organization to move forward during times of uncertainty.

One of the ways S1 models was in his decision making process.

> I will push on things. I think it is irresponsible to stop on the surface. I think that you have to be able to ask and answer the hard questions. If you do that, you can avoid a lot of the pitfalls. If you haven't vetted it and been willing to really challenge it, I don't

think you will get the best solution. I like to let things ruminate. I am not going to allow things to rush me to a decision I am not ready to make. However, if you think you are always going to get consensus on everything, you are wrong. I will circle the wagons a few times, but when it's time to go, it's time to go. You have to be decisive.

S1 also talked to the power of relationships and trust. He said that groundwork needed to be laid with all stakeholder groups and your integrity can never be doubted. He said the real question was, "Do people have that confidence to stand behind you and say that we know you are going to lead us in the right way?" S1 was able to see this philosophy come to fruition in real life. On the advent of the state budget cuts, the state teacher's union representative was interviewed by the local paper, asking if the teachers were unnerved by the impending cuts. S1 said, "One of the biggest compliments ever for me was to hear (the union representative) say, 'we trust our superintendent and he will lead us through this.'"

In contrast, S1 spoke about another issue involving relationships and trust, a situation in which during the budget cuts a particular facet was poorly executed by a member of his team.

It highlighted for me how important it is to be able to trust people and the work they do, to have people with integrity and real focus, because, frankly, I was lied to and the person who did that is no longer here. If you can't trust someone, they can't be around.

S1 also had one final thought on relationships and leadership,

The thing that concerns me the most is people's unwillingness to tell you what you need to hear. I value that a lot. I want to foster that type of culture. You have to have people who are willing to tell you the hard stuff. And, you have to be open to it.

S1 has a wide network of professional contacts.

I spend a lot of time with corporate CEOs, (Superintendent of Public Instruction) Tony Bennett, and the governor. I believe that the more you expose yourself to, the better you are going to be. All that is critical to becoming better in what it is we want to do. Usually business leaders look at educators like we don't have a clue of what goes on in their world. You need to be able to speak their language. That helps in your leadership ability.

When the questioning turned to difficult times, and more specifically the 2009 budget cuts, S1 quickly responded, "First, we are always preparing. You prepare for downturns constantly focusing on efficiencies and ways to save money and positioning yourself where you know where those cost savings are at." He further elaborated, "Right now, if we would have to cut more money I have some ideas of where we could do that."

S1 did not consider the budgets cuts a crisis. "Businesses deal with this stuff all the time," he noted. "It was unprecedented, so I think it's fair to call it a crisis, but I didn't define it as one. A gunman in a school, that's a crisis," he added. Not only did S1 not see the budget cuts as a crisis, but instead as an opportunity saying,

> It was an exciting time. It challenged our leadership and our leadership team. It helped us define our core mission. That was protecting the learning environment for our kids. Today if the state said that you can have all of your money back, what would we bring back? Not a single thing.

S1 defined his role during the budget cuts in this way,

> I had to quickly zero people in our core mission. I had to establish that right away. If not, everyone will have their own opinion about how they will be affected. They will begin jockeying for resources and advocating for across the board cuts that make

everyone feel the pain and diffuse the focus. We had work to do and we had to get

ourselves in a position to do the work.

S1 quickly held a news conference the day the cuts were announced stating,

Here's our core business: children, student programs, teachers, and the work happening

in our classrooms. For us to cut those things while other things are on the table would be

irresponsible. If we can find ways to protect our core mission, it is our duty to do so.

S1 added, "People fund schools to educate students, not to pay to get the lawn cut. Teachers and

student programs were off limits." S1 said that people, especially the press, at first tried to find

loopholes asking, "What about full-day kindergarten, sports, or music programs?" S1 simply

said those things are "off the table and including the things that affect student programs are off

the table." He reflected, "I saw this as a way to differentiate ourselves. If we could do this while

others were cutting programs, it could be a great opportunity for us to grow."

When asked how his day or week changes during difficult times, S1 responded, "Your

attention during those times changes." He said that his direct involvement in the operations of

the district in terms of direction and frequency intensified. He explained, "I typically get weekly

financial updates. During the budget cuts I was getting that stuff daily." He did not, however,

think that he had a "special" style that he put in place during difficult times, however he

commented, "True leadership is tested during these kinds of time. We now have to adjust to a

new setting. We now have to act. You have to have established that kind of rapport and

groundwork ahead of time."

S1 did say the one thing that did change was the length of days. Typically, he came to

work, did what needed to be done, and went home. During the budget crisis, he stated that there

was a lot more that needed to be done. "We (the leadership) were meeting daily. We were

meeting for hours. Everything else was put on hold. That was the priority. We had to move quickly. We pulled all that off in about two weeks."

However even in this he saw a bright side,

It was a learning opportunity. We spent a lot of time together and we were educating our leadership team on what we were doing. It was a professional development experience. There are a lot of people who became well versed in finance. The language has even changed. We now have people saying, 'well that's not part of our core business.'

S1 continued,

If you look at things positively, you take advantage of a crisis. It allows you to get buy-in where other times you may not. You can frame issues in a way where things are difficult to object to. It's hard to argue when it's an issue of priorities.

When the question of keeping up morale during difficult times was raised, S1 replied, "It's important that you try to exude a high level of confidence. However, that doesn't happen during that time. It happens before. Groundwork is very important."

When asked where he thought other leaders made mistakes during this and other difficult times, S1 responded in this way,

If I was a board member and I heard our leader making excuses that would be the first sign that we had the wrong leader. That would be where I would really struggle. It is all about having confidence and moving forward.

Superintendent 2 (S2). S2 is the superintendent of a semi-urban school district on the fringe of a large city. His district has a diverse student population of just over 11,000 students and a poverty rate right at 50%. The district is very diverse with African Americans making up the largest demographic at 43%. S2's district did not have to cut effective student programs or

staff during the budget cuts. They were able to realize savings through consolidating underutilized facilities and creating one school uniform calendar for all of their schools. They had previously had two calendars. He described their actions in regards to the budget cuts as "streamlining."

S2 has been a superintendent for 27 years. Prior to that, he served as an assistant superintendent for four years. However, S2 never served as a building principal. S2 commented,

> Because of that, I have always made sure that people around me have building level experience. Although I have been doing this for a long time now and think that I know what goes on, I never want to discount that ground level perspective.

Through the course of his career, S2 served in small, medium, and large sized districts. When asked if that varied experience contributed to his leadership today, S2 recalled experience he received early as a central office administrator, "In small districts you do it all. I did transportation at 28 years old. You do a lot of different things and that was great experience when I became a superintendent."

At that point, S2 paused and reflected,

> I tell you what else I learned. I had to learn how to delegate and not be afraid to hand things over, but it's not just delegating. It's effective follow up as well. I think with leaders the ability to effectively use the people who work with them varies tremendously. I tell my people you take things as far as you are comfortable taking them and then see me. I really try to empower them to handle as much as they are comfortable and then when they need direction to come to me. Frequently, we have bright people who work with us and we don't utilize their talents because we want to control what they do. I

structure, but I also believe that everyone in senior management should set goals, too. You have to hire the very brightest you can find, and while you monitor, you've got to let them run their part of the organization.

S2 did say that it is possible to over-delegate and mentioned that he had a standing order that if people thought that he had given them too much to do that they should come to him. He would then identify the priorities and take something off of their plate.

From a leadership point of view, S2 had some very strong thoughts on what makes an effective leader,

You have to decide when you become the leader if you are going to play the part, or do the work. We all play the part a little bit, but by in large; you've got to be doing the work. You don't have to have all the answers, but you need to know how orchestrate a process that gets you the best answers and recommendations.

S2 described his leadership style as "forthright and direct." He said that he thought the people who work with him like this because they always know where they stand. Although, he is forward and not afraid to share his opinion that does not mean that he is ill-tempered. S2 remarked, "You would have to hang out here a long time to hear me raise my voice. When people make mistakes we deal with it. We've all made mistakes. It's part of being a learner."

When further questioned about these aspects of his leadership style, S2 felt that maybe what he was saying was that he was completely honest in his appraisal of things and that appraisal was usually right on. He attributed this perspective to experience and humility. He thought that this style worked particularly well for him because, "They all know I have no ego in this."

S2 felt strongly about being approachable as a leader. He said that whenever his door was open people were welcome and that people were in and out of his office all day long. However, he felt that as a leader being approachable takes on a whole new meaning. You have to put yourself in positions were you can be approached. He explained,

> I visit classrooms every week. I don't think you can run a learning organization from the corner office. When you are a superintendent, things are filtered. When I visit a building, it helps me. You've got to be out in those buildings to understand what issues you are facing. It gives them an audience with me.

When asked how he thought others would describe his leadership style, S2 replied,

> Obviously I think they would say that I am straightforward and I will give my honest appraisal. They would also tell you that I run a very effective organization. Our scores for an urban district are pretty good. All of our elementary schools made AYP. I think they would also say with me it's about the process, not a program.

He went on,

> I tend not to follow. One of my colleagues said to me, 'You've always been the lone wolf.' I am typically not going to do what everyone else does. Not because I am contrary, but because I see things in a different way. I am very focused on data. I am not much for the 'flavor of the month' stuff. Maybe it's great, but it's not what we need.

S2 again came back to the way he approaches his work,

> I am different in that I just am different. I tend to confront things. I believe you owe people your honest appraisal. You've got to be willing to do your share of the dirty work, instead of putting it off on subordinates. But at the same time, I have a real handle

on how to oversee the organization without micromanaging. Experience has taught me

that.

When the questioning turned to his approach to the budget cuts of 2009, S2 responded,

I have a fiscal perspective always. You ought not to spend tax dollars you don't need to

spend. I am very fiscally conservative. You don't spend everything you bring in.

You've got to save for when times get tough. I think it was something we all knew was

coming. It was just a matter of when it fell.

S2 felt that hopefully most leaders in charge of large public budgets would feel the same

way also; however from a leadership perspective he felt that his approach might be different, and

perhaps make him somewhat distinctive.

I don't really spend much time on drama. I don't wring my hands and say, 'Oh, what are

we going to do?' I am already thinking about solutions. I am a very solution focused

person. I don't entertain much drama from my staff. This is just something we have to

accept and live through.

S2 said by approaching problems in this way, he was almost immediately able to start

looking at the bright side. He remarked, "I was able to look at it as an opportunity to deal with

some things that politically we could not have dealt with."

After that, S2 felt that it was important to get his plan out as quickly as possible. He

reinforced this by saying,

People needed to know exactly what was going to happen. If your teaching force is

quaking in their boots that they may not have a job, they are not going to be focusing on

kids. So, we lose big time!

At the same time, S2 wanted to make clear that just any plan was not the answer. He said that in these situations sometimes leaders will come out quickly with an easy plan that is easy to implement, but it does not address the entire problem, or does not focus on the important things, and therefore hurts everything. S2 quipped, "It is easy to be a leader if you say 'yes' to everything, but there comes a time when you can't." When asked for an example, he said that he was talking about things like across the board budget cuts or reductions in staff, programs, and resources in a uniform manner. S2 explained, "We need to make good decisions, rather than just any decision."

