

MITCHELL V. MCGHEE
A Principal's Role in Opening A New School
(Under the Direction of C. KENNETH TANNER)

The purpose of this study was to examine the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school, during the year preceding the opening of the school and during the first year of occupancy in that school. The examination was completed via an autobiographical case study. The case study was enriched by interviews with three principals that had opened new schools, one assistant superintendent in charge of new school construction, and an architect of schools. Personal reflections and interviews were recorded, transcribed, and along with documents were analyzed for themes.

This study sought to answer the following questions: 1. What are the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school, while that school is under construction? 2. What are the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school during the first year of occupancy in that school? 3. What characteristics or skills are needed to be a successful principal of a new school?

The following conclusions reflect the findings of this study. The duties and responsibilities documented in this case study, and those cited in the interviews and review of literature can be separated in to five theme categories: 1. Parental issues, 2. Construction or building issues, 3. Staffing issues, 4. School organization issues, and 5. Time management issues. There were also five skill, characteristics, or personal trait categories: 1. Interpersonal skills, 2. Organizational and planning skills, 3. Professional knowledge, 4. Vision, and 5. Flexibility. Although a lack of ability in any one of the categories could be detrimental, the categories that mitigate deficiencies in other categories is strong interpersonal skills and flexibility.

INDEX WORDS: New Schools, Principal's Role, New Principals, Successful Principals, Successful Leaders

A PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN OPENING A NEW SCHOOL

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Education has become one of the most discussed topics in America. In the early 1980's, reports critical of public education began to appear. In A Nation at Risk, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) predicted the demise of our nation if educational reform was not forthcoming. The Carnegie Forum's (1986) A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century, and the National Governors' Association's (1986) A Time for Results added reports and proposals to strengthen the perceived connection between America's economic impotence and its educational system (Murphy, 1992).

A myriad of reforms have found their way into educational practice. Open classrooms, whole language and other early educational reforms attempted to fix the existing delivery system by focusing on centralized controls and standards (Boyd, 1987; Sedlak, Wheeler, Pullin, & Cusick, 1986). These reforms, however, failed to bring about the desired improvements in the schools (Cuban, 1984; Sizer, 1984). The next wave of reform movements called for the restructuring of schools. These included such initiatives as educational choice, site-based management, and teacher empowerment (Bacharach, 1990; Chubb & Moe, 1992; Lieberman, 1988; Sergiovanni & Moore, 1989). However, many restructuring efforts have been undertaken in a haphazard manner and without focus (Pascale, 1990; Prestine & Bowen, 1993; Sams & Schenkat, 1990).

Since the 1980's every presidential candidate has touted educational reform as an integral part of his platform. Gubernatorial races are even more plagued by educational

jargon and proposed reforms. Most of these reforms have left teachers and principals more accountable but less empowered (Carnegie Foundation, 1986). It is widely acknowledged that the role of the principal is crucial to a school's effectiveness. Recent reports from many groups have also indicated that this role is becoming more demanding as a result of successive waves of school reform (Lyons 1999). A principal's effect on school outcomes is subject to many unpredictable variables, influences and mitigating circumstances. Interpretations of the school outcomes that should serve as templates for measuring a principal's effectiveness vary widely within the large body of research on the subject (Davis 1998).

If one is simply examining change, there is little doubt that the principal is the person most likely to be in a position to shape the organizational conditions necessary for change (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991). Fullan (1983, 1992) argues that principals engage in six activities that directly impact change. The first of these is to have and articulate a vision. The second step is evolutionary planning. The site administrator must be willing and able to allow the plan to evolve, changing direction as needed as the program progresses. The third step is initiative taking and empowerment. Site principals must be able to initiate the change and then allow the faculty to initiate when appropriate, thus providing them the power to take ownership of the new program. Fourth, the administrator must provide the staff development needed to familiarize the staff with the change, and to support staff members until they feel comfortable with the innovation and confident that they are competent to carry it out successfully. Monitoring and problem solving are the fifth step. The first five steps will lead to the sixth, which is restructuring. Restructuring

results in the new program taking the place of the old program and becoming a part of the overall institution.

No matter what the strategy for improving schools, all schools, good, bad, or improving, rely on the leadership exercised by a single individual, the school principal (Ashby, Vornberg, Yerkes, Whitaker, & Stone, 1996). In many regions throughout the United States principals have the added responsibility of dealing with rapidly growing student populations. These growing student populations invariably lead to the building of new schools.

The construction and opening of a new school adds a new dimension to the principal's role. A school administrator usually does not possess a degree in architecture, nor does he concentrate on school construction or spend time assessing the latest technology. However, principals are among the nation's best school designers because they possess the most important component of good school facility design; experience (Hubler, 1997). Any educational facility designed and built without extensive input from and support of administrators is doomed to fail (Sullivan, 1996).

The principal that is involved in the planning for new school construction must put instructional issues first. The physical layout of a school can enhance certain instructional strategies, discourage others, and have a significant impact on discipline (DeJong, 1997). If a principal is to effectively bring about change in his or her school it is a great asset to be involved in the design and construction of the school. Having a school that is designed to fit the curriculum and instructional methods that a school staff plans to implement will take some pressure off the principal.

The opening of a new school has many points of pressure for the principal. Every principal has to go through a school opening each school year. Findley & Findley (1998) have developed a checklist for principals to start each school year. This checklist has 13 categories, including the following: (Faculty Members, Counselors, Coaches, Band and vocal Music Directors, Students, Parents, Custodians, Food Service Workers, Bus Drivers, Office Operations, Media Services and Central office). Each of these categories consists of an average of ten tasks that need to be completed, before the start of each school year. Few people realize the amount of work that administrators must do before teachers and students arrive. As overwhelming as preparation may seem, it is only a part of what a principal of a new school must prepare for before the building is opened. To this list can be added such things as; interviewing and hiring an administrative staff, interviewing and hiring a secretarial staff, establishing a parent support organization, such as a PTO, and rezoning issues. Although seemingly minor issues, issues which generate significant public concern, like school colors and mascot must also be determined.

With pressure from politicians and others to bring about significant change in education and the many duties and responsibilities of opening a new school, what qualities are needed to be an effective principal of a new school? There is limited research on this topic. Therefore, the first step in answering this question is in identifying the specific duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school. To a large extent the duties and responsibilities will depend on when the principal of a new school is appointed.

This study was an autobiographical case study of a principal that was hired one week before the contract for the building which he was to become principal was let. The study focuses on a principal of a new school in one specific setting, during a particular period of time. The case study began when the principal of the new school was hired and chronicled events for two years. The account ended at the end of the first year of occupancy of the new school. The autobiographical case study can be divided into two primary job responsibilities; each divided into one year. The first year was that of school construction and the second year was of occupancy in the new school. Although there is a definitive line that can be drawn on the calendar to separate these responsibilities, in reality there is much overlapping throughout the two-year period. This study explored the process and the product. Maxwell (1992) noted that knowledge or data cannot be inherently valid or invalid. What matters is the inferences that are drawn from a collection of data. Living something is not enough; it needs to be interpreted. In this study the author told what happened and why he thought it happened. Shulman (1992) declared, “narrative modes are specific, local, personal, and contextualized. We do not speak of the validity of a narrative, but of its verisimilitude. Does it ring true? Is it a compelling and persuasive story” (p 23)? The quality of appearing to be true and real guided the information collection and analysis in this dissertation.

Purpose of the Study

This study documented leadership responsibilities of a principal of a new school. The purpose of this autobiographical case study was to describe the duties and responsibilities of a person that was hired to be principal of a school that was not yet built. The study examined these duties and responsibilities for a two-year period, the first

year while the new school was being constructed, and through the first year of occupancy in the new building. The case study method was used to describe, understand and generalize the organization being studied. The case study is considered to be a superior method of description, and the choices and tactics that define it also precisely define the process of transformation from local to global (Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993).

Organizational and managerial processes, such as those found in schools, are best investigated in a way that retains the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 1989).

This study was not intended to present conclusive evidence to prove or disprove theories, but rather to present a portrait of a principal of a new school. The intended audience is anyone interested in a detailed description of these duties and responsibilities. This should include officials in the many school systems in Georgia and other areas that are experiencing unprecedented growth and new school construction programs. Perhaps it will help new principals prepare for what is in store for them, aid in the selection of principals of new schools and give some guidance regarding when is the best time to hire the principal of a school that is under construction.

Rationale for the Study

The role of a principal is well researched and there are a large number of dissertations written with the principal's role as the topic. However, the research on principals of new schools is virtually nonexistent.

The need for research on this topic will increase as the school construction boom continues. In a 1997 dissertation Norris suggested in her recommendations for further research that a principal of a new site should preform an autobiographical case study.

Since the research is so limited, a logical start was a description of the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school. Senge (1990) stated that the study of patterns of behavior could lead to responsive behavior in which the individual is able to discern long-term trends and plan appropriately for how to deal with these trends. The identification of responsibilities was the first step in developing a body of research on the topic. Undoubtedly other studies and methods should follow, both qualitative and quantitative. In addition, the data have significance for school practitioners since the content of this study arose from descriptions of life within a school.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school, while that school is under construction?
2. What are the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school during the first year of occupancy in that school?
3. What characteristics or skills are needed to be a successful principal of a new school?

Definitions of Terms

Planning year ----- The year in which the new school is under construction and plans are being made to move into that new school. This may be interchanged with Construction year.

- Construction year ----- The year in which the new school is under construction. This may be interchanged with Planning year.
- First year of occupancy ---- The year that students, teachers and staff move into the school and operate as a functional school.
- Year one school ----- The school where the principal was housed during the construction year.
- Year two school ----- The new school that was constructed and occupied.

Organization of the Study

This study contains five chapters. Chapter I presented the introduction, purpose and the rationale for the study. Specific research questions, hypotheses and a definition of terms have also been stated in Chapter I. Chapter II contains an extensive review of related literature, which is divided into three major areas: A Principals Role, New School Construction, and Beginning Principals. Chapter III includes the research methodology and design, site description, and the case description. The case description and collection of data are organized into two, one-year segments. Year one is the new school construction phase and year two is the first year of occupancy in the new building. Chapter IV consists of the summary of findings and answers to research questions. Chapter V provides conclusions and recommendations for practitioners and future research

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to describe the experience of, planning for, and being a principal of a new school. This autobiographical study required an examination of literature related to being a principal and being a principal of a new school. There is a minimal amount of literature on this exact topic; therefore, the three topics that most closely relate to opening a new school were examined. While the focus of this study was on developmental processes and issues that arise during the planning year and first year of occupancy of the new school, much of the focus of the literature review is on leadership. The following sections review each of these areas as they relate to the principals role in opening a new school. The topic that most closely relates is the role of the principal, second is literature on the beginning principal and third is school facilities-planning new buildings.

Principal's Role as Leader of the School

A school principal's role is broad and dependent on many factors. For instance if the school is an elementary school, middle school, or high school, the roles can be vastly different. The role can also depend on whether it is the start or the end of a school year. The role can even depend on the time of week. In his classic ethnography, *The Man In The Principal's Office*, Wolcott uses over three hundred pages to describe the vastness that encompasses the life of one elementary school principal. It could take several dissertations to discuss all the possible roles that a principal can play, however, a short summary will be presented in this paper. During this review of literature, the level, i.e.

elementary, or high school, will not be differentiated. Only general roles of principals at all levels will be discussed.

As Abbott (1994) explained principals are asked to be “Renaissance Principals” Abbot describes the wide range of duties and responsibilities today’s principals are not only expected to accomplish, but are expected to master. Principals are primarily evaluated on student achievement, based on standardized test scores (Gray, 1999). However, many believe the real problem in public education is one of community, mental health and home-school connections (Dandridge, Edwards & Pleasants, 2000). No matter what area is being evaluated; evaluation brings with it a broader responsibility, school reform. School reform is generally accepted as the avenue that must be taken to increase student achievement (Ashby, 1996). It is widely acknowledged that the role of the principal is crucial to a school’s effectiveness. Recent reports from many groups have also indicated that this role is becoming more demanding as a result of successive waves of school reform (Lyons, 1999).

Secondly, principals must have talents in dealing with the staff of the school. This includes areas of human resources such as hiring and firing. It also includes the ability to develop collaboration and nurturing of teachers and other staff to bring out their best. An important aspect of nurturing is beginning teacher induction programs (Brock, & Grady, 1998). The beginning teacher can be very fragile and should be treated with care by the principal. The first three years of a teacher’s career usually have a profound effect on the remainder of their tenure in education.

Another related role is that of staff development. Staff development is not just for beginning teachers (Ellis, 1996). The principal is expected to take the lead in

determining what staff development is most beneficial and how it should best be implemented.

Much of a principal's role is rather abstract. The principal is supposed to provide "effective leadership", courage and vision for the school. Whenever there is an issue at a school or involving the school, it is the principal's role to deal with it. Many principals seem driven by their concerns for preserving and/or maximizing legitimacy (Johnson & Fauske, 2000). Is there any other profession where the manager is expected to be close to expert in such a vast array of topics?

How do school principals perceive their roles? While there is general agreement amongst principals interviewed in a study by Lyons, (1999), there is exact agreement that the role and responsibilities of the principal have changed over time, particularly during the last decade. The recent research, theory and professional organizations (for school principals) have generally recommended that principals:

1. Have a vision for their schools;
2. Have clear and well-understood goals;
3. Establish a safe and positive school climate;
4. Focus on academics, teaching and learning; and
5. Practice shared decision making in concert with teachers, parents, and students (Lyons, 1999).

Do principals perceive these issues as a fundamental part of their leadership roles?

According to Lyons' study all principals he interviewed stated that the development of school goals was a shared process in their schools. In general the principals listed their most important roles in the following rank order:

1. Providing a safe school environment and a positive school climate.

2. Fostering good teaching and learning.
3. Communicating with parents and promoting good school community relations.
4. Hiring and developing a good staff.
5. Monitoring student progress.
6. Managing school resources, i.e., budget, facility, school property, etc.
7. Determining school goals.
8. Leading, inspiring, and motivating staff.
9. Maintaining a child oriented school and being an advocate for children.
10. Maintaining positive staff relations and staff harmony (p 21).

Similarly in a study which interviewed 125 middle-school principals in Pennsylvania and New Jersey the qualities that made for an effective principal were listed as:

1. Have a very positive outlook about work, experience a high degree of job satisfaction, and view school problems as surmountable
2. Be more teacher-oriented
3. Be supportive of parent/community involvement in their schools
4. Have a high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty
5. Be intentional in their efforts to assemble, develop, and maintain a staff of dedicated educators who want to be in a middle school (Anfara, Brown, Mills, Hartman & Mahar, 2000 pp 43-46).

It appears from this list that while the order or importance of principals' duties or responsibilities may be a little different than what other academicians believe, the duties and responsibilities are generally what the academicians believe they should be.

The above description of a principal's role is not merely a definition of the role of the principal, but it is a description of the roles of an "effective" principal. Even though the literature on effective school leaders points to several quantifiable indicators, they simply do not, nor cannot, apply in a uniform fashion from one principal to another or from one school to another (Chemers, 1993). A principal's effect on school outcomes is subject to too many unpredictable variables, influences and mitigating circumstances.

However, even the skeptics among the empirical researchers admit that principals can exert a positive influence on certain school outcomes. The difficulty lies in determining with absolute precision which outcomes are affected by particular principal behaviors. The dynamics of the relationship between individual principals and their schools are simply too complex and unique to provide anything other than general guidance on how an effective principal, ought to behave (Davis 1998). As with any leadership position in which many different subgroups must be dealt with, i.e. students, parents, county office personnel, there is no definitive checklist that can describe the full dimension of effective school leadership. The research on effectiveness has generated a number of commonly accepted principles, though. These generally fall within three categories: 1) personal attributes of effective leaders; 2) leader behaviors; and 3) organizational outcomes.