S2 said that one of the first things he did almost immediately was get his senior management team together and draft the parameters. He stated the "non-negotiables," the guiding principles on which they would not compromise. They would tie their recommendations for budget cuts into their core values. He also told them, "Problems are an opportunity to demonstrate our best efforts and when things like this happen, you have to see them as opportunities to get things done that you could not do politically otherwise." Then, S2 gave his team one more piece of advice, "If you stop the average guy on the street would he understand why we made those decisions and did they make sense?" S2 remarked, "I made it a team effort, but it was my job to do the hard work of how we frame the recommendations and run the process. I needed to carry the sword."

When S2 made his recommendations they were straightforward and easy to understand. He entitled his presentation, "Peeling the Onion." At the center of the onion was the classroom, and everything else would be cut before the work in the classroom was affected. The main points of his recommendations were to close two elementary schools and create one uniform calendar for all schools. S2 explained,

We looked at things that were not essential. We were running two calendars. It was costing us a fortune. We had too much space. It was an opportunity to consolidate and do some things that made sense. We had two board meeting and two open work sessions where we explained the plan. No one ever said that it was a bad idea. I think it is because they could see what we were doing. We streamlined. As you unpeel the onion, they see you are trying to save teachers. It has been very well received. We have made things better with our reductions.

S2 then talked about the power of communication and leadership during difficult times. He stated,

When you have a crisis, people want to know that you are confident about what you are going to do. Otherwise, they lose trust that you know what you are doing. Once we knew what we were doing, we got our plan out right away. As soon as we knew answers, we posted them on our website.

He and his leadership team personally presented the plans at each of the schools. S2 made the presentations at the two schools that he was recommending closure. He put it this way, "Those people should have the opportunity to be mad at me." In addition, they held community dialogues and open houses in all the schools. S2 would make a presentation to all assembled and then he and his leadership team would set up tables and answer questions in small groups. S2 pointed out, "This way everybody gets their questions answered." S2 also explained there was a hidden benefit in this strategy. It was a learning opportunity for his leadership team because in order to lead the small group discussions, they had to become intimately familiar with the current state of affairs and the new plan of action.

S2 had more to say about leadership, communication, and visibility during difficult times,

You have to be transparent. People are always going to think it's a backroom deal.

That's why it is so important to focus on how you are communicating the message. I sat

with those teachers [in the buildings being closed] while they cried. I hugged them and

did all those things. They could tell it wasn't a recommendation I wanted to make, but it

was the right decision. In difficult times, you have to have more public meetings.

Dealings get magnified in times of crisis. It boils down to what people think. In a crisis,

it's what you communicate and how you communicate it. Do you communicate strength

or do you communicate drama?

However, S2 was quick to point out that visibility and communication were not a "crisis" thing

and the leader just can't become visible overnight. He put it this way, "When you become the

new superintendent, at the end of six months no one should wonder who the new superintendent

is." He stated that he thought many leaders underestimated that role in which they can drive

their communities' thinking.

When asked what role a leader plays in a crisis, S2 had voluminous thoughts,

What tells about leadership is what you do in a crisis and how you respond. People will

look for a plan. That plan has to be drama free and clearly communicated. You have to

have empathy for those impacted by your decisions. You have to let people be upset with

you. You have to show that caring concern even as you are carrying out the business

plan. People need you to lead. They don't want you to whine or tell them how hard it is.

They don't care how hard it is. You get paid the most money. People expect you to lead.

That's what people expect leaders to do in a crisis.

When asked if his leadership style shifted or changed during a time of crisis, S2 did not

feel that he had a particular style that he enacted. S2 responded, "If you are focused on action,

your style easily adjusts." He said that there may be a "crisis mode" that you go into, meaning longer hours and more meetings, but in his case his leadership style and focus does not change. He said, "As always, the goals of the district drove the decisions."

When asked about mentors, S2 said that, of course, he had mentors as he was coming up through the ranks, but at this point in career, "The people I listen to the most are my senior management people. I feel so confident in my senior management and they have good thinking and good reason." S2 also added that this empowers them as well.

When asked about leadership, he remarked,

I am obsessed with it. I tend to read books about leaders. It's all about leadership. I always think there is a lot to learn from history about people who have proven to be good leaders. I am looking for those people as leaders who are humble and approachable and care about service. It's about servant leadership. When it becomes about us, we have missed the mark.

When asked where he thought other leaders may struggle in difficult times, he first spoke of personal lessons and skills he has gained from past difficult times.

Just do your job and don't read blogs. Difficult times build resilience as a leader. Crisis builds adaptability. No plan works in every situation. I have learned a lot about dealing with the media. I have learned the value of my words. When in doubt to say more or less, always say less. You have to stay strong. Sometimes you just have to survive it. You don't have the luxury as the person in the spotlight to have drama. Nobody cares. Eventually, we all take our turn in the dunk tank.

When he began to speak about where other leaders fail during difficult times, he took a broad perspective and began speaking about what it takes to succeed versus fail,

I think that being a leader over the next 10 years is going to be a difficult time. The leaders that will survive are those that can adapt to a new environment. Take No Child Left Behind, for example. There are those that have spent eight years wringing their hands instead of trying to do something about it. Whether you like accountability or benchmarks doesn't matter, because it's coming. We have to begin to get people to understand and acclimated to the new environment. Instead, I see a reaction against it. The point is that it is coming. When a crowd forms you have to decide if you want to get in front of it and lead it like a parade or have it trample you. I would rather frame the conversation than have it happen to me. I would rather have the conversation about substantive issues than complain. You have to give people experiences and help them prepare for change, not just complain. Sometimes you have to help people swallow the castor oil to understand that in the end they are going to be better for it.

Superintendent 3 (S3). S3 is the superintendent of a metropolitan school district with 64% of its students living in poverty. The district is very diverse with just over 60% of the students being White. S3 anticipated the coming financial unrest. His district closed three schools and passed a referendum before the budget cuts even happened. He explained that he essentially put his district in a position to "right the ship and weather the storm" before the storm even hit. By creating a "new normal" ahead of time, the uncertain financial times did not cause an emergency or crisis in his district.

S3 describes himself as "atypical" of the superintendents in the state of Indiana. He was never a classroom teacher, nor a building administrator. The story of S3's career path illustrates this point.

When S3 was near the end of his undergraduate career with a major in education, it became apparent to him that he would be drafted upon graduation. Once drafted, he applied for Officer Candidate School and was selected. After four years, he left the United States Army attaining the rank of Captain. At that time, his fiancée was studying at the University of Pennsylvania. He enrolled there in a future educational leaders program that allowed him to study at the Wharton Graduate School of Business while pursuing a doctorate in education. After he completed a master's degree worth of courses at Penn, they returned to Indiana, where he completed his doctoral degree in educational leadership at Ball State in Muncie, Indiana.

Upon graduation from the doctoral program, he was hired by his present school district as the business manager because of his experiences as an Army officer and business acumen gained at Wharton. He has been employed there ever since. As the years passed, he was subsequently given more and more responsibilities, such as personnel and due process. Eventually he was named associate superintendent, and in the fall of 1995, was asked by the board to assume the role of superintendent. He has now held that position since 1996.

S3 spoke at length on leadership.

My leadership style is somewhat situational. Different situations require different kinds of leadership. Though, I never rely on position power. I've never said because of my position you must do this. My default, however, is usually one in which I rely a great deal upon my knowledge base and problem-solving to get a task accomplished. However, there are times that you have to rely on interpersonal relationships. There are some decisions that you don't need a committee. There are others that are so important that they require lots of dialogue. You get better at discerning which is needed. It's one of the things that experience teaches you.

Knowledge base and experience are the best combination. When I took a class, it was my goal to get the highest grade in class, to learn as much as I could. You never know when you will need something that you studied. It builds schema. You are then just always looking for the exception and can just modify your schema. You don't have to redo the entire thing. You just adjust.

S3 mentioned other keys to effective leadership. A leader must have compassion and a passion for the work and people around him. He said it was essential to always remain positive "about the situation, the people, and their motives. No one likes to work with Debbie Downer." He said that you must care about people and treat them as you would like to be treated. He called this "golden rule leadership."

S3 also talked about modeling and leadership. "I cannot tell you the importance I place upon modeling behavior. Why do I use the taskforce? Because I saw it modeled well by someone else." He said that as the leader it was his job to set the tone for the entire organization.

They look at you and say, 'what are we going to do?' When you are confronted with a serious matter, it is extraordinarily important that a leader remain calm, have a plan and assure people that things are okay. Maintain a sense of hope.

He said that if the leader cannot model this behavior for his staff and those around him, that in effect all is lost.

S3 spoke about the interaction between him and his staff.

I rely a great deal on my administrative staff. I don't like to be micromanaged, nor to micromanage people. I give my administrative staff a lot of leeway. I don't interfere a lot, but I do ask a lot of questions. I have an opinion about things, but would prefer to ask questions.

S3 went on to say that he encouraged his staff to be free thinking and problem solvers. When asked how he encouraged this type of behavior, S3 replied,

> I almost never say 'No' to my staff. It is important to say 'Yes' if you can. Finding ways to 'Yes' is important. You cannot acknowledge staff too much. Part of the way you do this is by building relationships with people one at a time. It's a compliment when any employee in the school district feels like they can come talk to you.

S3 then spoke to the power of visibility and on-site monitoring. "Get out in the buildings. That's the best piece of advice I ever got." S3 makes a concerted effort to "get in the trenches" whenever possible. He also challenges his principals to do the same. In order to get them in classrooms more often, he committed to being in one of the school buildings each day. He felt that lesser effective leaders become too comfortable getting information as it is reported to them, instead of collecting it firsthand. S3 sets up "listening posts" when he visits schools and offices. He makes it known he will be in a location and camps out there, so staff have unfettered access to him. From this, he gets ground level perspective of the culture and climate of the district with his own eyes and ears.

When asked how he thought he may differ from other leaders, S3 remarked, "I think I am more reflective than most superintendents. I seldom react. I never give control of my button to somebody else. I may be upset, but no one will ever know I am upset." He went on,

> I like to ruminate on things. I try to avoid being placed in a position where I am forced to make a decision before I am ready. If I have to make a decision instantaneously, it will not be of the quality that I would like. If it is a really, really important decision I will not make it that day.

S3 was asked how he thought others may describe him as a leader. "I am an effective listener. I try to hear people out and get their point of view. I have a core set of values and principles that guide my decisions."

He again referred to the power of modeling. He felt his staff would say it is easy to make decisions and take actions in his absences because "they know where I stand on things."

When speaking to the role of the leader during a difficult time, S3 could not overstate the importance of remaining calm. He felt the leader needed to have a plan and assure people that things are okay. He said that a leader's job is to maintain a sense of hope, but above all "You don't panic. The superintendent is just the safety valve. The superintendent is like the cartilage in the knee. Our job is to make the system work in spite of itself."

When asked how he personally approached a difficult time, S3 said that best way to handle a crisis was to avoid it all together.

> I think I plan ahead a whole lot better than the overwhelming majority of superintendents. I like to think that I have a pretty good pulse of the future and what's going to happen. We passed a referendum in anticipation of financial unrest. We anticipated. I think I anticipate better. We closed three schools ahead of time and weathered the storm. We were able to right the ship.

He elaborated,

> You try to avoid crisis. I tell my people I need a heads up as soon as possible. The more lead time you have the better chance you have to come up with a better solution. Time is so important.

S3 said that in order to avoid a crisis or handle difficult times, complicated issues have to be addressed.

When confronted with a complex problem, you divide it up into smaller problems and
look for optimal solutions for the smaller problems. That takes time. The way to tackle
any big task is to break it down into smaller pieces. If I can resolve this part of it, in
many cases, the rest of it begins to fall in place.

He said he felt that this is where some less effective leaders falter. They fail to break
down problems, and instead are intimidated and defeated by the shear perceived enormity of the
task at hand. "They think 'I am going to procrastinate because I do not want to tackle that big
task.' They avoid addressing issues because they think that they are too complex."

S3 said that he, at his age, did not really have any professional mentors left, but "the
younger you are, and less experienced, the more you seek out mentors. However, I do still call
people and ask questions." S3 said that as a young Army officer, he had the good fortune of
serving with one of the nation's most decorated officers. This officer took interest in him and set
forth a great example of leadership. "I probably learned more about leadership from him than
anyone else. He was wonderful role model. He was a leaders' leader. He was an intelligent
thoughtful mission driven leader." S3 did, though, have leaders that he admired and sought to
emulate.

I am an avowed fan of John Dewey. I like principled people that have some integrity
about them. I am impressed with people who are able to accomplish great ideas through
their personal actions. Gandhi. Martin Luther King. I admire people who commit
themselves to improving the condition of mankind. The reason I am an administrator
today is because someone said that they thought I had something to offer and encouraged
me to pursue it.

When asked how he and the district approached the budget cuts, his answer was very simple. "Children are first" and he said under no circumstances would he deviate from that core focus, the stated mission of his district. He further commented that in times like these, "You have to look at the big picture. You have to remember the kind of opportunities that could be available for kids. It's about creating life changing opportunities for kids." He said that when the focus is this clear, the choices and decisions become easier to make and communicate. "I am going to protect programs and opportunities of kids. Then my next focus became saving people's jobs, so we looked to find efficiencies and handle as much as we could through attrition."

When it comes to important decisions that could affect the entire school community, S3 employs the use of taskforces. These taskforces include not only school leaders, but community leaders as well. S3 elaborated on his use of taskforces,

> The community here has accepted the decisions of the taskforces. We have used the taskforces to make critical decisions in the past. As the leader, I am inclined to take people where they ought to go, but whatever idea you have, it is better if you kick it around with other people. They will refine it.

S3 said that he felt there are opportunities and advantages to almost every situation, including difficult times. "It's an opportunity for change that you cannot accomplish under any other circumstances. It requires you to reevaluate everything you are doing. It forces you to put various [levels of] priorities on everything."

When asked where he thought leaders made other miscues and errors in difficult times, S3 had several observations. He was very critical of those who make decisions too quickly and without enough information.

Invariably those will be bad decisions. People will make decisions that are short term

solutions that will impair the long term position of the district. Out of sight, out of mind,

but it's going to recur again and again and again. It's an easy way out. Timing isn't

everything. It's just 90% of everything. I want to give myself as much time as possible.

What time buys you is information.

He also felt that ineffective leaders often resorted to the blame game. "It would be easy to try to

find people to blame, but there is nothing to be gained and everything to be lost."

S3 had a final thought on leadership, especially during a difficult time. It was a personal

leadership turning point from his days in the army. During Officer Candidate School, one of the

final graduation requirements was night navigation. The candidates were dropped off on one

side a swamp and were expected to reach a destination on the other side by morning. Those who

did not complete the course in the allotted time were given the choice of starting Officer

Candidate School over or dropping out. It was completely a pass or fail assignment and there

was no room for error. A candidate made it or he did not.

As S3 began navigating his way through the swamp on the way to the destination, he

came across a large area of water. He did a quick visual appraisal. The water would have to be

crossed. It was too wide to go around. S3 had a secret that he had not shared with his

commanders. He could not swim. He had not been asked and he did not tell. Now a large body

of water stood before him and graduation. At this point, he said that a sense of calm came over

him and he an epiphany, "You can only expect of yourself the very best you can do. And at that

point, whatever has to happen has to happen." He decided he would try to walk through the

water and see how far he could make it. He began wading in and eventually as he stood on his

toes near the middle of the water with only his nose and mouth out of the water, it began to drop

in depth. He crossed the first area and to his dismay several more bodies of water stood between him and his goal. However, each time he decided to wade in and each time just before he was covered by water, the depths would start to recede. He said that as the sun was rising, he made it to his appointed destination and graduated. Had he not, he said that he would have still been at peace because at that time there was nothing else he could have done and he had given his all. These years later, S3 still uses that epiphany, slightly altered, as his mantra. "For your own mental health, it is important to be proactive and know that you have given it your best. That's all you can ask of yourself."

Superintendent 4 (S4). S4 is the superintendent of a school district of a large town in east central Indiana.   His district has just 5,000 students and has almost 70% poverty. His district is predominately White at 75%. S4's district did not have to cut programs or teachers as a result of the 2009 budget cuts. He described their plan as "cost avoidances." He personally took a cut in pay.

S4 has been a superintendent for 20 years. He worked in both urban and rural settings. Prior to becoming a superintendent he was a high school principal. Before that he was named math department head after only two years as a classroom teacher. Academically, S4 has degrees and certifications from five separate colleges and universities. When describing his educational and leadership experiences, S4 also made note of the fact he had been the president of the chamber of commerce and chaired many local boards and that he considered teaching a leadership role.

When asked to describe his personal leadership style, S4 responded,

It's situational. I do try more collaborative, but sometimes you fall into authoritative.

Really though, you try to rise to the occasion. You bring your leadership into appropriate

response to the situation. If I am dealing with something that has long term ramifications, I try to gather many people around and work through their best ideas and decisions. I allow a lot of autonomy from those around me. I listen well. I try to respect the positions of leadership I have given those around me. I have also surrounded myself with people who are respectful of people and their needs. Lastly, even in the face of criticism and adversity, I look for opportunities.

S4 built on his last point about the opportunities in criticism and adversity. Not long after beginning his current position, a prominent program at a well respected university labeled his district a "dropout factory." S4 was embarrassed, humiliated, and enraged. He called the professor leading the program and shared his indignation at being singled out in such a way. However after some reflection, the next day he called the professor back. "To my surprise, he actually took a second call from me."

When S4 called back, his tone was different. S4 shared with the professor that he was seeking his help. He would welcome the attention to his district that the moniker "dropout factory" would bring, as long as the professor, his program, and the university would help address and fix the problem. Today, S4's district is recognized as a national model for dropout prevention and S4 is asked to speak and participate at a national level in the conversation. "It wouldn't have happened if I didn't take time to reflect and look for opportunities. You work through your initial response and get on with the business of rising to the next level." S4 went on.

That's just an indicator of how I move. My approach is not to hit a problem head on. It is to find the different angles and work though it, around it, over it, and under it. I have always had to work angles to get what I needed.

S4 said that his district was prepared for the financial crisis, although he did not consider it a crisis. "We had been preparing for 1 or 2%. We had planned accordingly. The size of the budget cuts did take us by surprise, but it did not cause a crisis for us."

S4 explained his methodology.

The first thing I did was meet with my finance director and began to calculate the impact. We had a community forum because it did mean we were going to have to do some things differently. Our first priority was to not cut student programs. We were not going to cut a student program if at all possible and we didn't. Our goal was to not let students feel the cuts. The second rung, if a program had to be cut, make sure it is away from the classroom. Mostly, our cuts were cost avoidances. We shifted to trimming some practices that were ineffective. If something's not working the way it was designed to work, let's tweak it so it does work, or let's get rid of it.

He also talked about communication and visibility. "You need to set up some means of getting the story out to address the rumor mill. Spend time in the buildings. During the budget reductions, that process was very productive."

S4 expounded on the role of a leader in a crisis, he did not feel there was much difference than in the way he led every day.

Keep your chin up when all about you are in despair. Promote the conversation that takes us to the next level. Maintain a consistent approach. Try not to hunker down. People look to the superintendent. You have students, teachers, and workers who need you. You can't allow yourself time for an emotional breakdown. I try to be as consistent with my routine as possible, especially in times of crisis. There are times that you just have to commiserate with people. You have to demonstrate that these challenges and terrible

events are not in control of the organization. The more consistent and forward looking

approach is in the best interest of all. Perspective is huge. You deal with what you can

and move forward as deliberately as possible. It always has to be a window, versus a

mirror, and you have to project the success outward. Attribute that to as many people as

you can.

The one thing that S4 did say was different about a crisis was the toll it takes on a leader

and those around him.

That challenges a leader. The real test is how do you recharge your batteries under those

circumstances. For me, it's being with family. Whatever works for you, you better do it.

You have to watch the physical toll it takes on you and in others. I am always mindful

and observant of the physical toll it takes on those around me. Your body tells you things

and you have to be observant.

S4 also spoke to the power of networks and relationships, in being an effective leader

during difficult times.

When you have relationships throughout the district and community they create the

networking you need to communicate the effort, and the urgency. They also provide

safety nets when the criticism becomes red hot. Had I not had the networks that I have, I

probably would have been asked to leave after my second year [the year his district was

labeled a dropout factory]. It's relationships with people. It's the one-on-one

relationships. Those networks have been so helpful and supportive in trying to weather

through these challenges. I have had so many conversations with all the groups and

networks that I am a part of. Because of that, the financial crisis has been understood by

my networks and they have generated support.

S4 did add something that was not a "crisis thing." He stated that a leader cannot start building relationships and creating a network once a crisis hits. To S4, it is an everyday part of leadership.

When asked if he thought there were any advantages to a crisis, S4 responded,

Oh my, gosh, yes! I think it helps define you. If you can look at your challenges and appreciate what that's done for you, not only are you modeling, you are growing. Challenges, although you may not welcome them, have benefits. A financial crisis is a great time to do some trimming. A financial crisis is a great time to add innovative programs. Outsourcing bus service and substitute teachers, I don't think I could have ran that by our board in financially flush times. I guess I think it shows you that you can do things you never thought possible. When people look at the situation as an emergency, and not just say urgent, they will find ways to make things happen.

The topic of challenges sparked S4 to talk about the opportunities in criticism as well.