Personal attributes include such things as how a leader tends to view their successes and failures and interpersonal skills. A successful leader tends to view the successes and failures as reflections of their ability, degree of effort or motivational level. They are self-reflective individuals who are honest about their shortcomings as well as strengths and are not afraid to seek assistance from others when confronted with complex

problems or tasks. In contrast, less effective leaders often possess an external locus of control. They are more likely to attribute success and failure to task difficulty, luck or the influence of others. They are not particularly self-reflective and rarely accept responsibility for organizational shortcomings or personal mistakes (Frieze, 1976).

Surprising to some, 200 superintendents were asked to rank the reasons why principals fail, and the number one reason was lack of people skills (Davis, 1998). The surprising part is that no other factor – including low student achievement, disorderly campus, resistance to change, poor time management, poor administrative skills or poor decision-making – came close to the importance of interpersonal relationships in explaining why principals fail. In today's time of focus on student achievement and accountability, it seems ironic that people skills, is still the most important aspect of a principleship.

People skills of a principal can have a direct impact on parent involvement in a school. Most agree that parent involvement is a very important factor for a successful school. Successful principals provide frequent reports to parents, a welcoming building, home-based teachers, and parents in important roles in the school (Kirschenbaum, 2000).

The second general area of effectiveness is leader behaviors. Once again, the problem is a lack of consensus within the profession regarding which behaviors lend themselves to effective leadership and under what circumstances such behaviors exert a positive effect on the school. A review of the literature points to some commonly held principles. First, it is widely believed that effective principals are decisive, organized, and efficient and task oriented. Second, effective principals are good communicators who respect and promote the qualities of cultural and intellectual diversity. Third, effective

principals facilitate the development of a positive school culture in which the safety and welfare of students and employees are protected. Fourth, effective principals set high expectations for staff and students, and create an atmosphere of purposeful scholastic work. Fifth, effective principals understand and promote effective instruction. Sixth, effective principals are visionaries who can galvanize and mobilize school-community support around shared beliefs and goals for the school (Davis, 1998).

Effective principals prefer solution-oriented conflict strategies, where differences are resolved through collaborative and integrative problem solving (Henkin, Alan, Cistone, Peter, & Dee, 2000). Importantly, the principal's most significant effect on student learning comes through his/her efforts to establish a vision for the school and goals related to the accomplishment of the vision (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

The third aspect of leader effectiveness examines organizational outcomes and effective leadership. Such outcomes commonly include one or more of the following: student test scores (achievement and aptitude tests), grade point averages, dropout rates, student suspension/expulsion rates, number of college bound students, teacher satisfaction, parent/community satisfaction, and various forms of school recognition (terms of accreditation, distinguished school awards, etc.) (Davis, 1998).

Some believe that many principals never develop the inner qualities that real leaders must possess (Clark, 1998). What are the qualities of "real" leaders? A two-year study conducted at Santa Clara University and at several locations around the country in the late 1980's surveyed over 2600 top-level executives and determined the top five qualities in a leader to be honesty, competence, ability to look ahead (vision), ability to

inspire others, and intelligence. These qualities appear remarkably similar to the qualities already cited in this review of literature describing an effective principal.

Schmoker (1996) and Rosenholtz (1991) assert that goals are at the center of success for any organization. In school terms, the central factor to school success is the principal taking the lead role in having a vision for the school. This main role leads to several subsidiary roles. These include; illuminating the strengths of the school and the educational system, setting high expectations, empowering all staff members to stretch, grow and achieve, ensuring that all aspects of classroom and school activities were meaningful, being a team member and team player amongst the faculty, perceiving diversity as a strength rather than a weakness, being a risk-taker, keeping the focus on the classroom (Payne & Michailides, 1998).

Many aspects of the principal's role as "captain of the vision" are cognitive and philosophical. Vann in a 1994 article gives a sample of a principal's vision. In this sample vision there is still the cognitive and philosophical, but also some very concrete behaviors that make up a principals role.

A Principals Vision

- A principal who is highly visible in classrooms, cafeteria, on the playground and in the halls, providing leadership in curriculum and instruction and readily available to both students and staff.
- High expectations for all children by the principal and staff.
- Clear school and grade-level goals, with the focus on seeking excellence by trying one's best at all times.
- Development and enrichment of communication and math/science skills, including reasoning and problem solving.

- Effective instruction and high time-on-task through good lesson-planning techniques and effective teaching strategies that include both direct instruction and cooperative learning.
- Frequent assessment of student progress through homework and testing for the purpose of improving instruction and as a basis for regrouping and reteaching.
- A safe and orderly school climate in which individuals treat each other with respect and dignity, and where all teachers implement classroom management programs that establish clear expectations for student behavior.
- Effective school-home communication, in which parents are regularly apprised of classroom practices and encouraged participate in the educational process.
- Recognition of the need to teach “golden rule” values and good citizenship qualities as means of fostering character development along with academic achievement.
- Principal and staff working collaboratively and willing to share decision-making power. (p. 26)

This example adequately describes not only the vision but also many of the behaviors and roles that go into implementing the vision.

The reality of today is that many evaluate the principal of a school by the achievement test scores of the students in that school. While the vision of a principal and thus the school most assuredly will include achievement scores, there are specific duties and responsibilities aimed solely at improving test scores. Principals must first evaluate the school’s most recent scores; secondly the principal and teachers must have a commitment to raising test scores, thirdly teachers and the principal should examine all the factors that influence students test performance and use every available resource to enhance that performance; lastly it is the principal’s responsibility to ensure quality control in the process (Gray 1999). Two effective leadership themes that principals can

practice to enhance classroom instruction are talking with teachers to promote reflection and promoting professional growth (Blase & Blase, 2000).

Politicians are fond of making educational reform a major plank in their platform. The main result of this reform is supposed to be higher achievement test scores. Principal behavior and attributes do significantly influence individual student achievement (Eberts & Stone, 1988). Therefore it is also a role of the principal to lead reform in the school. The specific role of the principal should be to remove barriers that restrict the ability of the staff to focus on curricular improvements affecting teaching and learning (Manges & Wilcox, 1997). The attributes that allow principals to manage successful school reform are the very same that allow principals to be successful in general, effective interpersonal skills, promoting cooperation and focusing on instruction (Hersey & Blanchard, 1997).

There is another area of reform, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Although the law maintains provisions that public schools have been practicing for many years, some provisions are likely to have more direct impact on delivery of services to students with disabilities. Recent judicial rulings are also redefining the responsibilities of public schools in serving eligible students with disabilities (Williams & Katsiyannis, 1998). As mentioned previously this most recent legislative and litigative activity is occurring during a period of national educational reform. Restructuring efforts continue to explore ways that schools can be more responsive to the educational needs of all students. As a result, the approach often referred to as a “dual system” for general and special education is being examined and questioned in terms of efficacy and equity (Sage & Burello, 1994; Stainback & Stainback, 1996).

How does this impact a principal's role? Williams and Katsiyannis address this question in their 1998 article;

Principals should facilitate, at the school level, collaborative planning and problem-solving discussions between general and special educators, other specialists, students, and family members to respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. The Law serves as a backdrop against which such planning can occur. (p. 12)

Often a result of the collaborative planning is the inclusion model. Inclusion exists when any required special education services are provided within general education settings or within close proximity to age-appropriate classes. The amount of time children with disabilities are included, supported, and educated with peers without disabilities is maximized (Parker & Day, 1997). This becomes increasingly more difficult as the severity of the students disability increases.

Principals today are often charged with creating or leading an inclusive school, one attended by all children within an age range from a given geographical area. Children with disabilities attend the same school they would attend if they had no disabilities (Sailor et al., 1989; Villa, Thousand, Stainback, & Stainback, 1992). The principal must gather opinions and data regarding the conflicts, issues, and challenges voiced by school personnel relating to the current mission. The extent of a match between the current mission of the school, individual beliefs and values, and the promotion of inclusive practices must be determined (Parker & Day, 1997).

In addition to issues related to Inclusion, principal's duties also are affected by individualized education plans (IEPs). In a school setting principals are sometimes the only "representative of the school agency" qualified to lead IEP meetings. According to the IDEA, (Individuals with Disabilities Educational Act), this person must be qualified

to provide or supervise the provision of specially designed instruction and be knowledgeable about the general education curriculum and availability of resources (Williams & Katsiyannis, 1998).

Discipline guidelines for individuals with disabilities is yet another aspect of IDEA that greatly influences a principal's duties. IDEA guidelines require that any discipline that results in more than ten days of interrupted services must be modified. Principals have a role in ensuring broad-based community support to conceptualize the nature and aims of alternative education, securing needed funding, hiring qualified personnel, articulating entry and exit criteria, providing for ongoing training and support, fostering collaborative efforts with public and private agencies, and implementing a sound personnel and program evaluation process (Williams & Katsiyannis, 1998).

One of the key factors in dealing with students under IDEA guidelines is selecting the appropriate personnel. Personnel issues, as a whole, is another area that takes much time and energy on the part of the principal. Human resource issues make up a very important part of a principal's duties and responsibilities. In a 1994 study Webb, Montello, and Norton interviewed seventy-four principals regarding human resource responsibilities. Staff selection, staff assignment, and organizational climate, were major responsibilities of over ninety percent of the principals. Staff evaluation, staff development, and staff orientation were above the eighty-four percent level. It is clear that the school principal today assumes a significant leadership role in the effective administration of the human resources function. There is general consensus among educators and others that effective school programs are inextricably related to staff quality (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh, Sybouts, 1996).

Staff Evaluation consistently ranks as the most time consuming aspect of human resources (Norton, 1999). Related to staff evaluation is staff development. Staff development can also be very time consuming. Principals should establish a focus for their staff development as quickly as possible, recognizing that principals still have to leave room for an individual teachers professional needs (Ellis, 1996). Staff development of beginning teachers is also very important.

The literature on first-year teachers identifies the difficulties of the transition into teaching and supports the need for first-year teacher induction programs (Brock 1988, 1990; Ryan 1979, 1986; Veenman 1984; Zumwalt 1984). Principals play a key role in inducting beginning teachers into their schools as well as into the teaching profession (Hughes 1994; Lieberman & Miller 1994; Smith & Andrews 1989). To provide appropriate support and direction to their new teachers, principals need to understand the problems of those teachers and the significance of the principal's role in helping with their problems (Chester 1992; Lee 1994; Sergiovanni 1994). With the many duties and responsibilities that principals have. It may become easy to overlook the struggles of first year teachers. Mentor programs are important to a beginning teacher's success, however it is very important for principals to make their expectations clear to first year teachers. Principals are central to the successful socialization and first-year induction of beginning teachers (Brock & Grady, 1998).

The induction of first year teachers is very important to a school's success, there are many other issues that are, debatably, very important as well. The duties and responsibilities associated with the start of a new school year can be overwhelming. Every principal is aware of the importance of being prepared to open school in the fall.

Equally important, but not so obvious, is the process of closing one school year in preparation for the next. When getting ready to begin a school year, principals can focus most of their time and energy on tasks related to opening school, since faculty members and students are not present. At the end of the school year, however, the faculty and students are still in the building, and school is in full operation. Principals must get ready to close the school year while still operating the school (Findley & Findley, 1998).

Extra curricular, discipline issues, and boundary realignment in a growing system, all tax a principal's time. The principal's job is rife with paradoxes, and competing forces often pull the principal in many different directions. Unfortunately these factors often overshadow how rewarding the job can be (Marnik, 1998). In their report, Maine Principals and their Worklives: A study of the Maine School Principalship, Donaldson and Hausman concluded, "There is an overwhelming consensus that the principal's job is in 1997 more professionally challenging and personally taxing than it has ever been" (p 11). A report commissioned by NASSP and the National Association of Elementary School Principals mirrors this conclusion on a national level. The role of the principal must change to meet the challenges of the twenty first century. Administrators must develop a new conception of their roles as instructional leaders (Colon, 1994). School principals must become instructional leaders, develop philosophy and vision, lead staff development, foster morale in the school, oversee extracurricular activities, create a safe environment in the school, mentor new teachers, and a myriad of other duties. If these duties are performed in a way that elicits staff and parent satisfaction then the principal will be viewed as successful (Davis, 1998).

Beginning Principals

The role of the principal has been described as instructional leader; business leader; office clerk or manager; and consultant, counselor, and adviser. Major job responsibilities have grown from as few as 10 to as many as 60. Research suggests that principals in urban settings face as many as 100 separate events and 400 interactions a day (Morris et al., 1981). Considering the sometimes-overwhelming complexity of the modern principal's role, it is easy to see why beginning principals often feel inadequate. At first things may go smoothly. Teachers will generally pitch in to help the new principal get off to a good start. As time goes by, however, they get caught up in the day-to-day business of running their own classrooms. The new principal is on his or her own. New principals often discover there is much about being principal that they do not teach in schools of educational administration (Wilmore, 1995).

How is the parent calmed down who is furious over a bus situation when the principal is not in charge of transportation? What explanation is given to the teacher and/or parent to explain why Johnny does not qualify for special education services because he does not meet eligibility requirements, when it is quite evident he can't read a word? It doesn't help concerned parents to find out it is their child who is slipping through the bureaucratic cracks. What is done about the athletes who can't quite seem to remember to do daily work or study for tests until report cards come out and they find out they failed and are ineligible for extra-curricular activities? One solution to the problems beginning principals' face is mentoring (Wilmore, 1995).

Related to mentoring is talking with and studying what experienced principals have to say and have experienced themselves. In a 1999 study Lyons interviewed 184

principals and asked them what advice they had for new principals. There were 13 main points of advice:

1. Have a vision for the school and stay focused on it.
2. Be a good listener.
3. Establish your leadership role as principal.
4. Stay up-to-date on teaching and learning, educational research, and learn all you can.
5. Admit that you do not know everything.
6. Have patience and realize that it takes time to improve a school.
7. Be fair and consistent and do not play favorites.
8. Learn to delegate.
9. Ask for help.
10. Establish a network of relationships and get a mentor.
11. Always remember what is good for students when you make decisions.
12. Keep your life in perspective and do not make the job your life; have a stress outlet.
13. Do not take attacks personally and maintain a sense of humor. (p. 22)

Having a mentor and a good preparation program are steps that will make for a successful move into a principalship.

The vast majority of beginning principals move into the principalship from an assistant principal's position. It is important for the beginning principal to realize that the principal position is different (Rieger, 1995). Assistant principals are relatively insulated from negative feedback because the "boss" is there to act as the court of last appeal if people disagree with the assistant's decisions. There is a strong correlation between the

authority to make decisions and criticism (Rieger, 1995). Journalist Greenfield (1994) has highlighted a critical asset of successful leaders: they must be thick-skinned. She says it is imperative that people in authority “establish some kind of hard-shelled comfort level under attack, some discipline that allows them to absorb the blows and still keep going (p 23).” Without this defense, she adds, leaders will spend most of their time worrying about criticism and not focusing on the job at hand. Successful new principal’s identified life long learning as the key to success. The three main categories of this learning were, professional identity, influence of the liberal arts, and personal identity (Boris-Schacter & Merrifield, 2000).

Some believe that the only true preparation for a principal’s positions is experience. In the book The First Year as Principal: Real World Stories from America’s Principals. Thorpe (1995) reported the interviews of 30 educators to give “the delight, the frustration, and above all the ambiguity attendant to that initial year” (p. xi).

Here we find career educators who have spent years in the classroom working with students, colleagues, and parents and who by all accounts know the essence of schooling as well as the technical side of how school “keeps.” Yet, pulling it all together and providing the vision of where a school ought to go next require a whole new set of skills. Leadership, it appears, is not experienced by the leader in quite the way it is experienced by those being led.