I feel like it is the role of a leader to uphold legitimate criticism. I have been complimentary of the local newspaper for raising issues. I always recognize at board meetings that dissenting opinions, even if they are misinformed, are helpful to moving the conversation forward. I think we show that we not only can listen to criticism, but actually act on it in a positive way. That is leadership at its best. It is modeling an adaptive behavior for success and progress.

S4 said that he had many mentors and sought the counsel of his fellow superintendents. "We are mutually dependent on each other." He also said he looked up to political leaders in the spotlight. He looked up to people who have been able to accomplish great things under much scrutiny.

When asked where he thought some leaders struggled during difficult or trying times, S4 responded, "They isolate themselves. You can't do that when you are on the job. It's so easy to just close the door and say 'Hold my calls.'" S4 also commented that he thought leaders ran the risk of being ineffective when they did not properly break down problems or as he called it "work the angles." He said he is always concerned and troubled when people "jump to the easiest solution without looking around the corner and under the surface, failing to get that second opinion, failing to talk to your critics."

Additionally he felt that it would be difficult to be effective as a leader if the crisis was "created by your own actions. I would guess that management of that crisis by you would impossible." In this case, he spoke to actions of BP's CEO Tony Hayward after the oil spill when he said that "he wanted his life back from the inconveniences of the crisis in the face thousands of people having their lives ruined."

Superintendent 5 (S5). S5 is the superintendent of a suburban district outside of a large city. His district has over 6,000 students and a poverty rate just over 50%. The population is 80% White. S5's district was able to successfully navigate the budget crisis through cutting ineffective programs, divesting buildings, and seeking out new forms of revenue. S5's district did lose four teaching positions, but it was more aligning staff with enrollment than budgetary.

S5 has been in education for 39 years. He served in administration for 36 of those years. In just his second year of teaching he was tabbed to be a coordinator of a curricular team and from there went directly into the role of principal. At the time he was the youngest principal in the state of Indiana. At one point in his career, he was principal of two buildings at the same time. He then became assistant superintendent of the district and eventually superintendent. In 2000, he was hired into his present position. He attributes much of his success as leader to his

early experiences, especially in smaller districts. "I handled it all. You name it. Those

experiences have made me a better leader."

When asked to describe his leadership style, S5 said that first and foremost,

I am a strong collaborator. I believe in including as many stakeholders as possible on our

leadership team. I believe in building leadership capacity in all of our stakeholder

groups. We have a process in place to build leadership. I don't have much of an ego. I

like to think of myself looking for every opportunity I can to help people get better and

be stronger. I want to surround myself with the best people I can. I want them to be

smarter than me.

Asked to elaborate on collaboration, S5 had several thoughts.

Relationships are so, so important in this district, all the way down to our students. I

really believe in strong consensus building. It's not taking a vote. It's a discussion,

almost a spiritual occurrence. We are learning so much through the process. We have to

understand change. We go through the process deep enough to create new habits. How

do change your beliefs to form a new culture of learning? You focus on systemic

transformational change, not piece meal change. We couldn't just keep trying to add

piece meal change to a system that did not work.

S5 thought those around him would describe him this way. "I am fair. I care about them.

I want them happy in their position. I care about their families and as long as you work here,

your family comes first."

When asked how his district faced the budget crisis, S5 remarked,

This may sound crazy, but we looked at it as an opportunity. I could see this coming for

a while and we had done some things earlier to prepare for it. You've got to look at

every situation first as an opportunity. Then you can deal with the crisis in a much more positive manner. Heck, Katrina was the best thing that ever happened to New Orleans' public schools.

S5 saw his role as "the father of the district."

It was my responsibility to hold this district together and protect everything that was making a difference for students. Critics said to do away with new programs. Those were the things we were going to hold onto no matter what.

As he stated earlier, collaboration again played a major role in these decisions. "We pulled our leadership team together and defined the problem. It was a total community effort. I needed to be the one out front leading this, but we changed the plan based on community meetings."

S5 felt like he and his district already have a standard operating procedure that easily adapts to this and other crises. "We really had in place the systems that we need to address the crisis. We didn't do a lot of things differently than we normally do."

S5 mentioned several aspects to approaching the budgets that he thought were key.

You have to communicate very effectively. I felt the first thing on the list was that I took a 20% cut in pay. As a leader I had to step forward. If I was going to ask anyone in this district to take a cut, I had to lead by example. We then looked at ineffective programs. If we were going to have to cut that's where we were going to go first. We got very creative. The 'crisis' allowed us to use itself as a vehicle to cut ineffective programs and improve our district.

S5 was asked to elaborate on this.

I can spend my time and energy arguing with the legislature and governor or I can get to

work trying to figure out how to make our district better. Our goals for the district did

not shift. No, not at all. We just looked for opportunities on it could make us better. We

cut ineffective programs. We protected the classroom.

S5 said that they were now able to offer college credit through programs that would never have

happened unless they were forced to make cuts. They were able to close a building that was

nothing but a drain on their budget and also hastened the retirement of several employees.

S5 named his leadership team, principals, and teachers association as his mentors and

counsel. He thought this empowered them. He also tabbed Ronald Reagan as the leader he most

admired. "He could really relate to people, motivate people."

Although S5 was not as loquacious as his four counterparts in this research, where he did

expound was in the area of ineffective, short-sighted leadership.

Too many leaders get into 'woe is me' mode. They say that it's being done to me and

blame, blame, blame. Then, they simply focus on surviving instead of looking for an

opportunity. A lot of the cuts that have been made were made by boards and

superintendents with no input from stakeholders. Many school systems are hurt due to

the lack of leadership to look at this as an opportunity as a way to make the district better.

He then talked about what it took to succeed as a leader.

You are always planning and looking ahead to keep pitfalls from happening. If one does,

you plan in a way that you will never have that pitfall again. I think that in most crises, if

you have a system in place, it will work out. You've always got to be looking ahead. We

are already talking about the governor's education plan and how we are going to deal

with it. One of the things that drives me crazy is my colleagues' view of charter schools.

They have to start removing barriers from their mental models. I want opportunities for my students and they may not be in my schools. I look at every student in this district and have hope for a good life.

He then added that he also saw charter schools as a boon for his district. He said that he has paved the way for charter schools to open and is more than willing to help them. In that too he sought out opportunities for his district to benefit. In a time of decreasing budgets, S5 has found a way to generate revenue. "We are also going to lease them a building, provide them food service, and provide them bus transportation."

Key Findings of the Study

On-site interviews were conducted with five Indiana public school superintendents that were identified by educational leadership authorities as the most highly effective in the state. Using the budget cuts of 2009 as a uniform crisis faced by all school districts, these leaders were questioned regarding their leadership and their leadership during this crisis and other difficult times. After completing interviews, summary findings were distributed to the cohort of subjects for feedback to triangulate and provide additional validity and reliability of the data. Each subject confirmed the findings as a representation of their personal philosophy and leadership. This process was used to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the leadership philosophy of highly effective leaders during difficult times?

2. What leadership behaviors do highly effective leaders exhibit during difficult times?

3. What are the differences, if any, between highly effective leadership and highly effective leadership during difficult times?

The key findings of the study are arranged in three sections. These sections correspond with research questions. There is also a very fine line between philosophies and behaviors. In

some instances, part of a philosophy has been also noted a behavior and vice versa. The

philosophy and behaviors of these highly effective leaders were found to be very congruent.

Leadership Philosophy of Highly Effective Leaders During Difficult Times

Difficult times are seen as opportunities. To a person, each subject verbalized that in

crisis they saw opportunity. Whether it was an opportunity for growth, an opportunity to

reestablish priorities and frame the mission, or an opportunity do things that could not be done

politically otherwise, every leader was looking at the bright side. Because these leaders see

opportunity in crisis, they are able to convey a positive attitude.

S1 was able to close underutilized buildings and streamline operations. He said, "If you

look at things positively, you take advantage of a crisis." He also commented that it was a

learning opportunity for his leadership team. S2 was able to merge cumbersome school

calendars into one uniform calendar and combine overstaffed, under-populated schools. He said,

"I looked at it as an opportunity to improve some things." S3 described it "as an opportunity for

change" forcing reevaluation and prioritization of what his district did. S4 said, "Even in the

face of criticism and adversity, I look for opportunities. This comes from the man whose district

was called a "dropout factory." S5 said, "This may sound crazy, but we looked at it as an

opportunity."

Difficult times define leaders and organizations. Difficult times were seen by all five

subjects as times that define a leader and their organization. The superintendents reveled in the

face of challenges. None of the five reported to be intimidated by challenges, but were actually

exhilarated by the chance to excel at the work in these situations. S4 commented, "I think it

helps define you." S1, describing the budget crisis, said, "It was an exciting time. It challenged

our leadership and our leadership team." He went on to say, "I saw it as a way to differentiate

ourselves." He also added, "True leadership is tested in these kinds of times." S2 commented, "What tells about leadership is what you do in a crisis and how you respond." He also said, "Problems are an opportunity to demonstrate our best efforts.

Find the best people for the job, communicate the vision, give autonomy, and stay out of the way, but hold them accountable. They all believed in having a distributed leadership structure. None of the five outliers could be describes as micromanagers. They had confidence in the leadership team and its ability to do the work. They believed the role of the leader was to set the example, provide the vision, and give the resources and freedom to get the job done. S3 spoke of not interfering, not micromanaging, and relying heavily on his leadership team. Through member checking, he followed up by commenting that he probably should have said that part of finding the best people for the job includes finding people that "share your values and beliefs." The other four agreed.

S4 summed it up by saying, "I allow a lot of autonomy from those around me. I listen well. I try to respect the position of leadership of those around me."

S3 commented on the philosophy of some less effective leaders, "Frequently we have bright people who work with us and sometimes we don't utilize their talents because we want to control what they do." He added, "I really try to empower them to handle as much as they are comfortable and they when they need direction to come to me."

S5 had several comments in regards to this philosophy. "We have a process in place to build leadership." I want to surround myself with the best possible people I can. I want them to be smarter than me." "I don't have much of an ego."

S1 said, "You have to give people the latitude to innovate. You can stifle that creativity very quickly. We don't know what innovation looks like, if I could tell you, it wouldn't be innovation."

S2 spoke to the value of accountability in this philosophy. "It's not just delegating, It's effective follow up as well."

The value of networking, collaboration, and the input of the community, including criticism. All of the leaders believed in the value of networking, collaboration, and the input of the community at large. They also saw the value of honest appraisals, including criticisms. They spoke of their networks and communities as vital parts of their leadership team. This was a philosophy that was vital to their success as leaders.

S4 said, "I have been the chairman of several different boards. Those boards create the networking you need to communicate the mission, the effort, the urgency. They provide a safety net when the criticism gets red hot." He also added, "I think when we show that we can not only listen to criticism, but actually act on it in a positive way, that is leadership at its best." He also added, "Had I not had the network that I had, I would have been asked to leave after the first couple of years." This was after the district was labeled a "dropout factory."

S5 commented, "I believe in including as many stakeholders as possible in our leadership team." He also added, "We changed the plan based on community meetings."