A second theme is the frustration felt by many principals who set out to provide instructional leadership for their schools but soon find themselves in a dozen other roles ranging from traffic cop to plumber, fire fighter to arbitrator. Leadership means knowing what to do when. (p. xvi)

The gap between vision and current reality for new principals seems to be similar to what Sarason (1972) describes when discussing the socialization of leaders during the relation of new settings. He states that the theorist and the practitioner have views of the same process but from different vantage points and both views are correct to the extent

that they explain what is happening. New principals seem to react like theorists who are suddenly confronted with the application of their theories, and find that their theories have only limited use in the every day operation of schools. While new principals are willing to take risks in order to move toward implementing their vision of the school, a vision based on limited experience and understanding of schools and of the role of principal, they find themselves having to reconstruct their role based on their experience and having to readjust their vision to include contextual factors (Macmillan, 1998). Little guidance is provided by first year principal's predecessors and scant support is offered by the central office. Principals are expected to go through a "rite of passage" similar to that of a first-year teacher, and colleagues assume that their struggles are inevitable (Brock & Grady, 1996).

A study of the literature on principal preparation programs and on what beginning principals should do during their first year will help in understanding the plight of a new principal. Training programs for principals are generally viewed to be inadequate (Sherman, 2000). The recent waves of educational reform seem to have increased the emphasis on educational leadership programs, both at the university level and in local school systems. One preparation model that has recently received more attention is the cohort program in educational leadership. Cohort educational leadership programs try to include a networking aspect to preparation programs (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000). Another evolving preparation program is allowing principals to take "timeout" from their school and meet with other principals, study new theories, skills, and visions, leads to more fundamental and pivotal changes in the schools (Ballet; et al, 2000).

With the changes in school principals' responsibilities accompanying various education reform efforts, policy makers have recommended that schools and districts play greater roles in the principal preparation process (National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration, 1987). In interviews, beginning principals frequently lament that they are "overwhelmed." Shock, insufficient preparation time before the first day of school year, nervousness and worry are common themes (Brock & Grady, 1996). As of 1993-1994, schools and districts were playing active roles in the preparation of more than one-third of public school principals overall and about one-half of minority principals and of principals who worked in central city schools (De Angelis & Rossi, 1997). In addition, the finding that new principals were more likely than experienced principals to have participated in a local aspiring principals program suggest that participation in this sort of program has become increasingly important to the career development of all public school principals.

Unfortunately, aspiring principals often have only a vague understanding of what the position entails—the loneliness, the conflicts, the dull routines, the paperwork and the anguish involved in attempting to solve complex educational and organizational problems with extremely limited resources (Elsberry & Bishop 1996). New principals express a need for training in practical aspects of administration such as preparing budgets, developing supervision and evaluation plans, organizing teacher in-service, conflict management skills and communication techniques. Other needs include mock "in-basket" sessions, interviewing techniques, dealing with parents and working with varying socioeconomic groups (Brock & Grady, 1996). Many principal preparation programs are based on the assumption that principals have within themselves the ability to help each

other become effective leaders and create schools where all children achieve (Franklin & Jone, 1997). Klein and Wasserstein-Warnet (2000), found that successful principals have a basic orientation toward an internal locus of control, however, regarding work, they tend more toward an external locus than less successful colleagues. To often principals fail in their first year because they do not receive orientation and support (Elsberry & Bishop, 1996).

A study of first year principals in Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina identified practices that these principals considered to be most effective for success in their new roles (Elsberry, 1993). Leading the list were summer induction conferences before a principal's first year, which allow a beginning administrator to learn about the new job without the stress of daily school responsibilities. The second most effective practice was the assignment of a veteran district administrator to help a new principal "learn the ropes" during the first year. This assistance can take the form of technical advice; help in learning and understanding the district's unwritten rules, procedures, and expectations; or simply to provide a confidant with whom the new principal can discuss ideas and problems. A mentor relationship with an administrator who has no supervisory authority provides the novice principal the freedom to question and observe with no strings attached.

One of the most successful methods for initiating new principals into the role is structured mentoring programs (Brock & Grady, 1996). A form of mentoring is peer coaching. Peer coaching with a fellow school administrator provides an excellent opportunity to discuss and reflect on practice in a mutually supportive, safe environment. Debriefing on difficult situations, watching a peer lead meetings, and shadowing a peer

during classroom observation are examples of peer coaching activities that allow participants in peer coaching to gain understanding, insight and support for their administrative work. Unless new school administrators have a structured peer coaching experience, they may rarely find the time to reflect on their practice (Speck & Krovetz, 1996). In a 1993 study Krovetz and Barekman evaluated program participants' views about the benefits of peer coaching and instruction. These seven benefits were listed as significant:

- Reduce isolation among administrators.
- Build collaborative norms that enable administrators to give and receive ideas and assistance.
- Enable administrators to work smarter, not harder.
- Share successful practices (coach to person being coached, and vice versa).
- Transfer training from the classroom to the workplace.
- Investigate the connection between their own planning/organization and the consequences.
- Encourage reflective practice. (p. 37)

Clearly, peer coaching is a very valuable experience. Peer coaching reduces professional isolation, helps participants share ideas with colleagues, and encourages participants to reflect on their professional experiences (Speck & Krovetz, 1996).

Peer coaching or mentoring are not the only preparation of which aspiring principals should partake. A creative program for the academic preparation for school leaders might include the frameworks recently implemented at the University of Northern Colorado (Daresh & Barnett, 1993). These frameworks reflect a shift from individual courses in such traditional areas as school law, supervision, finance, school-community

relations, and personnel to a core set of five integrated learning experiences:

Understanding Self; developing a personal vision for educational leadership, Shaping Organizations; management and leadership in education, Understanding People; professional development and educational leadership, Understanding Environments; social, political, economic, and legal influences, and Using Inquiry; framing problems and making decisions in educational leadership. Programs such as these should incorporate traditional learning with the innovative.

Another aspect that should be added to leadership preparation programs is internships for aspiring school administrators (Ginty, 1995). Internships provide individuals with a clear picture of what life as a school administrator would be like on a sustained basis. Like internships in other professions, this experience gives the chance to learn and practice technical skills under the supervision of an experienced practitioner. Full-time internships provide an important orientation to school administration and strengthen the link between university preparation and the world of public schools (Ginty, 1995).

Academic preparation is one aspect of becoming a new school principal. There also seem to be certain skills that are necessary for success. Schmieder, McGrevin and Townley, in a 1994 article report that there is strong agreement among and between principals and superintendents regarding critical skills that are needed for new principals. Thirteen critical skills were identified, these skills are;

1. Knowing how to evaluate staff (e.g., procedures for the task and also substance: What do standards really mean?).
2. Knowing how to facilitate/conduct group meetings (large and small).

3. Knowing how to design and implement a databased improvement process, including goal setting and evaluating.
4. Knowing how to develop and monitor a building budget.
5. Knowing how to organize and conduct parent-teacher-student conferences.
6. Knowing how to establish a scheduling program for students and staff (master schedule).
7. Awareness of the state code and other issues associated with school law.
8. Knowing how to manage food service, custodial and secretarial staff.
9. Establishing a positive and cooperative relationship with other administrators in the district.
10. Knowing how to delineate employee roles in a school setting.
11. Knowing how to relate to school board members and central office personnel.
12. Knowing where the ethical limits exist within the district or building and balancing that knowledge with one's own professional values.
13. Understanding how the principalship changes one's family and other personal relationships. (p. 281)

It would seem that it would be difficult to teach all of these skills in an educational leadership program. Many of these skills must be developed over many years or be inherent to the individual.

What advice then do experienced principals have for the beginners?

There are many articles written on this topic. The following is a representative sample. Some may sound a bit simplistic, while others too academic; they all, however, offer sound advice. Pawlas (1997) gives A Dozen Guidelines to Ease a Principal's Journey .

1. Have a positive mental attitude, 2. Hire the best people, 3. Delegate, 4. Praise your school in public, 5. Be enthusiastic, 6. Be visible throughout

the school, 7. Manage by walking around, 8. Talk with teachers about teaching, 9. Pay attention to your support staff, 10. View parents as partners, 11. First impressions are often lasting impressions, 12. Expect the best from everyone...including yourself. (pp. 108-110)

These suggestions not only ring true for school leadership, but leadership period.

Skelly (1996) offered ten similar “tips for making the grade”:

1. Understand the power of the position and respect it.
2. Have a mentor.
3. Listen.
4. Be humble.
5. Do something safe, dramatic and visible early.
6. Find out as much as possible about your predecessors and where the “land mines” are.
7. Ask people for advice on how to make decisions and move slowly to change existing policies.
8. Be an educational leader.
9. Be positive.
10. Keep things in perspective. (pp. 90-96)

Murray (1995) also has offered 10 suggestions to help novice administrators achieve success and avoid pitfalls.

1. Clarify perceptions of philosophy and determine the overall objective of the school.
2. Practice shared decision-making and be flexible during the decision-making process.
3. Maintain a climate of high expectations for both students and employees.
4. Practices should reflect an assertive approach to educational leadership.
5. Take time to listen.
6. The leader is responsible for developing ideas and influencing the group.
7. Manage time well.
8. Recognize and accept responsibility of providing for professional growth of assistant administrators.
9. Market the success of the organization.
- 10.

Approach controversy with caution and political astuteness. (pp. 70-73)

Experienced principals would be wise to follow these guidelines.

Finally, Holman (1996) offered a few suggestions to help a new principal get off on the right foot.

1. Organize your office.
2. Locate key work-related items.
3. Get the support of your assistant principal.
4. Get the support of your office manager, cafeteria manager, and head custodian.
5. Get the support of your faculty and staff.
6. Get the support of your parent community.
7. Get to know your students.
8. Move slowly in implementing change.
9. Establish a few visible and popular goals.
10. Sponsor a school fundraiser.
- And 11. Network! (pp. 40- 41)

It is also apparent that their ideas overlap. Issues such as getting support of the staff, establishing goals, getting a mentor, and others are reoccurring themes. The above paragraphs offer an interconnecting web of advice for new principals.

With improving training both from academic institutions and from local school systems and with the sound advice and guidance that is available, why do some new principals fail? Superintendents were asked what they believed to be the three biggest challenges for beginning principals. Their responses fell into four major categories: interpersonal skills, academics/curriculum leadership, fiscal resources and management/ leadership role, however, it was interpersonal skills issues that resulted in most failures (Schmieder & McGrevin & Townley, 1994).

Interpersonal skills are not easily taught in the academic setting. Most agree that when the leadership certificates are complete and the internships are over, new principals simply need to be mentally prepared to open school. New principals facing their first school opening should think about what the beginning of a new school year means to them and to the school and community. New principals are expected to resolve critical issues and make crucial decisions from the minute they step into the front office. There is little time to “get their feet wet”; they are immediately in the spotlight and should be prepared for whatever the opening of school brings (Alley, 1995).

A new role for the principal is beginning to emerge – one that demands a creative, enthusiastic, uniting, collaborative approach to leadership (Schmieder, McGrevin, & Townley, 1994). The challenge for universities is to develop programs that reflect the emerging paradigm shift. Greater emphasis on interpersonal skills, psychology, adult learning, philosophy, creativity, and collaborative decision-making may need to dominate the curriculum.

A new position always requires a period of adjustment, especially a new principal (Vonvillas, 1994). Taking over as a new principal is an exciting yet scary experience. Although it can be stressful, if handled correctly, the first year can be a time of opportunity. New principals can develop support, nurture respect, and establish a collaborative school environment. They can build their credibility while molding the school into their desired image (Whitaker & Lumpa, 1995).

New School Construction

Principals are among the nations best school designers (Hubler, 1997). Principals usually do not have architecture degrees or concentrate most of their time on school construction or spend the majority of their time assessing the latest construction technology. However, school administrators possess the most important component of good school facility design: experience. Constructing school facilities requires a multitude of considerations: long term planning and involvement of stakeholders, availability of financial resources, legal and financial counsel and contracting with architects and contractors (Swartzendruber, 1996). Who should make the decisions concerning new school construction? Thirty-seven states offer some form of financial help to local systems with new school construction (National Governors' Association, 2000).

School facility design can have a profound effect on student learning (Dykman, 1998). Cleanliness of a building, proper heat and air and lighting are accepted by most as critical factors on how students feel, and thus in student learning. However, the actual design of the building can make a student feel special and different (Copa, 1998). Design should be flexible and stimulating and create a positive learning environment. Many factors influence the learning environment, including inside and outside space, corridors, and interior design (Kleberg, 1992). Considering these factors, educators should be intricately involved in new school design.

Principals and teachers are brought in to the construction process too late to have significant input in most new school construction projects (Hubler, 1997). Too often, school district leaders allow schools to be constructed that force the instructional program

to fit into them. The result is a beautiful design that falls short of meeting the needs of the professional staff who must carry out the district's educational goals (Fox & Psencik, 1997). Effects on students should be the primary factor in new school design. The level of the school i.e., elementary, middle, or high, will also have a profound effect on the design of the school. Roles of all parties involved, architect, contractors, and school system employees and a plan for occupancy should be well defined before the new building process begins.

Can the way a school is designed have any effect on the instruction that goes on within that school? Almost every educator will agree that a well-maintained school building is essential for a proper learning environment. However, Abe Lincoln learned to read by candlelight in a cold log cabin, and still grew up to become president. The difficulty lies in properly isolating the variables that influence student learning. While the direct relationship may be hard to pin down, the effect is there nonetheless. The physical setting in which instruction occurs will affect learners' behavior, whether or not it is intended (Weinstein, 1992).

Many "schools of the future" limit learning more drastically and subconsciously than can ever be imagined. Poor design of lighting, acoustics, ventilation, and other factors reduces the connection of electronically formatted information and the learning styles of the student (Franklin, 1995). It is incumbent upon school systems to provide their students with the best opportunity to learn. With respect to instructional experiences, minimally, the ability to distinguish among the different educational settings (classes and schools) in which assessments are administered is a necessary condition for an appropriate interpretation of student performance data. Information about actual topic

coverage and instructional methods are even greater value (Burstein, 1989). If schools are to be held accountable for the equitable delivery of educational opportunities, the core of the education performance indicator systems should include school and classroom process information (Wang, 1998).

There is no doubt that building condition affects academic performance. The issue is not whether it does, but how to best spend the limited funds available to school districts on design and construction (Cash, Earthman, & Hines, 1997). Today's school designs reflect a radical change in the way that many educators look at children and learning. Research has found that for effective learning to take place, children have to be actively involved (Firlík, 1994). In his 1994 article Dyck gives six suggestions for creating a learner-friendly classroom:

1. Avoid positioning tables, chairs and other movable furniture evenly throughout the room. Instead, create some densely used areas and some that are more open, some small and large.
2. Remove the teacher's desk. It takes up space that could be used by the children. Teachers' desks should be located in an area convenient to the classroom, where teachers can share issues, problems, ideas, and resources.
3. Don't assign students to individual seats. Instead, create workstations by using small, rectangular tables and separate chairs.
4. Make maximum use of movable furniture. Permanent built-in cabinets and bookshelves restrict flexibility and adaptability.
5. Keep the environment fresh by changing it regularly. Involve the children in planning and carrying out these changes. Giving them a sense of control over their environment fosters a sense of ownership and of self-worth.
6. Don't fill the walls with excessive displays. It's far more effective to display a few pieces of nicely matted work for a short

period of time and replace them regularly, than to display every child's work at the same time. (p. 39)

All teachers may not find all of these effective all of the time, however, the suggestions should be seriously considered.

The physical setting effects on learners occur in two ways—directly, by the behavior the setting allows, and indirectly or symbolically, by the messages the setting communicates about what behaviors are permitted, how important learning is, and what the roles of the learner and teacher should be (Weinstein, 1992). Teachers and instructional designers should consider the direct and indirect effects of various spatial arrangements and determine which formations will maximize the effectiveness of the designed instruction. Many new schools have large, shared work spaces as well as classrooms that are more intimate and technology equipped than those of older schools. These schools are being built with children's learning styles and teacher's needs in mind (Firlik, 1997)

The needs of the teachers and students will differ depending on whether the school being built is elementary, middle, or high. Elementary schools should be able to support self-contained instruction, grade-level teams, multiage groups, and performance-based learning. Secondary schools should be able to deliver departmentalized, team, intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary teaching, schools-within-a-school, and a variety of other approaches, possibly concurrently. All schools should be able to support large-group, small-group, and individualized instruction and should have the appropriate infrastructure to support current and evolving technology (DeJong, 1997).