S1 noted that he spent a lot of time with community and business leaders. He talked about being able to "speak the language." He found the value in letting them know he understood their business, and helped them to fully understand his. "Usually business leaders look at educators like we don't have a clue of what goes on in their world."

During member checking, S1 noted that he has held numerous community forums in both difficult and good times, well over 100 in three years. While explaining the district's strategic plan at one such forum at a school they were planning to close, the school community voiced its concern and outrage over their school being shut down. They said it would be in essence the death of the community and would do irreparable harm to the children and families that considered this school as the cornerstone of the community. Although the decision made sense on paper, S1 went back to his leadership team and found a way a save the school. He commented on the value of listening to criticism and collaborating with the community. He said that such "groundwork" was valuable. A leader cannot start reaching out to the community after times have gotten bad.

S3 created community task forces to face many difficult issues facing his district. He spoke to the power of getting representation from all stakeholders within the community and how it has streamlined and eased difficult situations by creating community buy-in. "We have used task forces to make critical decisions in the past. The community has accepted the decisions of the task forces."

Leading by example and from the front. Each of the superintendents believed it was their role to provide guidance, leadership, and direction for their staff and community at all times. They believed that this guidance, leadership, and direction should be provided in an unambiguous and visible way. Modeling was seen as one the most important parts of their role as leader.

S1 talked about the need to "zero people in on our core mission." He held a press conference the day the budget cuts were announced and laid out the direction for how the district leadership would approach the cuts. From that day forward there was no question as to what was

on or off the table. He engaged his leadership team in exercises that further educated them about what needed to be done, and how that could be accomplished. He spoke of the opportunity and advantages and helped those around him understand what that meant. "It is important that you try to exude a high level of confidence. That doesn't happen during this time [crisis]. It happens before."

S2 believed that leaders should "carry the sword." He said, "People need you to lead. They don't want you to whine or tell them how hard it is. They don't care how hard it is. You get paid the most money. People expect you to lead."

S3 said, "I cannot tell you the importance I place upon modeling behavior." He said, "When you are confronted with a serious matter. It is extraordinarily important that a leader remain calm. Have a plan and assure people that things are okay. Maintain a sense of hope."

S4 added,

Keep your chin up when all about you are in despair. Promote the conversation that takes us to the next level. Maintain a consistent approach. Try not to hunker down. People look to the superintendent. You have students, teachers, and workers who need you. You can't allow yourself time for an emotional breakdown. I try to be as consistent with my routine as possible, especially in times of crisis. There are times that you just have to commiserate with people. You have to demonstrate that these challenges and terrible events are not in control of the organization. The more consistent and forward looking approach is in the best interest of all. Perspective is huge. You deal with what you can and move forward as deliberately as possible. It always has to be a window, versus a mirror, and you have to project the success outward.   Attribute that to as many people as you can.

S5 said, "As a leader, I had to step forward. If I was going to ask anyone in this district to take a cut, I had to lead by example." As an illustration of believing in leading by example, in total three of the five pointed out that they gave themselves a pay cut prior to even announcing what the other reductions for their district would be.

Leadership Behaviors of Highly Effective Leaders During Difficult Times

They are always preparing and planning ahead. Therefore, they have the ability to get out in front of problems. The highly effective leaders spoke of not being surprised by the budget cuts because they could see them coming. They were attuned to the circumstances happening around them and understood the possible effects. They were proactive and began making plans to deal with them.

S3 commented,

I think I plan ahead a whole lot better than the overwhelming majority of superintendents. I like to think that I have a pretty good pulse of the future and what's going to happen. We passed a referendum in anticipation of financial unrest. We were able to right the ship.

S5 spoke not only about the budget crisis, but future uncertain times. "You've always got to be looking ahead. We are already talking about the governor's education plan and how we are going to deal with it."

S2 said, in regards to future problems, "I am already thinking about solutions. I am a very solution focused person." From a financial standpoint, he elaborated, "You've got to save for when times get tough."

S1 put it this way,

You prepare for downturns constantly focusing on efficiencies and ways to save money

and positioning yourself where you know where those cost savings are at. Right now, if

we have to cut more money, I have some ideas where we could do that.

When speaking about the budget cuts, S4 explained that his staff had been preparing for them.

"We had planned accordingly." He went onto say, "It did not cause a crisis for us."

In summary, all of the subjects in one way or another spoke about laying groundwork,

whether it be financially or with relationships with employees and the community. It can best

summed up in the words of S3. "You try to avoid crisis."

To the contrary, S2 felt this was an area where less effective leaders struggled. In

speaking out on future trends in education, he said, "I see a reaction against it. The point is that

it's coming. When a crowd forms you have to decide if you want to get in front and lead it like a

parade or have it trample you."

They have a defined process of how they lead and do business. All five of the highly

effective leaders stated that they had an established standard operating procedure and they stuck

with that process as much as possible in difficult times.

Having an established standard operating procedure is what S1 meant when he said that

"groundwork is important." He has developed and taught a type of leadership model during

good times that will work effectively in difficult ones. "You have to have established this type

of rapport ahead of time." He explained that his style of meetings and public appearances did

not change. He had meetings more often and they lasted longer, but the style and approach had

already been developed.

S2 talked about "a process." He did not feel that his leadership style changed at all

during difficult times. He spoke of doing nothing differently than he would do any other time

that he was faced with a decision. "If you are focused on action, your style easily adjusts." When asked if he employed a different style or "crisis mode" S3 said, "I don't think you can reinvent yourself to be something different than what you are." S4 said, "I try to maintain a consistent approach." He went on to say, "In times of crisis, I try to be as consistent with my routine as possible." S5 also spoke of using an established process. "We just basically used our operating procedure to deal with the crisis. We really had in place the systems that we need to address the crisis. We didn't do a lot of things differently than we normally do."

They have a laser-like focus on their core business, communicate it clearly, and do not deviate from it. A laser-like focus on core business was a universal behavior of all five leaders and was strongly emphasized. They each made a point to say that the goals of their district did not change during difficult times. Their focus on core business, like their leadership style, was constant.

S1 said, "Here's our core business: children, student programs, teachers, and work happening in the classroom. For us to cut those things, while other things are on the table would be irresponsible." S1 said that he immediately came out and said, "The things that affect student programs are off the table." S1 said, "The activities of the district can be explained in four ways: core, directly related to core, indirectly related to core, and unrelated. Anything unrelated we completely wiped off the table."

S2's core business was what was going on in the classroom. He explained his philosophy as "peeling the onion." He explained that the classroom and teachers were at the center of the "onion" and that "as you unpeel the onion, you communicate and reinforce the priority of saving teacher jobs in the classroom."

S3 explained, "I have a core set of values and principles that guide my decisions." He went on to say, "Children are first." He also said, "I am going to protect programs and opportunities for kids." Beyond that, he said that his priority became saving people's jobs.

In member checking, S4 noted that he felt that focus on the core business was so key because it allows the leader to expose the things going on in the district that are not core business related or hindering it from achieving its goals. "These problems become the focus of strategic objectives, designed to realize the goals of the district."

S5 said that his core business was and still remains to "protect everything that was making a difference for kids." He went on to say, "Critics said to do away with new [expensive, but effective] programs, those were things we're going to hold onto no matter what."

They build trusting relationships with staff and the community. In different ways, each of the subjects emphasized the power of relationships in effective leadership. The five superintendents have each built strong foundations of trust and respect with not only those they lead, but their stakeholders as well.

S1 has built strong relationships throughout his district. His favorite example of this is the trusting relationship he has constructed with his teachers union. In the face the budget cuts, the union representative was asked if he was worried. He responded, "We trust our superintendent and he will lead us through this." As referenced earlier, S1 felt that groundwork was again important. A leader cannot begin to build relationships once a crisis is at hand.

S1 also spoke about when that trust is broken. He was lied to by a member of his leadership staff. "It highlighted for me how important it is to be able to trust people and the work they do."

S2 put it this way. "When you become the new superintendent, at the end of six months no one should wonder who the new superintendent is." S2 felt one of the primary roles of a leader was to go out and build relationships in the district and in the community.

In regards to relationship building, S3 said, "It's a compliment when any employee in the school district feels like they can come talk to you." He stressed the fact that this must be done on a one to one basis.

S4 has reached out to almost every conceivable constituency in his district. He credits his "network" with saving his job during difficult times. The relationships he has built and the understanding of the district it has fostered has created a community that supports its leader instead of demonizing him in the face of a crisis. "It's relationships with people. It's the one-on-one relationships."

S5 simply said, "Relationships are so, so important in our district, all the way down to the students." S5 illustrated his emphasis on relationship by saying that his leadership team is made up of all stakeholders in the district.

They are visible and accessible. Each of the highly effective leaders is out among their staff, stakeholders, and community. By being visible and accessible, they glean valuable information and unfiltered insights from their constituencies. They do not wait for a crisis to become visible. As is evidenced by their emphasis on relationship building, these leaders do not stay behind their desks. Four of the five gave specific examples that exemplify this point. S1, as referenced earlier, has held over 100 community forums for students, staff, and stakeholders in just three years. S2 visits classrooms every week. S3 tries to visit one classroom a day. The first thing S4 does is get out into buildings if he thinks there is going to be trouble.

S2 summed it up this way.

I visit classrooms every week. I don't think you can run a learning organization from the corner office. When you are a superintendent, things are filtered. When I visit a building, it helps me. You've got to be out in those buildings to understand what issues you are facing. It gives them an audience with me.

"Get out in the buildings. That's the best piece of advice I ever got." S3 makes a concerted effort to "get in the trenches" whenever possible. He also challenges his principals to do the same. In order to get them in classrooms more often, he committed to being in one of the school buildings each day. He felt that lesser effective leaders become too comfortable getting information as it is reported to them, instead of collecting it firsthand. S3 sets up "listening posts" when he visits schools and offices. He makes it known he will be in a location and camps out there, so staff have unfettered access to him. From this, he gets ground level perspective of the culture and climate of the district with his own eyes and ears.

They do not attack problems as a whole. They look to break down a larger problem into its component parts. S1 broke the activities of his district down into "core, directly related to core, indirectly related to core, and unrelated." S2 "peeled the onion." Both were able to make the conversation about those things that had nothing to with the district's core business. Instead of broad, slash the budget initiative, both situations became narrowly focused on a workable problem.

S3 gave these insights.

When confronted with a complex problem, you divide it up into smaller problems and look for optimal solutions for the smaller problems. That takes time. The way to tackle any big task is to break it down into smaller pieces. If I can resolve this part of it, in many cases, the rest of it begins to fall in place.

S3 went on to say that he felt that this is where some less effective leaders falter. They fail to break down problems, and instead are intimidated and defeated by the shear perceived enormity of the task at hand. "They think 'I am going to procrastinate because I do not want to tackle that big task.' They avoid addressing issues because they think that they are too complex."

S4 approached problems from different angles.

My approach is not to hit a problem head on. It is to find the different angles and work through it, around it, over it, and under it. I have always had to work angles to get what I needed.