The relationship between architecture and educational philosophy is powerful and complex. Although school design cannot, and indeed should not, be used to force

changes in educational philosophy, it can help create an environment in which change is possible (Sullivan, 1996). Designing a high school, for example, requires different thinking when compared with an elementary or middle school. Tucker and Zahn in a 1997 article, list several features which differentiate high-school students from their younger peers and effect school construction and design:

- A greater number of students congregate on a single campus.
- Less supervision is needed between classes and after school.
- Harder wear and tear on furniture and finishes, particularly those found in common areas occurs.
- The facility is used more for after-school activities.
- The campus may be open. (p. 90)

Building a successful high school actually begins long before an architect starts designing. District personnel should work closely with planners and architects to decide the project's larger goals, including academic and social perspectives as well as the effects the school will have on faculty, students and staff (Tucker & Zahn, 1997).

The close relationship between architecture and educational philosophy is nowhere more evident than in the contemporary middle school. The dissolution of subject specific departments, the necessity of interdisciplinary instruction and block scheduling, the emphasis on applied and experiential learning, and the desire to create an educational environment that acknowledges the social and emotional needs of young adolescents are all modifications to instructional practices brought about as a direct result of the shift to a learner-centered philosophy (Sullivan, 1996).

Regardless of the level there are three questions that should be given serious consideration before a building program begins; how might a building accommodate

different instructional approaches? What impact do aesthetics have on teacher and student attitudes toward the building? Should the community be encouraged to become an educational partner in the building (DeJong, 1997)? The challenge is how to integrate instruction, aesthetics and security into a place that stimulates and enhances the learning process (Tucker & Zahn, 1997). It is obvious that construction and design will have a significant impact on the success of a new school.

Improving instruction should be a goal of any new construction project, however, school systems usually have many other needs as well. There are five factors that should be considered as criteria for a building needs assessment; the overall condition of an existing facility, the degree of overcrowding in a building, the number of students served by a school, the projected enrollment of a school in the next five years, and the health and safety concerns related to a given project (Pellicer & Stevenson, 1997).

Building to accommodate technology is one issue that all school systems face. How can new schools be designed and built for the high-tech future when it is unknown exactly what that future will hold 10 years or 20 years from now? Ezra Ehrenkrantz and Stanton Eckstut in their 1995 article Design For Flexibility, give five strategies, which will help ensure that new buildings can successfully evolve along with technology.

1. Create a district wide strategic plan. A strategic plan creates a synergy between new and old facilities that allows delivery of comparable education quality across the district. A strategic plan charts a new future for a district.
2. Design diversity and flexibility into the school. A flexible school design will support people's freedom to choose and create the setting that best meets their needs.

3. Anticipate technology needs in new construction. Exact technology needs in five or 10 years cannot be predicted, but some basic requirements can be implemented, such as adequate electrical wiring, good lighting, environmental controls for computers and other equipment, and planning for wireless systems.
4. Don't do work that must be undone in the future. Do not build in rigid structure and technology that might become out-of-date in 10 or 20 years and have to be replaced. Commitment to one and only one technology now means rapid obsolescence and high replacement costs.
5. Maintain the present to build for the future. Combining maintenance with technological upgrades helps move all schools into the 21st century and saves money. (pp. A31, A32)

Much of the technology, which will effect twenty first century school facilities, has not yet entered the market or even been invented. However, a district should of necessity, develop a technology plan. The plan should also include a yearly updating. It should detail what technologies will be used in classrooms, offices and in building systems. It should include purchase costs, lease costs, repair costs, update costs and possible replacement costs (Glass, 1997).

In order for technological, as well as population and other needs, to be meet in new school construction, architects and school officials must work hand in hand. Architects work with school personnel to develop a building plan that meets client needs. The finished design will contain the required spaces and space relationships to assure that client requirements will be met (Stewart, 1996). Architects are seldom trained in curriculum. They should not lead a process that is intended to understand the educational future, technology applications and curriculum. Properly trained facilitators in curriculum and facilities can better understand where a school district currently is, where it might go and all the practical issues related to getting there (Hill, 1996). School

architecture should be redesigned to match the vision for overall school restructuring (Bruce, 1991).

Many believe that the management of school construction should be handled “in-house” (Stewart, 1996). Often a business administrator for the school district will be in charge of the construction program. Sometimes the school superintendent will be in charge and/or a construction manager working for the school board. The school business administrators should be equipped to lead a district facility planning effort. To do so, he/she needs to possess a reasonable level of knowledge about all of the processes and components of a master facility plan (Glass, 1994). School construction should always remain an educational issue.

It is ironic that the millions (if not billions) of dollars being spent on school reform research, literature and rhetoric do not take into account the obvious need for adequate facilities to house reformed/restructured educational programs. What is even more surprising is the lack of emphasis on facilities within districts strategic plans, which are now being developed and implemented in thousands of school districts (Glass, 1994). It is after all the education that goes on after a school is completed that is the most important aspect of a new school.

The final and most satisfying phase of construction is moving into the new facility. Employees transferring from existing facilities to a new facility undergo the typical stresses associated with significant change, including a new and unknown environment as well as new coworkers and changed work dynamics (Swartzendruber, 1996). This last phase is the beginning of the actual occupancy and another topic open for discussion.

Summary

From the review of literature on the role of the principal, beginning principals, and new school facilities many conclusions can be drawn that relate directly to the three research questions. Some issues relate primarily to one of the research questions, while others overlap two or all three.

The literature emphasized several key points that fall within the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school, while that school is under construction. Principals that have the luxury to have input during the construction of the school they are going to be principal of should keep the improvement of instruction at the center of all decisions they make (Pellicer & Stevenson, 1997).

An underlying theme of the literature on the role of the principal was the importance of having a vision and goals. A principal of a school that is under construction should tie all construction suggestions to his or her vision for that school (Fox & Psencik, 1997). Because principals are often the most qualified person associated with a new school construction project to make educational decisions, input during construction, for the improvement of instruction and in keeping with the principal's vision are not only recommended, but considered mandatory for success (Hubler, 1997). In making suggestions the principal should keep the ever-changing landscape of technology in mind and make suggestions that allow for, as yet unknown, growth in the area of technology (DeJong 1997).

A role that often overlaps the construction year of a school and the first year of occupancy is staff selection. While a principal should be concerned with the many construction and physical issues of the new school, it is paramount that he or she focus on

staff selection for the new school (Norton et al., 1996). Another overlapping duty is that of furniture needs. In keeping with the principal's vision he or she will need to order the furniture that will meet this vision when the school is occupied. Type of furniture and placement of this furniture can have a significant impact on teacher moral and the education of students (Dyck, 1994).

Whether it is the placement of furniture or the selection of staff a principal of a new school must be the master of multiple tasks (Abbot, 1994). A principals duties and responsibilities during the first year of occupancy of a school not only include issues dealing with construction, but also duties related to instructional leadership, developing philosophy and vision, leading staff development, overseeing extra curricular activities, creating a safe environment, and mentoring new teachers (Davis, 1998). Among the most time consuming of these tasks is staff evaluation (Norton, 1999). Another responsibility that principals are often ill prepared for is knowledge about special education law and IDEA (Williams & Katsiyannis, 1998).

In the midst of these many duties and responsibilities the principal of a new school is also expected to be the "captain of reform"(Lyons, 1999). If a principal is to accomplish all this he or she must have a clear vision and goals (Lyons, 1999). Often a new principal will become disillusioned when the vision he or she had during the planning year does not match with the reality of the first year of occupancy (Thorpe, 1995). This gap often results in a feeling of being overwhelmed. The literature suggests two ways to reduce this feeling. One is better academic preparation (Brock & Grady, 1996), and the other is mentoring programs for principals (Wilmore, 1995). Many

principals of new schools fail because they have no orientation or support (Elsbery & Bishop, 1996).

However, the number one reason principals of new schools fail is because of a lack of interpersonal skills (Davis, 1998). Having interpersonal skills are the most important ability or characteristic a principal of a new school will need. This skill seems to be the common denominator for the other necessary characteristics. The principal must facilitate a smooth move into the new building (Swartzendruber, 1996). This requires organization skills, but facilitating a smooth move while also fostering moral requires strong interpersonal skills (Davis, 1998).

A principal of a new school should be willing to listen to and take the advice of others (Alley, 1995). The mentoring and improved academic training mentioned earlier will be for naught if the principal is not willing to be open to what others have to say (Townley, 1994). Related to this, a principal of a new school must be willing to take criticism (Rieger, 1995). It is highly unlikely that with the myriad of decisions a principal of a new school must make, everyone will be pleased with each of these decisions. If the principal is able to keep his or her, clear, articulated, vision at the center of the decision making process, success will be much easier to achieve (Hallinger & Heck, 1996).

The characteristics or skills that are needed to be a successful principal of a new school are the same as those for effective leaders everywhere (Frieze, 1976). Even though the literature does not directly address the role, duties, characteristics, and skills of a principal of a new school, inferences can be made concerning the research questions. In general, the duties and characteristics of a successful principal of a school that is under

construction and during the first year of occupancy in that school, is a combination of information found in the literature concerning new facilities, beginning principals, and the role of the principal.

The following outline summarizes the themes of the literature review as compared

To the research questions:

- I. Question one; what are the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school while that school is under construction?
 - A. Input during construction on design and furniture can aid instruction.
 - B. All construction suggestions should be tied to vision and goals
 - C. Technology suggestions should allow for, as yet unknown, growth.
 - D. Particular emphasis should be put on staff selection for the new school.

- II. Question two; what are the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school during the first year of occupancy?
 - A. The principal must be prepared to deal with multiple tasks.
 - B. The principal must be the instructional leader, including staff development, staff evaluation and special education issues.
 - C. The principal must develop philosophy and vision

 - D. The principal must develop a safe school environment.
 - E. The principal should be reform minded.

- III. Question three; what characteristics or skills are needed to be a successful principal of a new school?
 - A. The principal should have strong interpersonal skills.
 - B. The principal should have organizational skills.
 - C. The principal should be able to articulate his or her vision clearly.
 - D. The principal should be flexible and open minded
 - E. The principal should be willing to take criticism.
 - F. The principal should have a strong background in instruction.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Research Design

The purpose of this research was to contribute to the understanding of leadership activities as it relates to a principal of a new school. Central themes, which arise during the planning and construction year and the first year of occupancy of a new middle school, were examined by studying a daily appointment book, a journal, memos and other official documents and interviews with principals an architect and an assistant superintendent. Research for the study used qualitative methodology. The study was not intended to present conclusive evidence to prove or disprove theories, but rather to lead to an understanding of the experiences and duties, which make up the unique experience of opening a new school.

“Research design is the logic that links the data to be collected (and the conclusions to be drawn) to the initial questions of the study ” (Yin, 1989, p 15). This research used a descriptive autobiographical case study to investigate the principal’s role in opening a new school. Additionally this study sought to discover what characteristics or skills are needed for a principal to be successful in a new school environment, and if when the principal is appointed might affect his or her duties. The purpose of the study dictated the method of investigation. Yin (1989) noted that the case study focuses on decisions, organizations, processes, programs, neighborhoods, institutions, or events and tries to determine why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result.

The case study provides a variety of sources and different perspectives. It is also an in-depth investigation, and accordingly uses different methods to collect various kinds of information from which to make observations (Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993). Wallace (1991) referred to autobiographical case studies as “story telling” and gave two reasons why story telling is a valuable tool to principals, both those who are there and those who want to be there. First, stories serve as a lens through which leaders may see how to move schools forward. Hidden messages, thoughts, and feelings come to the surface and provide a wealth of useful information. Second, principals gain validation and support for the risks they take as they share the joys and pains of leadership. Story telling allows leadership traits to emerge. Brubaker (1991) argued that “...any definition of leadership has a foundation of beliefs underlying it. This value foundation provides the drive or impetus for a leader’s behavior, serves as the rationale for explaining such behaviors to others, and interprets others’ behaviors” (p. 5). Stake (1988) defined the case study as “a study of a “bounded system” emphasizing the unity and wholeness of that system, but confining the attention to those aspects that are relevant to the research problem at the time” (p. 75).

In this study a unique case was examined. The duties and responsibilities of a principal appointed before school construction began were closely documented. The duties and responsibilities were examined within the context of the “wholeness” of the school system. Although bounded by its context, the study proposed to contribute to the understanding of the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school and the duties and responsibilities leading up to the opening of the school.

The fundamental model for this approach was a reflection on the lived experiences and practical actions of the daily duties and responsibilities of the school principal. These activities took place during the construction year and first year of occupancy of the new middle school; and the intent was to increase thoughtfulness and practical resourcefulness of the researcher and reader. The aim of this research inquiry was understanding and interpretations using case study methodology. Case study is both the process of learning about the case, or “bounded system,” and the product of that learning (Stake, 1994). Stake identified three types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective. This study contained elements of each type, with an emphasis on intrinsic.

With an intrinsic case study the case itself is of interest. When a study is conducted to provide insight into an issue, it is considered instrumental in nature. The case is examined in depth because this helps to pursue the external interest. The choice of the case is made because it is expected to advance understanding of the interest of the researcher (Norris 1997).

Clandinin and Connelly (1995), writing in Handbook of Qualitative Research discussed experiencing the experience.

As we begin work on a research project, we often talk about beginning a new story, a story of inquiry. Thinking about an inquiry in narrative terms allows us to conceptualize the inquiry experience as a storied one (p. 417).

As researchers, we also tell another kind of story; that is, we try to tell or represent the story of the research project . . . This consideration of the end of the research process brings us full circle to the beginning of the inquiry, because in personal experience methods we must acknowledge the centrality of the researchers’ own experience: their own tellings, livings, relivings, and retellings. Therefore, one of the starting points is the researchers’ own narratives of experience. (p. 418)

Although some traditional researchers may argue for the more “cut and dry” methodology and results of a quantitative type study, it was not as valuable in this instance. With the limited body of research that currently exists on the principal’s role in opening a new school, the autobiographical research project was the ideal starting point to describe the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a school that is under construction and the role of a principal during the first year in a new school. A thorough description of what a principal does during the planning and occupancy of a new school should provide better information regarding the time the principal of a new school should be hired. Other research methods including quantitative might follow.

Data Collection

In an autobiographical case study methodology, descriptive data are important. Casey suggested that the phenomenological imperative to take nothing for granted, the psychoanalytic need to integrate all parts of the psyche, and the existential search for the authentic self are represented in metaphors of disguise and disclosure (Casey, 1993).

I was named as principal of a middle school that was yet to be built. The job description listed responsibilities including being in charge of the seventh and eighth grade at a seventh through eleventh grade transitional school while also having input on the new school construction. Planning for the opening of the new middle school was a responsibility as well. These duties were to last one year; then the responsibilities would become those related to being principal of a sixth through eighth grade middle school projected to open with 800 students. The understood, yet undefined, additional responsibility was the fact that this 800-student middle school would be a new facility.

The collection of data began the day after the principal of the new school was approved by the board of education. Thoughts were recorded, along with concerns, emotions and aspirations. Some of these recordings were in the form of audiotape and the rest in journal format. The goal was to make a journal or tape recorded entry at least twice a week. This proved to be quite easy until school started. The rigors of the school year quickly reduced the entries to two or three sessions per month during the year of construction and the first year of occupancy in the new school. In addition to these reflections, a detailed day planner was kept, which included school activities, appointments, and notes of the day's events.

Data were collected through document analysis. Documentary information may take many forms and is likely to be relevant to every case study topic (Yin, 1989). Communiqués, agendas and minutes of meetings, administrative documents and news clippings were examined. Every correspondence sent to me or by me regarding the construction, planning, or first year of occupancy in the new building was also kept and cataloged. By the end of the second year a mountain of information had been accumulated on a wide array of topics. These include notes from monthly construction meetings with the assistant superintendent, school system representative, architect, building superintendent, construction representative and various contractors; to a letter from a group of "concerned" parents that indicated they had favored someone else for the principal of the new middle school; to guide lines on how to hire and transfer staff to the new school; to proposed plans for rezoning for the new school; to mission statements and objectives for the new school. In addition to gathering these mounds of data, five interviews were conducted (see appendix A, B, C). The assistant superintendent in

charge of school construction, the architect and three principals that opened new schools were interviewed. The interview was a tape-recorded interview conducted in the interviewee's office. The interview questions centered on the role of a principal in opening a new school (see appendix A). In organizing this mountain of data, patterns began to emerge. The most difficult part of the study was to take this scattered conglomerate of information, condense it and define what parts of the information were important and what were not.

In this process Stake's (1988) characteristics of qualitative studies served as reassuring guidelines:

It is holistic: contextuality is well developed and it is relatively
Non-comparative, seeking to understand its object more
than to understand how it differs from others.

It is empirical: it is field-oriented, devoting extra effort to getting data
from where the action is; preferring natural language description
and disdaining grand constructs.

It is empathic: it is sensitive to the risks of human subjects research; its
Reporting provides vicarious experience; its design is emergent,
generating explanations from field experience rather than
predetermined hypotheses. (p. 41)

The nature of the study forced a reflection on the information gathered until themes emerged. The process was slow and often uncomfortable since reliving events often elicits the same emotions, anxieties and frustrations that accompanied the original event.

Modern science is rationalistic in that it operates on the assumption that my life may be made intelligible and accessible to human logic and reason. Maxwell (1992) asserted:

I am not assuming that there is only one correct, “objective” account of this realm outside of the account itself. As observers and interpreters of the world, we are inextricably part of it; we cannot step outside our own experience to obtain some observer-independent account of what we experience. (p. 283)

In this case study I rationally expressed a faith that I can collect data and share my experience and thus make the experience intelligible to others and myself.

Data Analysis

Through data analysis, which consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence, the researcher organizes the data so that it is manageable and meaningful. The ultimate goal is to treat the evidence fairly, to produce compelling analytic conclusions, and to rule out alternative interpretations (Yin, 1989).

According to Yin (1989), “data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence, to address the initial propositions of a study” (p. 14). In addition, he believes that the most fundamental operation of data analysis is that of discovering significant classes and the properties, which characterize them. The process includes holding the phenomenon up to serious inspection:

1. Locate within the personal experience, or self-story, key phrases and statements that speak directly to the phenomenon in question.
2. Interpret the meaning of these phrases as an informed reader.
3. Inspect these meanings for what they reveal about the essential, recurring features of the phenomenon being studied.
4. Offer a tentative statement or definition of the phenomenon in terms of the essential recurring features. (Janesick, 1994, p. 215)

The final draft should maintain a balance between description and interpretation.

Thorough description makes thorough interpretation possible. Endless description is not

useful (Janesick, 1994). “More will be pursued than was volunteered. Less will be reported than was learned” (Stake, 1994)

The transcribed tapes were read and coded using key words. Key words were tallied to identify areas of emphasis or recurring themes. Additional readings offered opportunity to consider other aspects that might emerge. Once the key themes emerged a great deal of time and attention were given to triangulating these themes with the five interviews. Stake (1995) suggested that interviews serve as the “main road to multiple realities” so important to the understanding of a case.

The data collection started with the focus of describing the first two years as the named principal of a new school. Consistent with Yin’s (1994) comment that the reporting phase is one of the most difficult to carry out in doing case studies, the written report proved to be a challenge. The traditions of research call for inclusion of quantitative data; the nature of this study did not.

At no point in naturalistic case research are qualitative and quantitative techniques less alike than during analysis. The qualitative researcher concentrates on the instance, trying to pull it apart and put it back together again more meaningfully-analysis and synthesis in direct interpretation. (Stake, 1995, p.75)

As data were analyzed and the report written, analysis was easier than synthesis.

It was a goal of this study for the account to ring true to the experience so that learning would be maximized and so that others could live the two years and benefit from the experience. As data were analyzed, patterns were sought as a means for understanding the case. Writing was done with attention to self-understanding and to the future reader. A thorough description that captured the complexities of the case and evoked personal connections in the reader was provided. According to Stake (1995),

“The reader is a franchised member of the transaction. Readers should be counted on to do their share of the work” (p. 75).

Triangulation and Data Analysis

All researchers recognize the need not only for being accurate in measuring things but in being logical in interpreting the meaning of those measurements. Case study research design is qualitative as distinguished from quantitative. There is, however, no reason why case study researchers should settle for lesser attempts at accuracy or logic. It is true that case studies deal with many complex phenomena and issues for which no consensus can be found as to “what really exists,” yet there are ethical obligations to minimize misrepresentations and misunderstandings. Multiple sources of evidence allow for triangulation resulting from converging lines of inquiry.

Stake (1994) noted that triangulation is a useful tool in clarifying meaning by looking at multiple experiences from several different viewpoints. He proposed a six-fold set of responsibilities the qualitative researcher must accept if using case study”

- 1) Bound the case and conceptualize the object of the study
- 2) Select phenomena, themes, or issues to emphasize
- 3) Look for patterns with which to develop the issue
- 4) Triangulate important observations to clarify interpretations
- 5) Find alternative avenues of exploration
- 6) Develop generalizations or conclusions about the case. (p. 218)

According to Stake (1995) in The Art of Case Study Research, data source triangulation is an effort to see if what we are observing and reporting carries the same meaning when found under different circumstances. We assume the meaning of an observation is one thing, but additional observations give us grounds for revising our interpretation. Triangulation helps to validate qualitative inquiry. For data source

triangulation, we look to see if the phenomenon or case remains the same at other times and from different views.

In this case study, the different angles used for triangulation were an in-depth look at the experiences during the first two years as a principal of a new school, interviews with three other principals of new schools, an assistant superintendent, and the architect and a survey of the literature. Not only did the narrative, the interviews, and reviewing literature triangulate the experience, but these three cornerstones of the triangle became part of the experience itself.

Case studies can include quantitative data (Yin, 1989), or statistical description (Stake, 1988). Although observation was the primary data source for this study and interviews were used to augment this data source, quantitative data were collected to support or confirm the collected data, and to satisfy the research questions and hypotheses. Findings, conclusions, and recommendations based upon the propositions, which emerged, are reported in Chapters IV and V.

Site and Sample

The site for this study in year one was a seventh through twelfth grade transitional school located in a midsize, formally rural turning suburban, school system in Georgia. There were over 10,000 students in this county school district at the start of the study. The districts diverse socio-economic and racial make up was represented at the site. The school district was 27% African-American, 71% White, and 2% other races. In addition 40% of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch. The school had 950 students overall and 400 seventh and eighth grade students. Parent involvement was strong, but limited to primarily a few parents from the higher socio-economic levels.

The middle school staff of year one school consisted of 12 regular classroom teachers, 5 exploratory teachers 4 special education teachers, 2 special education paraprofessionals, 2 physical education teachers, 1 title I teacher, 1 teacher of the gifted and one principal. In addition a part time English as a Second Language teacher and a part time speech therapist served the students. All counselors, secretaries, custodians, and food service workers were under the auspices of the high school administration.

Year two of the study shifted to a new facility one mile from the transitional school. The middle school student population increased and the new school opened with 800 students. The demographics of the school remained similar to that of the transitional site. The new school was 26% African-American, 72% White and 2% other races, with 41% of the students qualifying for free or reduced lunch. The main demographic difference in the new school was that sixth through eighth graders were now in the new building, where as the transitional school served seventh through eleventh.

The staff of year two school consisted of 30 regular classroom teachers, 7 exploratory teachers, 6 special education teachers, 4 physical education teachers, 2 teachers of the gifted, 2 counselors, 1 media specialist and 1 title I teacher. The administrative staff consisted of 2 assistant principals and 1 principal. The year two school was also served by a part time adaptive physical education teacher, a part time speech therapist, and a part time visually impaired teacher and a part time hearing impaired instructor. In addition to these certified staff members there were 22 classified staff members; 7 food service workers, 6 custodians, 4 special education paraprofessionals, 3 secretaries, 1 media paraprofessionals and 1 computer lab paraprofessional.

The year one school, the year two school, the school district, and the people that were part of these entities, make up the sample for this case study. All interviews, observations, and document collection took place on one of the schools campuses or somewhere in the school district.

In social research, what is commonly called the ‘assurance of anonymity’ is the promise that real names of persons, places, and so forth will not be used in the research report and/or pseudonyms will be substituted. The guarantee of anonymity of the people in research is viewed as an essential technique. (Lofland & Lofland, 1984, p. 113)

This guarantee of anonymity was strictly adhered to.

Limitations

Four potential limitations were evident throughout this study: the researcher himself and his biases, scholarly credibility, cultural constraints and generalizability. The researcher was acutely aware of the potential for bias and error. Qualitative research is highly personal research. Narrative researchers recognize that facts are never theory-independent (Hesse, 1980). According to Guba and Lincoln (1981, p. 11) “the best cure for biases is to be aware of how they slant and shape what we hear, how they interface with our reproduction of the speaker’s reality, and how they transfigure truth into falsity”. Autobiography allows a person to choose which elements of the autobiography will be revealed. Certain parts of the experience are shared, while others are kept hidden. There are emotions and perceptions that even the researcher may not be able to get in touch with to add to the autobiography.

Experiential accounts or lived-experience descriptions are never identical to the lived experience itself. Grumet (1991, p. 69) used the metaphor of the mask to describe this constraint: “our stories are the masks through which we can be seen, and with every

telling we stop the flood and swirl of thought so someone can get a glimpse of us, and maybe catch us if they can.” This mask limits not only my ability to see out, but also the readers’ ability to see in.

In addition to triangulation, effectively engaging in a process of self-reflection utilized the researcher’s enthusiasm and “masks.” The masks are the different roles that the principal must play, the politician, the disciplinarian, the adult and child counselor, among others, and the emotions and actions that go along with these roles. Self-awareness, recognizing potential problems of distortion and power struggles, is part of the experience. Interpretation of experience is the producer of knowledge. Again, a liability is turned to an asset.

Collection and publication of oral histories, however, suffers from credibility in some scholarly circles. In I Answer With My Life, Casey (1993) described the debate.

Oral history in all its various manifestations (for instance, popular memory, life history, personal narrative) is deeply entangled in current conflicts over theory, methodology and politics in academic research. Some proponents have spent considerable energy attempting to legitimate a “soft” method within a context of the “rigorous” standards of traditional historical research. (p. 11)

She then powerfully delivers the possibilities of such research, “At its most sophisticated level, oral history research can present a complex effort to reintegrate and realign ideas from historically prior framework (p. 11).” Watson (1993) stated:

Life is a constant series of interpretation of multiple experiences and externalized conditions that happen to us in the present tense. So, too, is leadership and research. We simply cannot script our self out of our understanding of the world, whether the world of education, autobiography, leadership or research. (p. 87)

Even though many complex phenomena and issues were dealt with, there were ethical obligations to minimize misrepresentations and misunderstandings. The

comparison of different point of views in the form of research, documentation from a variety of sources, and interviews, was critical in establishing credibility.

Another challenge to narrative research is that issues are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, and historical contexts. In this autobiographical case study, the author's culture was evident. Becoming engulfed in social issues could distract the research by reducing explanations to theoretical impositions.

On the other hand, giving voice to individuals allows them to connect with others, thus moving people from passivity to activity.

The autobiographical response is what the reader brings to the experience of reading the autobiography. The reader also has a cultural dictionary and autobiography that cannot be separated from the reader. This is another hermeneutical display of context; for when the reader reads and rereads, the interpretation changes and discovery occurs. This act integrates the autobiographical text into the reader's self-interpretation. (Watson, 1993, p. 96)

We, as individuals and as a group, need to step back and examine our basic assumptions and tackle difficult questions about the motives, beliefs, attitudes, and practices that underlie our culture. Without knowledge about how culture influences us, it is difficult to perceive, let alone respond to, some of our most fundamental characteristics. Paradoxically, the more widely practices and beliefs are shared with a society, the harder it is to "see" them. The deeper one looks inside people, the closer one gets to what is outside them (Sparks, 1997).

The fourth limitation to this study was that the findings are not generalizable in the usual statistical sense. However, the ability of the reader or user to generalize into his or her own situation was the goal of this study, not statistical generalization. As Stake (1978) observed, "When explanation, propositional knowledge, and law are the aims of

an inquiry, the case study will often be at a disadvantage. When the aims are understanding, extension of experience, and increase in conviction in that which is known, the disadvantage disappears” (p. 21).

Generalizability to a reader’s own situation is dependent on the ability to provide elaborate enough information from which the readers can decide the extent to which the researcher’s case is similar to theirs. Sennett and Cobb (1972) discussed generalizability and stated,

Anecdotal presentation raises the question of representativeness in the use of the data. The only answer to these criticisms lies in the quality of the work itself-in its ability to persuade by appealing to a level of “knowing” that exists in all of us ...to generate an “aha” experience.
(p. 11)

In generalizability it is important for me to be clear about whether the narrative was to be examined for constructions common to a group or unique to my experience. Gunn (1982) defined autobiography as “transcendental voyeurism, as though the reader obtains a second-hand account of what the self, watching and overhearing itself, has seen and heard” (p. 18).

Heidegger’s theories address all four limitations/possibilities validity, cultural limitations, inside-out focus, and applicability. He viewed anything that a person might encounter as something-that-is. Description from a personal perspective is inquiry. Reality is what we know at the time, because experience is producer of knowledge and truth.

This textual research and theorizing are an attempt to find, by means of introspection and examination, a description of the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a brand new school. My exegetical methodology of research writing is both

descriptive and analytical. The experiences of other principals of new schools triangulate and enrich this excerpt from my life story. Other forms of research may be more clear cut and clean, but they are very limited on this particular topic. The first step then must be to name the problem. “How is one to give name to what he is still searching for? To assign the naming word is, after all, what constitutes finding” (Heidegger, 1971 p. 71). Although the populations used in some of the citations mentioned in the section above are vastly different from the populations in this study, the rationale for qualitative research is sound.

CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter examined data collected over a two-year period through document analysis, written journal entries, and interviews of three principals that have opened new schools, an associate superintendent in charge of school construction, and an architect that had been involved in many school construction projects. Each of these data sources were combined to give a clear description of a principals roles and duties during the construction and first year of occupancy of a new school.

Findings Related to Research Questions

Year One; The Construction Year:

What are the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school, while that school is under construction? The data for this question begin and end with specific dates on a calendar, from the date of hiring to the date the staff moved into the new building. However the duties related to the first year of occupancy began well before the actual move-in date. The duties, responsibilities, and thought processes, while the school was under construction, will be examined in this section, even though many, if not most, of the duties did relate to the first year of occupancy.

The journey began on June 27th. This was the date of the interview for a job that I was not sure I wanted. I had a preliminary interview for an elementary school in the county I was currently employed and was scheduled to go through a final interview the next week. I believed that an elementary principalship would help me in my long-range career goals, to be an assistant superintendent or possibly a superintendent. The current

interview was expected to be quick, primarily just for the experience of interviewing for a principalship. The quick interview ended up lasting an hour and a half and the job was offered pending board approval. I was given two days to make a decision, after several discussions with my wife, we decided that I could not pass up an opportunity to guide a school through its construction and infant year of existence. On July 9th the board unanimously approved the superintendent's recommendation for the principal of the school that was not yet built.