S5 did not specifically address the methodology of his approach. Through member checking, he confirmed that this was his style.

They address situations quickly, but do not rush their decisions. Once a decision has been made, they take decisive action. They see the value in getting in front of a problem, but do not hastily make decisions. They ask a lot of questions.

S1 summed up his decision making process this way.

I will push on things. I think it is irresponsible to stop on the surface. I think that you have to be able to ask and answer the hard questions. If you do that, you can avoid a lot of the pitfalls. If you haven't vetted it and been willing to really challenge it, I don't think you will get the best solution. I like to let things ruminate. I am not going to allow things to rush me to a decision I am not ready to make. However, if you think you are always going to get consensus on everything, you are wrong. I will circle the wagons a few times, but when it's time to go, it's time to go. You have to be decisive.

S3 responded similarly.

I like to ruminate on things. I try to avoid being placed in a position where I am forced to

make a decision before I am ready. If I have to make a decision instantaneously, it will

not be of the quality that I would like. If it is a really, really important decision I will not

make it that day.

The other three subjects did not specifically address this aspect in as much detail as S1

and S3 in the initial interviews, however, their general responses were very similar in the manner

they approached a problem. Upon member checking, S2, S4, and S5 all confirmed they used a

very similar style.

The Differences, if any, Between Highly Effective Leadership and Highly Effective

Leadership During Difficult Times

The findings of this research showed that there is no difference between highly effective

leadership and highly effective leadership during difficult times. All leaders interviewed had

defined leadership processes and behaviors that they used universally regardless of the situation.

S1 has developed and taught a type of leadership model during good times that will work

effectively in difficult ones. "You have to have established this type of rapport ahead of time."

He explained that his style of meetings and public appearances did not change. He had meetings

more often and they lasted longer, but the style and approach had already been developed.

S2 talked about "a process." He did not feel that his leadership style changed at all

during difficult times. He spoke of doing nothing differently than he would do any other time

that he was faced with a decision. "If you are focused on action, your style easily adjusts."

When asked if he employed a different style or "crisis mode" S3 said, "I don't think you

can reinvent yourself to be something different than what you are."

S4 said, "I try to maintain a consistent approach." He went on to say, "In times of crisis, I try to be as consistent with my routine as possible."

S5 also spoke of using an established process. "We just basically used our operating procedure to deal with the crisis. We really had in place the systems that we need to address the crisis. We didn't do a lot of things differently than we normally do."

Further confirmation can be gained through the other aggregate findings of this study. The philosophies and behaviors described and cited are the philosophies and behaviors of these leaders at all times, not just in difficult times.

Other Findings Not Related to the Research Questions

There were additional findings that were not related to the research questions. Three were of note and are addressed.

Leadership development of highly effective leaders. Although only five subjects were interviewed as part of this study, the background and leadership development of these outliers is striking. Each of the five highly effective leaders had many meaningful leadership experiences and opportunities at a young age. Each was given positions of high responsibility before they were 30 years of age. Each of them credits their early experiences as a foundation of their leadership acumen of today.

The effects of difficult times on the leader. Although the question was never posed, three of the superintendents addressed the physical and mental toll that leadership during difficult times puts on a leader, and those around him.

When speaking about the importance of modeling, S1 talked about how important it was to maintain a work-life balance. He said that a committed leader could sometime give the

impression he did not have one, and then his staff would not try to keep one as well. S1 said that it was important for him to model this aspect of leadership as well.

> I go to all of my kids' stuff. I am there and people see me there. I don't want to be absent in their lives, nor do I want my leadership team to absent in the lives of their families.

> S3 talked about how important a proper perspective was on one's mental health and well being. "You can only expect of yourself the very best you can do. And at that point, whatever has to happen, has to happen." He added that is why it is so important to be proactive and make good, well thought out decisions.

> S4 was most openly concerned with this aspect of leadership.

> You have to watch for the physical toll it takes on you and in others. Your body tells you things and you have to be observant. I encourage people to go through counseling.

> Secretaries deal with more stress and responsibility that we'll ever know.

He also spoke about the importance of taking time for whatever it was that "recharged" a leader's batteries. "Whatever works for you, you better do it."

The habits and characteristics of ineffective leaders. Each subject had strong opinions regarding where weaker leaders fail and make mistakes.

S1 felt that ineffective leaders in many cases did not use the right leadership style for the situation. He said that he would also be concerned by leaders whose first impulse was to make excuses.

S2 shared similar insights. He felt that ineffective leaders whined and complained instead of "trying to do something about it."

S3 felt that ineffective leaders made decisions too quickly. More than just haste, it was an absence of full information. He felt that ineffective leaders were just concerned with "out of sight, out of mind." He also warned against blame. "There is nothing to be gained and everything to be lost."

S4 felt that ineffective leaders isolated themselves and "hunkered down." They did reach out to their staff, stakeholders, and community. They did not listen to their critics. They did not get a second opinion. They "jump to the easiest solution."

S5 echoed the sentiments of the other superintendents. They "simply focus on survival instead of looking for an opportunity." He went on to say that too many leaders are "woe is me" and "blame, blame, blame." Summing it up, they have a lack of leadership that allows them to "look at this an opportunity as a way to make the district better."

Summary

This chapter included an introduction and presentation of the study sample. A summary of the interviews, follow up member checking with the subjects, and the key finding of the study in relationship to the research questions. Additionally, findings not related the research questions were also addressed.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Discussion, Implications, and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine what highly effective leaders do during difficult times to be successful. In addition to research of pertinent literature on the subject, the researcher sought to identify and interview the most highly effective school superintendents in the state of Indiana in regards to their responses, characteristics, and behaviors during the recent state mandated school budget cuts and other difficult times. The researcher contacted the senior administrative staff of the IDOE, the educational leadership faculty of Indiana's public universities, and the leadership of Indiana's educational professional organizations. The researcher polled these educational experts to identify 5 to 10 of the most highly effective superintendents in the state, true outliers. Only two respondents identified 10. Most only identified five or less. Through polling these educational authorities, experts, and leaders across the state, 10 superintendents from the 293 public school corporations were tabbed as being the most highly effective school leaders. From those 10 individuals, five had scores and recommendations that further distinguished them as outliers among this group. With the overwhelming distinction of these individuals and a suitable diversity of background and demographics, those five were selected as the subjects of this study. Structured interviews were set up and conducted face-to-face, on-site in their offices with each of these school leaders. These interviews which lasted from 50 minutes to two hours followed the protocol in Appendix

F. Upon completion of the interviews, a compilation of summary findings was provided to the subjects. The subjects then provided feedback through member checking to assure that the findings were representative of the group.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

       Difficult times are seen as opportunities. The subjects all stated that they looked for the opportunities in all circumstances. They possess and model a positive outlook when facing a difficult situation. They maintain a belief that there are benefits to almost every circumstance. These may be opportunities to learn, grow, or focus. There may be opportunities to accomplish things that could not be done otherwise. Seeing difficult times as opportunities is supported by research previously cited in this study (Reingold, 2006; Sandys & Littman, 2003; Welch, 2005; Wooden & Jamison, 2005).

       Difficult times define leaders and organizations. The subjects saw a difficult time not only as an opportunity to accomplish things, but as a situation in which they could differentiate themselves from others. This type of philosophy is especially applicable to uniform crises, such as the budget cuts. They believe that difficult times were instances in which leaders and their organizations step up to and excel in the face of challenges. The belief that difficult times define leaders and their organization is supported by sources previously cited in this study (Iacocca, 2007; Sandys & Littman, 2003).

       Find the best people for the job, communicate the vision, give autonomy, and stay out of the way. They all believed in having a distributed leadership structure. None of the five outliers could be described as micromanagers. They had confidence in their leadership team and its ability to do the work. They believed the role of the leader was to set the example, provide the vision, and give the resources and freedom to get the job done. Finding the best people,

communicating the vision, and staying out of the way is supported by sources previously cited in this study (Bossidy & Charan, 2002; Buckingham & Clifton, 2001; Collins 2001; Kryzyzewski, 2000; Marzano et al., 2005).

The value of networking, collaboration, and the input of the community, including criticism. All of the leaders believed in the value of networking, collaboration, and the input of the community at large. They also saw the value of honest appraisals, including criticisms. They spoke of their networks and communities as vital parts of their leadership team. This was a philosophy that was vital to their success as leaders. The value of networks, collaboration, and input is supported by sources previously cited in this study (Fleck, 2005; Fullan, 2001; Harari, 2002; Harris & Chapman, 2002; Iacocca, 2007; Kennedy, 1968; Marzano et al., 2005; Phillips, 1992; Sandys & Littman, 2003; Welch 2005).

Leading by example and from the front. Each of the superintendents believed it was their role to provide guidance, leadership, and direction for their staff and community at all times. They believed that this guidance, leadership, and direction should be provided in an unambiguous and visible way. They believed that they were the standard bearer and flagship for their district. They set the tone. To highly effective leaders, the importance of modeling cannot be understated. Leading by example from the front is supported by sources previously cited in this study (Axelrod, 1999; Giuliani, 2002; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Marzano et al., 2005; Sandys & Littman, 2003; Welch, 2005).

Leadership Behaviors of Highly Effective Leaders During Difficult Times

They are always preparing and planning ahead. Therefore, they have the ability to get out in front of problems. The highly effective leaders spoke of not being surprised by the budget cuts because they could see them coming.   They were attuned to the circumstances happening

around them and understood the possible effects. They were proactive and began making plans to deal with them. In essence, they try to avoid crises before they happen. Preparing and planning ahead as an effective leadership behavior is supported by sources previously cited in the study (Axelrod, 1999; Covey, 1989; Drucker, 2006; Farkas & Wetlaufer, 1996; Forbes & Prevas, 2009; Goffee & Jones, 2000; Harari, 2002; Harvard Business Essentials, 2007; Kryzyzewki, 2000; Sandys & Littman, 2003; Wooden & Jamison, 2005).

They have defined process of how they lead and do business. All five of the highly effective leaders stated that they had an established standard operating procedure and they stuck with that process as much as possible in difficult times. They had a way of doing business that was understood and easily adjustable to various circumstances. There was no need to have a crisis mode. Having a defined process of leading and doing business is supported by sources previously cited in this study (Bossidy & Charan, 2002; Forbes & Prevas, 2009; Giuliani, 2002; Marzano et al., 2005; Welch, 2005).

They have a laser like focus on their core business, communicate it clearly, and do not deviate from it. This was a universal behavior of all five leaders and was strongly emphasized. They each made a point to say that the goals of their district did not change during difficult times. Their focus on their core business, like their leadership style, was constant. Having a laser-like focus on core business that is communicated clearly is supported by sources previously cited in this study (Axelrod, 1999; Bratton, 1998; Collins, 2001; Covey, 1989; Giuliani, 2002; Harris & Chapman, 2002; Marzano et al., 2005; Sandys & Littman, 2003; Reingold, 2006; Welch, 2005; Wooden & Jamison, 2005).