The contract period was to officially begin August 4th, however the superintendent asked for a meeting on July 15th. This was the beginning of the new duties. At this meeting a letter was reviewed that was written by several influential parents in the community citing some concerns about the new middle school. They also made it very clear they were in support of a particular individual to be appointed as principal (this individual was not me). The first charge from the superintendent was to contact these parents and make them feel at ease with the new principal. One of my earliest journal entries adequately described my apprehension about dealing with these parents;

This is where I begin to earn my money. I know these parents wanted Ms. Camp as the new principal, "but they do not know that I know". I will try and win them over by getting them to help organize the PTO. Surely they will give me the benefit of the doubt?

This was the first of many duties and responsibilities that had not been part of the academic course work and administrator preparation program. As documented in the review of literature, interpersonal skills are viewed by many as the most important skill for a school leader, and many superintendents ranked poor interpersonal skills as the number one reason for principals failing. Each of the three principals interviewed in this

study agreed with this, saying that early communication with the community and excellent interpersonal skills are paramount for a principal of a new school.

Each of the parents that wrote the letter was contacted by phone, under the auspices of setting up a Parent Teacher Organization, (PTO). In the course of the conversation the parents expressed their concerns, which ranged from not enough exploratory courses to the middle school students being neglected. Not one of the parents mentioned that they preferred some one else for the principal's position. Explaining the emphasis on instruction and sharing the vision for the new middle school apparently alleviated their fears. This proved to help greatly with a smooth year of transition as the move was made into the new middle school. One of these parents ended up being the president of the PTO and two others were officers; all were strong supporters of the school. This was the first of several major parental issues that I would have to deal with through the construction year and first year of occupancy.

Near the end of the construction year we began the process of establishing a PTO for the new school. Since new zones would be drawn for the new school the current PTO and myself wanted to involve everyone that would be zoned for the new school. Notices were sent to the other two middle schools and all five elementary feeder schools announcing a meeting to organize a PTO for the new middle school. Announcements were also posted in the local newspaper and on the local cable channel. The meeting was held the first week of May. At the meeting volunteers and nominations were taken for each of the PTO offices. There were ample volunteers for all offices except president. The one parent who volunteered for president stated that she would like to be co-

president if someone could be found. A slate of officers were reached by consensus and approved by all present. It was also understood that a co-president would be sought.

In hindsight the process should have been done differently. Taking volunteers and nominations at the original meeting, taking a few days or two weeks, to get references on the candidates, then having another meeting to approve the slate would have been a better method. It turned out that one of the officers had some improprieties in her recent past involving mismanagement of funds. This information was not discovered until two weeks after the slate of officers were approved. In fact, during the first year in the new school, questions of improprieties arose and she resigned from the PTO. This resignation at my suggestion was a very stressful situation for me, a journal entry adequately described the tension I was feeling.

I have a politically and possibly legally volatile situation on my hands. The situation with Ms. Best has come to a head. I am going to have to ask her to resign. Ms. Mathews, Cline, and Slaughter have each come to me separately to tell me about concerns with Ms. Best taking PTO money home before anyone had counted it and keeping it for days before making a deposit. They each believe there should be more money than there is. I know Ms. Best will not go quietly, she has the ear of several people in the community, but if I do not act now I know it will just get worse, maybe much worse. I have talked with Dr. Kent about it and he supports my plan.

Two days later another journal entry brings closure to the issue.

Well Ms. Best cried and said that other PTO members did not like her and were “telling lies on her”. I was careful not to make any accusations, but to simply ask procedural questions and ask why things were done the way they were. She has written a letter of resignation along with about two pages of accusations against other PTO members and statements about no wrong doing on her part. She copied the letter to the superintendent and the board of education. To my pleasant surprise the board of education is very supportive of me and my handling of the situation. Dr. Kent has asked me to write a letter accepting her resignation which I have done. The whole process has been much easier than I had anticipated.

I was very grateful that several parents did come to me with another parent's name they felt would make a very good co-president when we were setting up the PTO. I approached her with the invitation to become co-president and she agreed. Not only were the PTO officers very helpful as we made the move into the new school, but having a co-president allowed the resignation of Ms. Best to have very little effect.

Another major parental issue was rezoning. On January 13th of the construction year the county began the rezoning process for the new middle school and the two new elementary schools. The rezoning parent meetings were required attendance for the principals of the new schools. The major purpose for attending the parent meetings was to talk with the parents that might be apprehensive about their child attending the new school. These meetings proved interesting but uneventful. The parents often had many questions, such as: How will discipline be handled? What will be the school colors and mascot? What athletic teams will the school have? It was both surprising and a bit troubling that very few parents ever asked curriculum or academic questions about the new school. I spoke of this in a February journal entry;

I have stayed up late preparing for the rezoning parent meetings. I have outlines on overheads of the process we are going use to develop instructional strategies. I have acquainted my self with the curriculum for every subject. All this and I have not received one instructional or curriculum questions at the two meetings we have had! Mascots and athletic teams certainly build school spirit and are important, but it is instruction that must be the focus. I am disappointed that the parents concerns do not appear to be on instruction.

Most issues during the construction year and first year of occupancy had some involvement with parents. However, the afore mentioned events had parents as the center point.

All three middle school principals met on numerous occasions to discuss where the new boundaries should be set. The advice that arose from these meetings seemed to be taken seriously and all of the suggestions were purposed to the board of education. However, not all of the suggestions were adopted. One example was the suggestion to include an upscale, largely white, neighborhood in the school zone with the largest black population and the smallest overall student population. The board member who represented this neighborhood strongly opposed this move and thus the neighborhood was placed in the new school's zone.

The rezoning process, complete with parent meetings, administrative meetings, and board of education meetings spanned the months of January and February. The new school zones were officially adopted the second week in March. With the completion of the zoning process, the projected enrollment for all three middle schools was established and thus began the staffing procedures for the new school.

The first principal's meeting was held on August 12 and the introduction of the principal of the new middle school, which would be completed the following year, was made. From this moment on all other principals and county office personnel were very accepting. This included asking advice on instructional and administrative issues. The days were very full of activities after this meeting. The workdays were 10 to 12 hours and no issues concerning the new school were present as of yet. All of the duties at this time were those associated with the normal beginning of a school year, filling vacancies, scheduling, open houses and the many other duties that must be performed each year.

While all of these activities were taking place, duties were preformed which related to being in charge of the seventh and eighth grade of a 7-11 grade transitional

school. In addition to the 7th and 8th grades, there was a 6th grade officially designated as members of the transitional school, but housed at one of the county's middle schools because of space constraints. These students rode the bus to the transitional school then rode another bus to the middle school. These sixth grade teachers were included in all department, team leader, and other leadership meetings that occurred during this first year. The sixth grade students were also included in student decisions that were made, such as, choice of mascot and school colors.

Students began school on August 26th. Through the rest of August and all of September the emphasis was on duties and responsibilities associated with the normal duties of a principal of an established school. These duties included such things as, filling teacher vacancies, setting up a Student Support Team, (SST), meeting with chamber of commerce and business partners, meeting with parents, planning for open house, planning for curriculum, planning for discipline, planning for parental and extracurricular issues. These issues ensured a very full schedule. In October issues directly dealing with the opening of the new school were added to the agenda.

The first construction meeting that I attended was held on Thursday October 3rd and meetings were held on the first Thursday of each month until the following August when the building was almost completed. The participants at these meetings consisted of myself, Dr Kent the superintendent of the school system, Mr. Tom the associate superintendent in charge of administration, Mr. Baily a consultant hired by the school system to oversee construction, Mr. Marks the architect, Mr. Hill a representative of the construction company, Mr. Sims the building superintendent, and a changing variety of contractors that were working or about to do work on the building. The contractors

changed from meeting to meeting, but the other participants remained the same. The contractors would give updates on their progress, tell whether they were on schedule or not, and give projections on their completion dates. Careful notes were taken at each meeting and sent to the participants the following week.

In the beginning I was very uncomfortable at these meetings, having no background in construction and being unfamiliar with much of the terminology. Frankly, there appeared no real reason for attending these meetings. A journal entry from this time describes my feelings well;

I feel like a fish out of water. I don't even know what HVAC stands for! The architect seems to be in charge of the meetings. He asks each contractor for updates. I understand the time frames that are being talked about, but some of the landscaping terms, paving terms and plumbing terms I am totally unfamiliar with and have no idea what they are talking about. In spite of this I am finding these meetings interesting and I believe I am learning and will benefit in the long run.

The reasoning for attendance and interest in the meetings grew steadily and by the third month I was involved in some of the conversations going on during the meeting. The first issue was that of color scheme in the building. The actual painting, carpet laying and tile work would not take place for many months, however, the choices of color needed to be made in December. After the December meeting contributions became constant.

Advice was sought on a variety of subjects, such as parking lot placement, bus pick up area, science room placement, and electrical design of the technology lab. In addition to these, several small construction changes were suggested at the meetings. These included adding locking doors to the gym lobby restrooms, extra outlets in the computer labs and in the home arts room, changing a conference room to the bookkeepers office, adding a sink and kiln to the art room, and changing the layout of the softball and football fields.

Only one change that was purposed was turned down. A request to have an adult restroom added to the coaches' office in the gym was made. This was turned down because the slab was already poured and the addition would have been too expensive to change at that time.

By the final August meeting many contributions were made to the construction process. This was testified to by the interview of the architect and the associate superintendent. In answer to the question, how would you summarize the principal's role during the construction phase? The associate superintendent stated;

To me the most important part of the principals role is in the design of the building, and the early development of the educational specifications, the early drawings and putting the project together. Then once that is done it sets the stage for what you are gonna do, and then the principal's role is to review the progress of the project, and offering suggestions on changing anything that was originally designed. Staying in touch with the project as it moves through completion, but if the principal is not involved in the very beginning to cover everything that needs to be covered, then you will not get the best possible school. I have been able to tell a difference; because you have been on board longer than the elementary principals, and I believe because of this the middle school got a lot more attention from the educational side than the elementary schools. Even though the elementary principals came on late they saw some things they wanted changed, and we were able to get those in and improve the schools. If these principals would have been with us earlier it would have greatly improved the projects like you have done.

The Architect's answer to the same question also supported the value of the principal during the construction process. The response was as follows;

It is a very rare occurrence to have the principal of the school to be involved early on in the construction process. Often a principal or group of principals and teachers will give input during the design phase. I believe it has been very valuable to have you with us from nearly the beginning of the project. You have been able to suggest some needed changes that improved the building. If these changes had been suggested later on in the construction process they would have been very expensive. The elementary school principals were not brought on until well into the construction process. They have been able to make some valuable

contributions but not as many as you. I will now suggest on future projects that the principal be brought on at the earliest possible time.

Of the three principals that were interviewed two of them were involved early in the construction phase. Both of these principals expressed a belief that they made valuable contributions that improved the school. The principal that was hired well into the construction process had aspects of his school that he would have changed had he been brought on board earlier.

Later in the planning year discussions centered around furniture orders for the new school. Dr. Kent wanted to order the same furniture that was in place at the two existing middle schools. He gave me the task of meeting with the principals of the other two middle schools to garner their opinions concerning furniture for the new school. These principals were very helpful throughout the construction year offering advice and suggestions on how to make improvements on the new school. A helpful suggestion, which came out of this meeting, was to order tables instead of desks for the science classrooms. The new science curriculum that the county adopted incorporated quite a bit of hands on experimentation. The tables made for a much better learning atmosphere by being much more conducive to the experimentation and hands on activities.

July 1st was supposed to be the move in date for the administrative staff into the new building. The building was not ready. This was not a surprise; in fact all of the principals interviewed stated that they were not able to move into their building on schedule. The associate superintendent, also, stated, "it is a rare occurrence that a new school is totally ready right on schedule." Nevertheless, the transitional school was bringing on board another assistant principal as that school added a grade to become a full ninth through twelfth grade high school and thus needed the office space. The

construction year ended and the first year of occupancy had not quite begun. There was a three-week period of limbo when the administrative staff of the new middle school operated out of the transitional school's media center and officially the year of occupancy was underway.

I am torn between excitement and disappointment. I guess I never believed we would be in the building by July 1st. At one point in May when the school was two weeks ahead of time I did hope we would be in on time. I am visiting the school every day; it is very much like watching a pot of water waiting for it to boil! The office area is almost complete and there are plenty of instructional issues I can deal with from the transitional school's media center. I just want to be in the new building and get settled in!

The new move in date for the administration was set for August 1st and teachers were going to be allowed to start moving into their rooms on August 11th. However, August 1st arrived and the building was still not ready. The construction meetings became heated at times between the school system and the contractors. The painting contractor was fired and new painters were brought in and the building superintendent was transferred to another job site and replaced. The superintendent of the school system also began to hold up payment of contractors who were behind schedule. An August journal entry describes the dynamics of this time period.

I am not sure what happened. Two months ago the school was two weeks ahead of schedule. Now the building is in danger of not being ready for the students to start at the first of September. Dr. Kent has meet privately with Mr. Marks the architect on several different occasions. The tension does not appear to be between Dr. Kent and Mr. Marks, but between Mr. Marks and the builder. Dr. Kent does not chastise the builder directly, but it is obvious in the meetings that Mr. Marks is airing the school systems concerns. It was simply announced at the construction meeting that there was a new painting contractor and a new building superintendent. Whatever the reasons I hope these changes will get the school ready before the kids report!

Even though the building was not cleared for occupancy, the furniture, supplies and textbooks began to arrive the second week in August. After meeting with the assistant superintendent, it was decided to store all of the furniture in the chorus, band, and art rooms. Once the building was cleared for occupancy the furniture would then be placed in the appropriate rooms. Before the building was cleared for occupancy these furniture stores built up to fill the chorus, band and art rooms to capacity.

The delays were frustrating for the administrative staff, but the main concern was for the teachers. The teachers were very anxious to move into their classroom and arrange their rooms. Because of this mounting frustration and because we were a new faculty and largely strangers to each other, it was decided to have team building as the focus of the pre-school year staff development day. The staff development was dedicated to getting the staff to know each other in a low key and even fun atmosphere. Also, because the teachers did not have the time that was originally expected to set up their rooms, a considerable amount of time was built in for the teachers to work in their rooms.

Finally the administration was able to move into the administrative offices on August 11th. On August 19th the final walk-through of the new school was held with the superintendent, assistant superintendent, architect, and building superintendent and fire marshal. I pointed out a few minor things that needed to be corrected, such as replacing some floor tiles and ceiling tiles. The fire marshal would not certify the building for occupancy until the problems with the ceiling tiles were corrected. Had I known that the ceiling tiles would hold up the move in I certainly would not have pointed them out. On August 21st the building was certified for occupancy and the teachers could begin moving in.

Even though the teachers were allowed to begin moving in, the construction of the new school was not complete. The lockers were not fully installed, the installation of the bleachers in the gym was not complete, and the landscaping of the physical education and athletic fields had just begun. The building superintendent and various contractors would be every day parts of the school for several months into the school year. In fact, George, the new building superintendent was bestowed a honorary membership to the faculty and staff of the new school, complete with his own name tag identification and inaugural year faculty and staff shirt.

In late September of the first year of occupancy I asked the faculty and staff to compile a list of “building concerns” that needed to be addressed. The following is a list of these concerns as the school secretary transcribed them.

Yellow paint off the top of cement poles behind dumpsters.

Up-high foyer windows have never been initially cleaned.

The foyer green painted beams never have been initially cleaned and dusted.

More toilet paper rolls have come off. Probably need longer fatter screws.

Floor tiles in the C Hall and A Hall intersection around the doors toward the office, the tiles are broken and bent over a cement hump.

C-11 look at floor, (tiles are coming up), sprinkler in ceiling not complete. Ceiling tiles need adjustment near air conditioning vent next to door.

D-17, door is hard to catch in latch.

Mr. McGhee’s bathroom needs a soap dispenser and the office workroom needs a paper towel dispenser.

A-7, needs an off and on key switch, (like lights in the gym), for computer cut-off switch. There is now a regular light switch that is too accessible for students.

Teacher's bathroom next to A-7 needs a key lock and the toilet paper holder is loose.

D12, Computer outlet, the wires are exposed.

B7, Bulletin board is warped, door does not fit well.

D-14, room door is not finished. Paint splattered on science counter tops especially by faucets. Raw wood on side panel of science counter by the door entrance of the room. No hot water in the prep room.

D-11, prep room shelves need to be put up in the top right cabinet. One cabinet under the sinks will not open, (last one on the left).

B-5, Room door does not fit well in the jam.

B-8, inside of the door the tile is scratched.

B-4, no lock on cabinet door. The floor tiles are separating.

A-2, Ceiling tile with water stain. The door doesn't fit well in the jam.

C-8, Rubber along bottom of wall in the closet is off.

B-6, The doorstop is missing. Locker #21 will not work. Some ceiling tiles are not flush. The floor between rooms b-6 and b-4 need repair.

A-6, Upper door to the right of the range, Kitchen#2 is cracked at hinge. No hot water in the lab.

George and his crew were able to address each of these concerns within a few weeks.

The construction work in the building and on the grounds gradually became less with each passing week. During the month of September George was on campus every day. During October, this decreased to three, then two days a week. Finally the second week in November of the year of occupancy George and the architect came in to the office and stated that it would be George's last week and their storage areas would be cleared out by Friday. It was a significant step, which passed with very little fanfare.

Early in the construction year I called a meeting with the department chairs and team leaders that were already in place. The main purpose was to establish a Building Leadership Team, (BLT), which would eventually help set preliminary policies and guidelines for the new school. Although some changes would occur in the personnel on the BLT, it would become a significant factor when the move was made to the new school. During the planning year the BLT established by laws, student support team, (SST), guidelines and guidelines for calling substitutes. These policies would stay in place after the move in to the new school. I acted as chair of the BLT at our monthly meetings. The BLT made many decisions. There were not any official assistant principals during the course of the planning year, the BLT acted as assistant principals in many ways, such as, helping with scheduling, developing discipline policies, and deciding on parent meeting dates.

In addition to the principal meetings and the construction meetings, Instructional Lead Teacher (ILT) meetings were attended. All of the ILTs in the county meet once a month usually the 3rd Thursday to discuss instructional issues. This was a valuable experience in that it gave a different perspective on many curriculum issues. A new science curriculum was adopted and hotly debated. Testing strategies, home school and private school transfer credits, and retention policies were discussed and recommendations were made to the board of education. In addition to the educational issues addressed at these meeting, there was an important sociological aspect as well. Being the only male I was often “taken care of” by the group. If a meeting was missed a phone call was usually received the next day with an update on the meeting, if

information had to be gathered help was offered and many suggestions were given on how best to accomplish the task.

One aspect that caused wariness was that many of the other ILT's would gossip about their principals and often criticize or make fun of them. This awareness may or may not have changed my future behavior, but it was a realization that I kept in mind the next year, when I sent an assistant principal to these meetings.

When the rezoning process was completed in March of the construction year a memorandum was sent to all principals outlining the staffing procedures for the new schools, including the number of teachers each of the existing schools had to lose. The principals of the three new schools first interviewed volunteers that wished to move from the existing schools to the new schools. The principals of the new schools had the option of hiring these volunteers or rejecting them. If there were not enough volunteers, or the new principals rejected the volunteers, then the policy of "last hired" was implemented. This meant that the most recently hired teacher or teachers had to transfer to the new school. After all in-county transfers were finalized then the principals of the new schools could hire as normal to fill any remaining openings.

The vast majority of the certified staff volunteers were accepted. The interesting phenomenon was that no middle school teachers volunteered to transfer. All of the volunteers were either high school or elementary teachers that wanted to change levels. Most of these teachers were trained as middle school teachers in college, but took jobs outside of this level and wanted to move to the middle school. The teachers that transferred from the County's other two middle schools were the last hired at those schools.

The in-county transfer process was completed by the beginning of April. The rest of April, all of May and the first two weeks of June were dominated with interviewing, not only teachers, but secretarial, coaching, paraprofessional, custodial, and cafeteria candidates. From April 17th to June 17th there was not a single workday that at least one interview was not conducted. On most days four or five interviews were scheduled. A journal entry during the peak of this interview process dated May 14th relays some of the stress;

I cannot imagine how I could conduct all of these interviews if I had all of the responsibilities of a principal of a fully functioning school. In addition to the interviews and other new school issues, I must plan for standardized testing, plan for the ending of school, and meet with parents about academic and disciplinary concerns. I am behind on dealing with discipline and paper work for the county office as it is, and I am working ten and twelve hour days. I have to constantly guard against fatigue when evaluating the many different candidates.

The months of April and May were very taxing.

Before the hectic interview schedule began, and while the rezoning process was winding down, Ms. Small the personnel director for the county, granted permission to interview the assistant principals and counselors for the new school. The administrative team was to consist primarily of two assistant principals and secondarily of two counselors. The interview for the counselor candidates was carried out on a one-to-one basis. Conversely, a committee was established for the interview process of the assistant principals. The committee consisted of the principal, a teacher from each grade level, an exploratory teacher, a special education teacher, an assistant principal from the transitional school, and a curriculum director from the county office.

Each member of the committee was asked to come up with two or three questions they would like to ask. Before the interviews started we would meet as a committee to go

over the questions, make sure there were no duplicate questions, and establish an order for asking the questions. Instructions were given the committee on guidelines and the process to be followed. The committee was told that one assistant would need to have curriculum and instruction as a strength and the other assistant would need to be strong in discipline. It was also suggested that diversity in gender and race, as reflected by our student population, would be valuable to the school. Each committee member was instructed to take notes during the interviews and after all of the interviews were complete to rank the candidates in order of preference and also give them a grade with 100 being the best or most qualified candidate. Each committee member was to come up with two lists, one with curriculum and instruction as the focus, and the other with discipline as the focus. The top two candidates from each list became finalist and put through a one-on-one interview. The interview process lasted over three weeks and the process went just as planned until it came time for the final lists. In the area of curriculum and instruction there were two clear top candidates, both white females, with one ranked slightly better than the other. However, in the area of discipline there was only one candidate, a black male, which stood clearly at the top. After meeting with the committee it was decided to put the top curriculum and instruction candidates through the 2nd interview, but offer one of the assistant principal positions to the top discipline candidate. The committee unanimously agreed with this.

The final instructional candidates were phoned and a second interview was set up at a local restaurant. This was done for two reasons. One it was spring break and the school was empty and it would not be appropriate to ask the candidates to meet alone in an empty building. Second it was perceived as valuable to get a feel for these candidates

outside of a school setting. When the phone calls were made to set up the final interviews each candidate was given a homework assignment: “One, come to the interview with a plan to improve the schools standardized test scores, two, develop a plan to integrate technology into the classroom, and three, develop a plan to implement interdisciplinary units. These interviews went very well. The candidate that the committee ranked slightly higher made the biggest impression. The other candidate also expressed that she might rather have a high school assistant principals position that might be opening up soon. The candidate that was ranked highest by the committee was offered and accepted the second assistant principal’s position. A journal entry from this time describes my relief at having a complete administrative staff for the new school.

When I was first hired as principal I began to think about who would be my assistants. I had believed that Jim and Cheryl would be the choices, that obviously did not work out. I am very excited about the two assistants that I am recommending. Cam and Pam will bring a different perspective. I am glad that I did not know either one previous to the interviews. Cam was the obvious choice for the discipline position, but there were several very good instructional candidates. I am sure either one of the top two would be great, but I do like Pam better, primarily because I believe she is more likely to stay with the job at least three or four years. Lori mentioned in the interview that she preferred high school. I am afraid that if a high school position comes open in the next year or two she will want to move and I believe a stable administration is important for a new school.

Another task that was much more time consuming than I had believed, was sending letters of rejection to all of the applicants, administrative, teaching, as well as other staff, that were interviewed but did not get hired. A good deal of time in July and early August was spent sending personalized letters to all of these applicants. This process continued into the year of occupancy, but at a much slower pace.

While the teaching and administrative staff hiring was taking place, the process of selecting a school mascot and school colors began as well. This seemingly trivial task garnered quite a bit of parental and media attention. According to the superintendent the selection process of colors and mascot was the principal's duty. The issue was in turn taken to the BLT. A committee of teachers was in charge of this process and involved the students in the selections. Three teachers volunteered, a sixth grade teacher, a seventh grade teacher, Mrs. J. the chair, and an exploratory teacher. The committee surveyed all sixth, seventh and eighth grade students to take nominations for colors and a mascot. From the nominations the top three color schemes and mascots were put to a vote before the students.

It was at this time that a bit of controversy began. The top three mascots were Panthers, Beavers, and Warriors. The protests over the Atlanta Braves mascot possible insults to Native Americans were still fresh on many peoples' mind. The local newspaper called and the reporter's first words were, "surely you are not going to allow the new school to have an insulting mascot like the Warriors". Parents began to be divided on the issue. Some parents stated it would not be politically correct to have Warriors as a mascot, while others, some claiming to have significant Native American heritage, said it was an honor to Native Americans to have the Warrior as a mascot. I maintained to all concerned parties that the students would decide on the mascot.

When the votes were tallied, the Panther mascot won by a fairly comfortable margin. The vote was not influenced at all, however it was pleasant to know that the possible controversy that the Warrior mascot may have created never had to be confronted. The colors chosen were purple, teal, and black, not what most of the adults

would have selected. It was delightful to have this time consuming, and seemingly trivial, matter completed. A journal entry sums up my feelings about this process.

There are a lot of folks that I have taught with that would take offense at the time teachers and students spent on selecting a mascot and school colors. They would say that these have no impact on academics so no time should be spent on them. Well, I agree that instruction must come first, but “school” is more than just the academics, it is a climate, a society, and a culture. I believe, if there is a positive school culture and climate, then students will do better academically. Besides how can you be “true to your school” with out a mascot and school colors? Even though mascots and colors may seem trivial to some, they are important parts of a school.

There were two other non-instructional matters that had to be dealt with in the spring of the construction year. One was membership in an athletic league, and the other was cheerleading tryouts. The two other middle schools in the county were members of a middle school athletic league. Although it was generally believed that because the other two schools in the county were members the new school would be selected, we still had to go through the application process. This consisted of filling out a request form and then attending a league meeting and making an in-person request to join the league. This process turned out to be just a required formality. During the April league meeting a request for membership was made and the Panthers were accepted as new league members.

The second issue of cheerleading tryouts was a little more troublesome. The school had to send invitations out to all of the middle schools inviting students that were zoned for the new school to tryout for cheerleading if they wished. The cheerleading coaches then had to verify the address of each girl to make sure they were in fact zoned to attend the new school. The county transportation department was requested and agreed to provide transportation to any girls needing it from the other two middle schools. There

were no requests for transportation from one of the middle schools and two requests from the other.

Tryout practice was held from April 14 through April 18 and the actual tryouts were held on the afternoon of April 21. As is often the case with cheerleading tryouts there were parents who felt that their child should have made it, but did not. However, there were no controversies that had anything to do with the opening of the new school.

Another time-consuming task during this spring, primarily the month of May, was meeting with the parents and students of the elementary feeder schools. There were three elementary schools that were zoned to feed totally into the new middle school and two that were zoned to partially feed into the new school. Traditionally rising sixth graders visit the middle school during the spring of their fifth grade year. This was not possible for these students since the new school was not open. In lieu of the student visits to the new school, assemblies were held for the 5th graders at each feeder school and also parent meetings at each school in the evenings. A fifteen to twenty minute presentation was given at these meetings complete with a diagram of the floor plan. Much of the presentation centered on general elementary to middle school transition issues, such as, the middle school team concept, exploratories, lockers, and making friends from other elementary schools. A time for questions was allowed at the end of the meetings. Although these meetings were time consuming and became a bit redundant, the parents and students commented that they benefited very much from them and felt much more at ease about attending the new school.

One of the last tasks of the planning year dealt with the establishment of business partners for the new school. During the third week in June a meeting was held with a representative from the local chamber of commerce and the school systems director of public relations. The chamber of commerce sponsors the business partners in education program. Two local businesses had expressed interest in becoming partners with the new school. Instructions were given at this meeting on how the business partnership program worked and some examples of how other schools in the county related to their partners were shared. The name of the contacts at the two companies was then released.

One of these companies was just starting up in the community and wanted to wait a while before they became fully involved in the partnership program. Representatives from the other company met with the PTO officers and together we developed a plan of partnership that would benefit both the company and the school. The business partners in education program would become an ever-evolving process with the school losing and gaining partners each year.

The last day for students during the construction year was June 10th and the last day for teachers was June 12th. This second week of June and the following third week were dominated, with the exception of sporadic interviews, with traditional end of the year tasks. These tasks included, transfer of records to the high schools and from the elementary schools, grades, inventories, and a host of year end duties. However, the move to the new building was never far from the thoughts of everyone including, the faculty, staff, parents and students.

In looking back over the calendar, journal, and notes, it seemed impossible to accomplish the tasks that were required in the time frame allowed. The time period from

the middle of April to the first of June was particularly taxing. In addition to being in charge of the seventh and eighth grades of a transitional school, spring being one of the busiest times of the year, numerous meetings were held concerning the planning and construction of the new school and over ninety interviews were conducted. Without the support of the principal and assistant principal of the high school part of the transitional school, the job would have been impossible. The excitement and anticipation of moving into a new school was energizing. Although a clear shift in duty responsibility was not definitive from planning year to occupancy year, the clear line on the calendar of July 1st was at hand.

First Year of Occupancy

What are the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school during the first year of occupancy in that school?

As the workload concerning the new school, in the planning year started rather slowly then reached a hectic pace as the year came to a close, the opposite was true of the 1st year of occupancy. The pace was very hectic from the beginning and waned towards the end of the school year.

One major issue that added to the hectic atmosphere was the fact that the building was not ready to be occupied on July 1st. The administrative offices were supposed to be ready on this date. The original plan called for an initial move in date of July 7th, and for the assistant principals to move in on August 4th. The building was also supposed to be available on August 4th for teachers to start moving in, even though they were not on contract yet. For the month of July and the first two weeks of August the new school operated out of the transitional school's media center.

In addition to meeting with the assistant superintendent who was in charge of the project and visiting the new building daily, interviews were continuing at a rate of about four or five a week. Most of these interviews were for classified positions such as custodians and paraprofessionals. Also on July 10th parents began to contact the school wanting to set up conferences to discuss concerns about their child for the upcoming school year. These conferences concerned a variety of issues from concerns about their child not being challenged in gifted, to concerns over children reentering public school, and discipline concerns. It was intriguing that a large amount of parents said they decided to enroll their child back into public school because a new school was opening.

July was also spent planning for the assistant principals and the head secretary to begin work on August 4th. Two separate boxes of documentation and information resources were prepared, one for each assistant principal. One primarily dealt with discipline, custodial, and athletic issues. The other dealt with instructional, testing, and new teacher issues. There were some duties, such as substitute responsibility and teacher observations that would be decided after the assistants came on contract. A list of priority tasks for the secretary was prepared as well.

At the top of the secretary's list was the formatting and creation of a teacher handbook. During July an outline for the teacher handbook was prepared. Once the assistant principals reported for work other information and policies were filled in, and still more policies and procedures were completed after a daylong BLT meeting in early August. The secretary then completed all other information, such as, dates, schedules, and countywide guidelines, for the handbook. This was quite a time consuming task,

however the handbook complete with all information on policy and procedure was ready to distribute to the teachers when they arrived on August 25th.

During July and early August the initial letter to the faculty was formulated. In addition to giving the teachers a schedule for preplanning and staff development this letter was a welcome and introduction to the new school. It was not until the assistant principals were at work and their input incorporated, that the letter was sent to the faculty and staff.