They build trusting relationships with staff and the community. In different ways, each of the subjects emphasized the power of relationships in effective leadership. The five

superintendents have each built strong foundations of trust and respect with not only those they lead, but their stakeholders as well. They acknowledged the contributions of those around them. The value of relationships is supported by sources previously cited in this study (Fleck, 2005; Fullan, 2001; Harris & Chapman, 2002; Marzano et al., 2005).

They are visible and accessible. Each of the highly effective leaders is out among their staff, stakeholders, and community. By being visible and accessible, they glean valuable information and unfiltered insights from their constituencies. They do not wait for a crisis to become visible. As is evidenced by their emphasis on relationship building, these leaders do not stay behind their desks, but instead make efforts to be accessible and available to their staff and stakeholders. Visibility and accessibility is supported by sources previously cited in this study (Giuliani, 2002; Harari, 2002; Harvard Business Essentials, 2004; Marzano et al., 2005; Phillips, 1992; Sandys & Littman, 2003; Welch, 2005).

They do not attack problems as a whole. They look to break down a larger problem into its component parts. They have perspective and do not become bogged down by intimidation or procrastination in the face of a situation that could appear overwhelming. They try to find best possible solution for each component, and not the problem or crisis as a whole. They realize that larger issues were made of smaller details. Breaking down difficult problems into smaller parts is supported by sources previously cited in this study (Bossidy & Charan, 2002; Bratton, 1998; Drucker, 2006; Heifetz & Linsky, 2002; Wooden & Jamison, 2005).

They address situations quickly, but do not rush their decisions. Once a decision has been made, they take decisive action. They see the value in getting out in front of a problem, but do not hastily make decisions. They ask a lot of questions. Each of the five quickly addressed the budget cuts, laying out core business and approach, but took the necessary

time to ruminate and reach the best decision possible. Once the decision was made, they quickly put their plan in action. A deliberate decision making process is supported by the earlier cited actions of Giuliani (2002), Augustus Caesar (Forbes & Prevas, 2009), and John F. Kennedy (Kennedy, 1968).

The Differences, if any, Between Highly Effective Leadership and Highly Effective Leadership During Difficult Times

Highly effective leadership is highly effective leadership during difficult times. There is no difference. Highly effective leaders do not have a special style of leadership that they pull out during difficult times. Their standard operating procedure easily adjusts to any situation. The philosophies and behaviors outlined in the prior findings are what it takes to be a highly effective leader regardless the circumstance. Highly effective leaders approach their work every day with a sense of urgency, not emergency. By realizing that every day and decision is critical they are constantly preparing their organization for what is coming next.

Other Findings Not Related to the Research Questions

There were additional findings that were not related to the research questions. Two were of note and are addressed.

Leadership development of highly effective leaders. Although only five subjects were interviewed as part of this study, the background and leadership development of these outliers is striking. Each of the five highly effective leaders had many meaningful leadership experiences and opportunities at a young age. Each was given positions of high responsibility before they were 30 years of age. Each of them credits their early experiences as a foundation of their leadership acumen of today. The value of early leadership experiences is supported by sources previously cited (Bennis 1998; Drucker, 2006).

The effects of difficult times on the leader. Although the question was never posed, three of the superintendents addressed the physical and mental toll that leadership during difficult times puts on a leader, and those around him. They talked about the value of possessing and modeling a work-balance, a proper perspective, and taking the time to "recharge your batteries."   The value of renewal and recharging is supported by sources previously cited (Covey, 1989; Sandys & Littman, 2003).

The habits and characteristics of ineffective leaders. Each subject had strong opinions regarding where weaker leaders fail and make mistakes. This is actually an understatement. Each subject had an underlying disdain for ineffective leaders. There was palpable passion for effective leadership among the subjects. The same passion, this time as contempt, could be said about their feelings and disregard for leaders that sully the reputation of their chosen profession. The combined findings are below.

- They are short-sighted.

- They make easy, short-term decisions that have long-term ramifications.

- They make decisions without the input of their community.

- They whine and complain.

- They blame others for their circumstance.

- They make excuses.

- They isolate themselves.

- They fail to look at unintended consequences.

- They do not get a second opinion.

- They do not listen to their critics.

- They make quick decisions.

- They do not ask questions.

- They use situational leadership and do not fit their style to the situation.

- They micromanage and squander the talent of their staff.

- They fail to see crises as opportunities.

This "what not to do" list is basically the antithesis of all accumulated research and the findings of this study in regards to highly effective leadership philosophy and behaviors during difficult times.

Implications

At least for the foreseeable future, the educational landscape will be wrought with transformational change. With increased accountability, decreased funding and revenue, changing demographics and the dawning of an open market educational economy, educational leaders will be faced daily with additional challenges well beyond the hurdles typically encountered by a district. S2 said it best, when he remarked, "I think that being a leader over the next 10 years is going to be difficult times."

Current leaders must pay attention to the findings of this study. Many districts made ill advised decisions with long-lasting ramifications in the face of the 2009 budget cuts. This was a failure of leadership. The circumstances are not changing, therefore the leadership must.

These exciting times require highly effective leadership. Highly effective leadership during difficult times requires both a mindset and a skill set. This combination of both philosophy and behaviors enables a leader to succeed and thrive in an environment where most can only hope to survive.

Leaders must constantly search for opportunity, whatever the situation they face. They must communicate their vision and surround themselves with the best people they can find.

They must hold those people accountable, but while building positive trusting relationships and not micromanaging. Highly effective leadership is built through developing a standard procedure and protocols that are understood and followed throughout the organization.

They must set the example and lead from the front. They must accept the mantle of leadership and provide the guidance and direction that is needed by those they lead. They must be visible and accessible, especially to those they lead. They must be "in the trenches" seeing the ground level issues.

They must realize that they do not operate in a vacuum. The opinions, support, and understanding of the community at large are invaluable.

Finally, when facing difficult decisions, they must give themselves time to make good choices. They must ask lots of questions and take in the input of all their stakeholders. Then they should act decisively, like a leader.

We must change the way we teach and think about leadership. We must focus on teaching that opportunities lie within challenges. We must teach challenges are themselves are exciting opportunities to align and muster our best efforts.

We must look to create meaningful learning experiences for the next generation of leaders. Too often, someone is "too young" or "too inexperienced" to be put in a position of leadership. This study has found that future leaders with potential should be given those opportunities. Highly effective leaders credit their leadership acumen with the experience of their "leadership youth."

Building off that thought, more should be done to promote and recognize the works of the best leaders. The most highly effective leaders know that they are outliers, but at the same time

have very modest egos. They would be eager and willing to work with the leaders of tomorrow. The most highly effective leaders must be sought out as speakers, mentors, and professors.

Furthermore, maybe the most paramount finding of this study is that highly effective leadership is highly effective crisis leadership. The two are intertwined and inseparable. There is no difference. A leader who is handling the current financial crisis, or any other difficult time poorly, very well may not be an effective leader at any time. Difficult times only serve to magnify the deficiencies in an individual's leadership ability.

However, from a more positive standpoint, the keys to highly effective leadership during difficult times are a recipe for leadership success at anytime during any circumstance. Someone who commits to learning these lessons and practicing them could all but ensure success.

Implications for Further Research

The findings of this study indicate that further research in the following areas would be useful. This study found that the most highly effective superintendents in the state of Indiana had a remarkable amount of extremely beneficial early leadership preparation and experiences. A study of leaders that compared their preparation and experiences versus the success of their schools / districts would provide data to determine the impact of leadership preparation and experiences on overall effectiveness.

This study sought to identify and interview superintendents. A similar study should be conducted using school principals to see if the same core philosophies and behaviors hold true. In addition, this could also be done with classroom teachers.

The first two suggestions lead to the next suggestion. Perhaps a study that created an instrument to identify those with the highly effective leadership philosophies and behaviors

found in this study would be beneficial. This tool could be used to identify young leaders with strong potential and acumen for future leadership positions.

Further research should be conducted to assess the physical and mental toll that leadership during difficult times has on an individual. Do highly effective leaders remain highly effective through and extended, long period of difficult times? Do they remain leaders? Do they burnout?

This study found that the most highly effective leaders thought and behaved a certain similar way. Using this study's finding as a benchmark, perhaps a quantitative study of the leadership philosophies and behaviors of every superintendent in the state would provide insight into the overall quality of Indiana's superintendents. This study could again also be conducted with principals and teachers.

Finally, as this study sought out to identify what highly effective leaders, not specifically school superintendents, do to succeed during difficult times, studies should be conducted among other high performing leadership groups to further confirm the findings. These other groups could include, but might not be limited to, the most successful military officers, governmental and political leaders, business executives, entrepreneurs, religious leaders, and athletic coaches.

Conclusions

This study showed that the most highly effective leaders had distinct philosophies and behaviors that helped them succeed during difficult times. They believe that inside crises and difficult times there are opportunies. They know there are advantages to crises and difficult times that cannot be found during normal circumstances. They see the way they behave during crises and difficult times as a way to define themselves and their organization.

They believe in surrounding themselves with the best people they can find. They set out a vision and then let those people lead themselves. They provide follow-up and assure accountability but do not stifle their staff's ability to innovate or micromanage.

They believe in the value of networking, collaboration, and input from the community, including criticism. They do not stay isolated within their own organization, but instead embrace the community as a whole. They do not make decisions inside a vacuum. They do not shy away from input of those with whom they do not agree. They see the value in all opinions.

The most highly effective leaders believe they must lead by example. It is their responsibility to lead from the front and "carry the sword." They believe they are the face of the organization. They realize that people are looking to them for guidance, leadership, and direction. They are calm and confident.

The most highly effective leaders are always planning and preparing for the future. They have a defined process of how they lead, and they do not deviate from it. They, in addition, have a laser-like focus on their core business and do not deviate from that, as well.

They build trusting relationships with their staff and community. They are visible and accessible to those they lead.

They are able to solve large problems because they break them down into smaller more manageable parts. They then "peel the onion" and attack only the issues that need and demand attention. They address problems quickly, but make decisions slowly. They take the time necessary to make sure they have received maximum input and questioned sufficiently. Then, after deciding upon the optimal solution, they act decisively.

Most importantly, the findings outlined in this study are not just a methodology for dealing with difficult times. It is a primer on highly effective leadership regardless the situation

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APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FORM / EXPERTS

Polling Letter to Determine Highly Effective Superintendents

My name is Michael Raisor and I am a Ph. D. candidate at Indiana State University. My dissertation topic is "How highly effective leaders manage difficult times." Using the recent K-12 education budget cuts as a backdrop, I will investigate how the most effective superintendents in Indiana approached this situation and other difficult crises. Undeniably, not every district in Indiana has the same size, demographics, financial circumstances, or geographic location. Yet, it is very uncommon, and almost anomalistic, for every superintendent in the state to be faced with an identical crisis at exactly the same time. This situation truly allows an "apples to apples" comparison of leadership.

My research will be qualitative – I will administer in-depth interviews with five to ten of the identified most effective superintendents in our state. This is where your assistance is needed. I am looking to identify outliers – those superintendents that far and away stand out as exceptional leaders. This can be very hard to quantify, so that is why I am contacting you. As an educational authority in the state of Indiana, you come into contact and are exposed to many of the best superintendents in the state.

Would you be willing to take the time to identify who you feel are five to ten of the most effective leaders in our school districts today? Your results will be combined with the responses of others to create a small cadre of outlier superintendents from across the state who have been deemed not just effective, but outstanding.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Confidentiality of all participants, their school districts, or any information that could lead to identification of participants will be maintained. Data will be coded for use and accessed only by the researchers. All identifiers will be removed from the data in order to protect confidentiality.

If you would be willing to participate in this study, please contact me at (812) 430-8850 or at michael.raisor@evsc.k12.in.us .

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request for assistance.

Sincerely,

Michael Raisor, Researcher
michael.raisor@evsc.k12.in.us
Telephone: (812) 430-8850

Dr. Todd Whitaker, Professor
todd.whitaker@indstate.edu
Telephone: (812) 237-2904

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT FORM / SUPERINTENDENTS

Today's educational leaders are faced with more challenging circumstances than in any other time in our nation's history. Increased scrutiny from the federal, state, and local level has led to an environment of accountability that has never before been seen on the educational landscape. Increased oversight, unfunded mandates, tight budgets, non-academic responsibilities, and a rapidly changing student demographic have all become the standard hurdles standing between school leaders and success. In this landscape, only a few seem to truly succeed and thrive where most fail, or at best survive. We are interested in what highly effective superintendents do to be successful during difficult times. We are requesting two hours of your time to assist with gathering information for a dissertation research project encompassing the behaviors of highly effective leaders during difficult times. The interviews will occur on-site and will require no travel on your part.

The purpose of this study is to examine the behaviors of highly effective leaders during difficult times. The data collection process includes an interview with selected school superintendents and triangulation of the combined data among the sample of highly effective superintendents. Interviews will be tape recorded to ensure accurate analysis of data. The interview will last approximately two hours.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Confidentiality of all participants, their school districts, or any information that could lead to identification of participants will be maintained. Data will be coded for use and accessed only by the researchers. All identifiers will be removed from the data in order to protect confidentiality.

If you would be willing to participate in this study, please contact me at (812) 430-8850 or at michael.raisor@evsc.k12.in.us .

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request for assistance.

Sincerely,

Michael Raisor, Researcher   Dr. Todd Whitaker, Professor
michael.raisor@evsc.k12.in.us   todd.whitaker@indstate.edu
Telephone: (812) 430-8850   Telephone: (812) 237-2904

APPENDIX C: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH / EXPERTS

What Highly Effective Leaders Do During Difficult Times

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Michael Raisor and Dr. Todd Whitaker, from the Educational Leadership, Administration and Foundations Department at Indiana State University. This research study is being conducted for the completion of a doctoral dissertation. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding to participate.

You have been asked to participate in this study as an authority on effective school district leadership in the state of Indiana. School leaders are faced with difficult situations on a daily basis, including but not limited to increased oversight, unfunded mandates, tight budgets, non-academic responsibilities, and a rapidly changing student demographic. We are interested in your perceptions of the most highly effective superintendents in the state of Indiana.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND BENEFITS

The purpose of this dissertation is to determine what highly effective leaders do during difficult times to be successful. This study will increase awareness of behaviors identified highly effective leaders during difficult times.

PROCEDURES

The data collection process will consist of an emailed polling question asking your perception as to the five to ten most highly effective superintendents in the state of Indiana. Your data will be compiled, along with that of other educational authorities throughout the state, to identify a group of highly effective "outlier" superintendents. This group of outliers will be then be interviewed to determine what highly effective leaders do during difficult times.

Your submission will be recorded in a spreadsheet. Your identity will not be shared with the superintendents. Your identity and responses will be kept confidential by the researcher. You may choose to not participate. You may also choose to list as few superintendents as you like.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The anticipated risk from participating in this study is that not all participants will feel comfortable answering the question. Participants may choose not to answer the question. Email is not a secure method of data retrieval and anonymity cannot be promised, although all available means will be used to ensure confidentiality.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This study will benefit the area of educational leadership by increasing awareness of the behaviors of leaders during difficult times. No guarantee of direct benefits to you as a participant exists.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

Your name will not be used, nor will you be identified personally in any way or at any time. Data will be coded for use and accessed only by the researchers. All identifiers will be removed from the data in order to protect confidentiality.

It should be noted that email is not a secure method of data retrieval and anonymity cannot be promised. Confidentiality of respondents will be protected by all means available by the researcher.

Participants will be requested to keep all information shared during the interview confidential.

Data collected in this study will be stored at the home of the researcher in a locked filing cabinet for the required three year period. At the end of the required storage period, all data collected, including audio-tapes, will be shredded and destroyed.

Results of this study will be included in Michael Raisor's doctoral dissertation and may also be included in manuscripts submitted for professional publication.

You have the right to review material prior to the final oral defense of the study by filing a written request to the researcher.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can voluntarily choose to participate in this study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. The Subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

APPENDIX D: CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH / SUPERINTENDENTS

What Highly Effective Leaders Do During Difficult Times

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Michael Raisor and Dr. Todd Whitaker, from the Educational Leadership, Administration and Foundations Department at Indiana State University. This research study is being conducted for the completion of a doctoral dissertation. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding to participate.

You have been asked to participate in this study as a superintendent of a school district in the State of Indiana. School leaders are faced with difficult situations on a daily basis, including but not limited to increased oversight, unfunded mandates, tight budgets, non-academic responsibilities, and a rapidly changing student demographic. We are interested in your perceptions of your role as leader in these and other difficult times.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND BENEFITS

The purpose of this dissertation is to determine what highly effective leaders do during difficult times to be successful. This study will increase awareness of behaviors identified highly effective leaders during difficult times.

PROCEDURES

The data collection process includes an interview with the superintendent. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be interviewed individually. This interview will occur on-site at the school district offices of the superintendents. The interviews consist of twelve questions and will take approximately two hours. The questions you will be answering address your views on leadership during difficult times and situations in your school district.

The interview will be tape recorded to facilitate analysis of the data. You may refrain from answering a question at any time during the interview.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The anticipated risk from participating in this study is that not all participants will feel comfortable answering some of the questions. Participants may choose not to answer any question that makes them uncomfortable.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This study will benefit the area of educational leadership by increasing awareness of the behaviors of leaders during difficult times. No guarantee of direct benefits to you as a participant exists.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

Your name will not be used, nor will you be identified personally in any way or at any time. Data will be coded for use and accessed only by the researchers. All identifiers will be removed from the data in order to protect confidentiality.

Participants will be requested to keep all information shared during the interview confidential.

Data collected in this study will be stored at the home of the researcher in a locked filing cabinet for the required three year period. At the end of the required storage period, all data collected, including audio-tapes, will be shredded and destroyed.

Results of this study will be included in Michael Raisor's doctoral dissertation and may also be included in manuscripts submitted for professional publication.

You have the right to review material prior to the final oral defense of the study by filing a written request to the researcher.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can voluntarily choose to participate in this study. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. The Subject may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the subject is otherwise entitled.

APPENDIX E: IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

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

Michael Raisor   Dr. Todd Whitaker, Professor
Principal Investigator   Department of Educational Leadership,
145 S. Faith Way   Administration, and Foundations
Evansville, IN   Indiana State University
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                                        todd.whitaker@indstate.edu

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 4709, 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 F: STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Could you describe your leadership roles, career experiences?

2. How would you describe your personal leadership style?

   - How do you think others would describe you as a leader?

   - Do you think your style would differ from others?   How so?

   - What has shaped this style?

   - Has it evolved? How so?

3. In December 2009, Governor Daniels announced that funding to the general fund would be cut by $300 million dollars or a base of 3.5%. This has been described as a crisis. What is your view? Were you surprised by this? Was it possible to prepare for?

4. Talk to me about what it means to be a leader during a difficult or challenging time, such as the 2009 Budget Cuts.

   - What did you see as your role?

   - What are the responsibilities of leadership during a difficult time?

   - Do you have a style that you put in place during difficult times or does the "standard operating procedure" easily adjust to times of crisis?

   - Did your normal day / week change while you were addressing the budget cuts?

5. As a leader, what do you see as the most important things to do when your district is facing difficult times?

   - Communication?

- Morale?

- How was survival versus growth balanced? Could it be?

6. How did you set your priorities? What are they?   Did these shift your goals for the district? How so? What had your goals been? What did they become?

7. How did you specifically carry out these priorities / responsibilities?

8. Do you have a professional mentor or sounding board with which you seek advice or affirmation? If so, describe this person (persons)? Do you look to other leaders and emulate their examples and techniques?

- Anyone in the district?

- Anyone outside the district?

9. As a leader, are there any advantages to experiencing difficult times?

- Did this crisis allow you to do things that you would be unable to do in "normal times?"

10. Are there any struggles or pitfalls you feel leaders have made during a crisis? In looking back, are there any decisions or choices you would make differently had you had the opportunity? Have you ever made any of those errors? How do you avoid those pitfalls?

11. Do you feel that there any crises or situations that are un-manageable, why?

12. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your leadership during this crisis or other difficult times?

APPENDIX G: COMMON TRAITS EXHIBITED BY HIGHLY EFFECTIVE LEADERS

1. They lead by example and from the front – especially in times of crisis. They realize that people are looking to them for guidance, leadership, and direction.
2. They have integrity.
3. They see crisis / difficult times as opportunities.
4. They believe that difficult times define leaders and organizations.
5. They have a laser like focus on their district's core business. They do not deviate from it.
6. They build trusting relationships with their staff and community and see relationships as the key.
7. They see the value of networking, collaboration, and input of their community
8. They believe in hiring the best people, communicating their vision, giving them autonomy, and then staying out of their way.
9. They communicate clearly.
10. They are forgiving of "subordinate's" mistakes (good intentioned) made and see them as lessons learned – as long as the lesson is learned.
11. They have a defined process of how they lead / "do business"- they stick to that process.
12. They do not condone whining, pessimism, or "drama."
13. They respond. They do not react. They retain control.
14. When they are upset, they get mad, and then they get over it.
15. They respect legitimate criticism and act on it. They are resilient.
16. They are always planning ahead, preparing - trying to feel the pulse of the future.
17. They very rarely rely on position power.
18. They are highly visible - especially in times of crisis. They "carry the sword."
19. They share accolades and own mistakes. It does not have to be about them. Their ego is in check.
20. They ask a lot of questions.
21. They take time necessary to make good decisions – not procrastinating, but ruminating – then take decisive action.
22. In times of crisis, they remain calm (or at least appear calm). They do not panic in public.
23. They do not attack problems as a whole. They look at the different angles. They break them down into smaller manageable pieces. They "peel the onion."