Writing the first letter to the faculty is proving much harder than I thought. It should not be that difficult. I am probably being a perfectionist, but since it is my first official correspondence with the entire faculty and staff, I do want it to be perfect. I want to appear friendly and welcoming, but also professional and task oriented. I have what I feel is a pretty good letter now, but I am going to wait and let my assistants look over it, offer suggestions and add anything they would like.

Thankfully the school board had the foresight, at the suggestion of the school system superintendent, to move the starting date for school later than most systems to September 2nd. Having these extra days was the only reason we were able to get prepared and be ready to educate the students on the first day of school. In addition to the new school issues and late move in, the normal beginning of the school year issues were present as well. The teachers still had to get textbooks ready to distribute, arrange for syllabi to be printed, attend the countywide convocation and attend faculty meetings. There were still administrative meetings, planning for and attending BLT meetings, attending PTO meetings and new teacher luncheons and planning for faculty meetings and open houses that had to be accomplished.

Usually one open house is held for upcoming sixth graders and any other students new to the school. However, since a new school was opening, all students would be new.

Therefore, an open house for each grade level was held. The physical education, exploratory, gifted, special education, title one, and counselors worked out a rotation for these open houses and the grade level teachers just attended on their grade level's night. The administrative staff attended all three nights.

As the Labor Day weekend approached with the students reporting on the following Tuesday, level of anxiety and stress was evident in a journal entry:

There are not enough hours in the day to complete all the tasks that need to be finished. Dealing with new school issues is a full time job; much less the regular school start up tasks. If I believed I had too much to do this spring during the peak of interviews, I was just in training for the true work! I must still work through this weekend to make sure we will be ready for the students. If I did not have two assistant principals and secretary that were willing and even eager to go way beyond the call of duty, there is no way we would be ready to open school. In many ways they work harder than I do!

Finally after a weekend of working at the school on schedules and last minute meetings with the building superintendent to set the guidelines for construction workers during the school day, school opened with students on September 2nd. George, the building superintendent kept control of one large closet that could also be used as an office, and two smaller closets. Various contractors touching up paint, replacing ceiling tiles, landscaping, and various other tasks would be a constant presence in the school for the first three months of the new school year. All contractors were required to wear an identification tag identifying them as a member of the "construction team". Also, whenever a contractor needed to work in the building, he was first to meet with George and myself so that the work could be scheduled at the least disruptive time to the students. All in all the construction work that continued into the school year caused very little disruption to the learning environment.

One tardy construction phase did cause significant inconvenience, which was the incomplete athletic fields. Even before the students began school, the softball and football teams began practice. Since the fields were not ready, alternative practice facilities were needed. An agreement was worked out with the county recreation department for a softball practice field and with the former transitional school, now a high school, to use the outfield of the baseball field for football practice.

Before school started the parents would drop off and pick up the students at these sites. Having to move equipment every day and not having restroom facilities were a problem for the coaches and players, which caused loss of practice time and inconvenience. The start of school added the inconvenience of transportation. The transportation department agreed to provide buses for the softball team and football team to take them to their respective practice fields. The parents would then come to the fields to pick up their children. The busses were often late and on a few occasions did not show at all. This was very frustrating to the coaches, athletes, and parents, greatly affecting practice time and preparation for contests. The fields were not usable, even for physical education classes, until late spring of the first year of occupancy.

The entire staff was cognoscente of the fact that many of the procedures adopted during this first year would become the standards to follow in the future. The teacher handbook and teacher sign in procedures were two examples. Another was the first PTO meeting of the school year, which occurred three weeks after the students started school. The BLT, the PTO, and I decided that the first PTO meeting would be a curriculum night in which students' works would be displayed and teachers would give summaries of the different curriculum areas, Language Arts, Science, Math, Social Studies, Exploratory,

and PE. After the summaries and PTO business meeting the parents would then be invited to tour the school and see the many different students' works and visit with the teachers.

The BLT made the suggestion that every PTO meeting would have some sort of student display or performance, such as, band and chorus concert, talent show, and athletic recognition. The PTO wholeheartedly approved this and it proved to be a very effective method of drawing parents to the PTO meetings. The BLT was made up of the team leaders from each team, three from sixth grade, three from seventh grade, and two from eighth grade and the special education, exploratory, physical education, and gifted department heads as well as the media specialist and administrators. The BLT also set a policy that all teachers would be required to attend the quarterly PTO meetings.

Other precedents were set in the athletic programs as well. It was decided that one pep rally would be held for the fall sports, softball and football, and one pep rally would be held for the winter sports, wrestling and basketball. If a team made it to the league finals another pep rally would be held before the championship game. It was also decided that if a team was runner up or league champion a banner would be erected in the gym with the teams accomplishments displayed. In the inaugural year the football team and boys basketball team both made to the championship game and finished as runner up.

During the summer before school began a coaches meeting was held in which uniforms were discussed. The school system had provided start up funds for the athletic programs and uniforms would be bought from this fund. It was agreed that in the future if uniforms were needed then the individual booster clubs must fund them. Revenues

from the gate receipts from the first year would be divided between the different sports and that would be that sports operating budget for the next year.

The “sunshine club” was another precedent. Quite often the faculty and staff of a school have moments of happiness, such as weddings and births, and moments of sadness, such as illness or death in the family. It was important to make sure that the school did something during these times. The administrative budget was extremely limited. Therefore the sunshine committee was established. The committee was made up of a teacher from each grade level and the special education and exploratory departments and this committee established the guidelines for meeting these needs of the faculty and staff. All teachers were invited to join the sunshine club at a cost of twenty dollars each. The sunshine committee set as a rule that members of the sunshine club would receive flowers or small gift and a card during special times or bereavement and non-members would receive a card. The Sunshine committee also sponsored a faculty Christmas party and an end of the year luncheon the last day that teachers were on contract.

An unplanned result of being a new school was the frequent request for tours. During the months of September and October the Rotary Club, the district fire chiefs, the district school superintendents, community leadership program, and the chamber of commerce all set up tours of the building. Some of these were during the school day and some were in the evenings. The administration established a routine for tours, which included an information sheet with construction costs and building capacity. This proved helpful when various groups would contact the school requesting a tour. The tour requests tapered off as the school year progressed, however, the requests did trickle in the entire school year.

Related to tours the new school was also the selected site to hold several countywide activities, such as the teacher of the year reception and the business partner recognition banquet. During the course of the school year there were six countywide meetings held at the school. This was not counting the building dedication ceremony.

On Sunday November 9, the dedication ceremony for the new school was held. The planning for and ceremony was a major undertaking, which involved the entire faculty and staff of the school, as well as students, parents, community members, and county office personnel. The date for the dedication ceremony was set in August before school started. Planning began in early September. A committee made up of teachers, parents, county office personnel and the school's administrative staff was responsible for planning the event. The committee met four times during September and October.

A former superintendent of the school system and retired high-ranking state official accepted an invitation to speak at the ceremony. Students were used as greeters, ushers, and tour guides. The PTO supplied and served at a reception after the ceremony and the band and chorus played two songs each to begin the program. In addition to the guest speaker each school administrator and the system superintendent had a part in the program. A student representative began the ceremony with the pledge of allegiance.

At the conclusion of the ceremony everyone was invited to attend a reception in the cafeteria and tour the building. A colored brochure with construction facts, such as, cost, square footage, and capacity and educational facts, such as, enrollment, demographic information, and programs offered, was made available to everyone that attended the dedication ceremony. This brochure was used repeatedly during the first year, when groups or individuals visited the school. The dedication ceremony was

hailed by everyone as a great success and the positive publicity from the event had a positive effect on public relations.

The first week of November the first student was taken to a disciplinary tribunal. A student is taken to a tribunal when the administration decides to suspend a student for longer than ten days. This is usually for a major offense, such as, weapons, drugs, or assaults. This first tribunal was important because, like so much else, it set a precedent for future tribunals. A meeting with the assistant principals was held and an outline was given out of what was expected to be presented at the tribunal. Five folders were made of identical information, which included information about the discipline infraction that brought the student to the tribunal and discipline history, attendance history, and academics. When the tribunal began, a folder was given to each of the three tribunal members, the hearing officer, and the parents of the child. This proved very effective in focusing on the student's behavior and presenting the school's case. I went with the assistants the first time each of them presented at a tribunal, and after that the administrator who originally dealt with the discipline attended the tribunal alone.

Another administrative precedent concerned supervising athletic and other extra-curricular events. It was suggested and the assistant principals agreed that all three administrators should attend home football and basketball games and at least one administrator would attend all away football and basket ball games and other events, such as softball games and band and chorus concerts.

In December of the first year the PTO began a tradition they would follow three times a year, in which they supplied lunch for the teachers and also supervised the students in the cafeteria so the teachers could have a duty free lunch. This proved to be a

great moral building practice for the faculty. The PTO established a precedent of not only showing the teachers appreciation several times a year, but also continually asking the teachers what they needed in the way of supplies. The faculty was polled and created a priority list of “wants”. At the top of this list was another copying machine. Before the school year was out the PTO had purchased a new machine valued at over \$3400.00. The cooperation and camaraderie between the faculty and the PTO was a significant factor in having a successful first year.

Here we are almost half way through the school year. In some ways it feels like we have just started the new school, and yet in others it seems that we have been at it for a long time. The cooperation between the PTO and the faculty is amazing and heartening. Not only do the parents genuinely want to show appreciation to the teachers, but they also want to make sure the teachers have what they need. When I suggested that the PTO provide a lunch and supervision of students, I thought it would be a once a year occurrence, but they wanted to do it at least three times a year.

In February the budget process began, one of the last endeavors of the first year, but would not be complete until the middle of April. On February 25th the financial allotment for the next school year was received. On February 26th the allotment was presented to the faculty at grade level meetings and each department was given their percentage of the allotment. The departments were to meet, decide how they wished to spend their money and turn in these plans to by March 10th. In addition to the department budgets, the faculty was asked to turn in special requests. These requests included assistant basketball coaches, reseeding the athletic fields, additional computers in the instructional lab, and standardized test preparation materials. The department budgets and special requests were turned in to the assistant superintendent for administration on March 11th. On March 18th at the countywide principals meeting all of the schools’

special requests were discussed and prioritized. On April 14th the Board of Education met and approved the county budget, including a few of the special requests.

This process became the template for creating the school budget. The percentages that each department was allotted were the guidelines for future budgets. The faculty also decided that every teacher would order two reams of paper out of their supply budget and each department would order a printer cartridge from the department budget.

As the school year grew towards its conclusion the faculty, staff and PTO established four hopeful traditions. The physical education department suggested a field day, several exploratory teachers proposed a faculty vs. student basketball game, the PTO first suggested an eighth grade dance, and a plan for an honors night came out of a BLT discussion. These were designed to promote camaraderie, not only between the faculty and staff, but also with the students. The first was the faculty vs. student basketball game. All students and faculty members that were not participating in the game filled the stands to watch. This proved very entertaining and was seemingly enjoyed by all attendees. The second was field day. The different homerooms competed in a wide variety of individual and team events. The teachers ran the events and the students voted on the eight teachers that would be in the dunking booth during the course of the day. The events were capped-off by an eighth grade students versus faculty tug-of-war.

The third tradition was the eighth grade dance held the last Friday before the last day of school. All other dances during the year were held during the week and began at 4:00 and concluded by 5:30. The eighth grade dance however, was more of a formal dance in honor of the eighth graders. There was no admission charged the students, the student council decorated the school, the PTO provided refreshments, and the students

were encouraged to wear their “Sunday best.” The students responded well, looking very nice and behaving as young adults, enjoying this informal interaction with their teachers.

Lastly was honors night. This was held the last week of school. All of the students that were to receive any academic honor, including perfect attendance were seated in chairs on the gym floor; all parents and other students sat in the bleachers. The ceremony was very formal with student recitations and solo performances. After the program the PTO supplied a cake and cookie reception with teachers doing the serving.

On June 12th the school year came to an end and so did the first year of occupancy in the new building. This did not mean that all policies and procedures were set for the future, or even that all construction issues were resolved. Many of the procedures, such as, parent pick up and honors night would continue to be tweaked and improved in the future. Relating to construction the master breaker for the electrical system in the building tripped four times during the school year causing the school to be powered only by the emergency generator until the breaker could be reset. The architect, contractor, and electric company could not agree on the cause of this, each blaming the other. The solution to this problem would not come for another year after the power to the building was shut off for a week during the summer and all systems checked.

Conclusion

The two years of school construction and first year of occupancy were without question the two busiest and hectic years of my life. It very much resembled climbing a mountain that had not been mapped and the height not completely known. The work started slowly, often the every day work of being a principal taking much more time than the work associated with preparing for the new school. After the midway point of the

construction year, the work really began to peak with interviews taking up most of the time and many tasks occurring simultaneously. When the construction year ended and the first year of occupancy began, the work continued towards the summit, with planning sessions and precedent setting taking over as the main tasks. As the first year of occupancy continued the summit was reached and the work of a principal running a school was once again the main consumer of time and energy. In looking back it seems very symmetrical. During the climb it often was simply a matter of surviving the workload and unknown future. The experience was very valuable and I am very glad that I had that experience. It has made me a better principal and even a better person. However, given the option, even though it is a great honor, I would be hesitant to undertake the job of being a principal of a new school again

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The purpose of this study was to examine the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school, during the year preceding the opening of the school and during the first year of occupancy in that school. The task was completed via an autobiographical case study. The case study was enriched by interviews with three principals that opened new schools, one assistant superintendent in charge of new school construction, and an architect of schools. Personal reflections and interviews were recorded, transcribed, and along with documents were analyzed for themes.

The themes that emerged were manifested in the duties and responsibilities that were constant in the literature, the case study and the interviews. The information from these sources provided a comprehensive look at this particular case study. Case studies do not lend themselves to generalizations. “But people can learn much that is general from single cases” (Stake, 1995, p. 85).

Findings

Five themes that emerged from the case study were parental issues, construction or building issues, staffing issues, school organization issues, and time management issues. Each of these issues requires certain skills or traits on the part of the principal in order to have a successful new school. The following is a discussion of how these themes and skills and traits relate to the research questions.

1. What are the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school, while that school is under construction?

An analysis of the case study shows a variety of duties and responsibilities. The theme of parental issues had interpersonal skills at the forefront. The first duty the superintendent requested, winning over the parents that had supported another candidate, was a key example of the importance of interpersonal skills. The rezoning meetings, the mascot controversy, and the evening fifth grade to sixth grade transition parent meetings in the spring of the construction year were examples, also.

Early in August of the construction year duties centered around dealings with other educators starting with the principal meetings, and continued through the ILT, (Instructional Lead Teacher), meetings and meetings with the other middle school principals to discuss improvements to the new school. Interviewing the many candidates and weeding through to find the best choice was a major responsibility during the construction year. Organizational and time management themes were also prevalent during the monstrous interview process. The duties and responsibilities also involved the community during parent meetings and the mascot issue during the construction year.

Many of the duties and responsibilities also involved the supposed simple tasks, such as the selection of the mascot and school colors. As well as more complicated issues such as cheerleading tryouts and the establishment of a PTO, and the very important tasks of planning for the assistant principals and head secretary to come on contract

There were many meetings during the planning year. The construction meetings, meetings with the other middle school principals, the BLT and ILT meetings with the construction theme at the center, all resulted in construction changes to the new school. The SST guidelines, procedures for substitute calling, also were products of the many meetings. One of the major duties and responsibilities of the construction year was

dealing with the fact that schools are rarely ready on time and this new school was not either.

2. What are the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a new school during the first year of occupancy in that school?

During the first year of occupancy there were many new duties and responsibilities, some expected, some not. Dealing with the resignation of a PTO officer was one duty that was not expected. Numerous parent conferences at the start of the school year, and the dedication ceremony were expected. Many of the duties during the first year of occupancy revolved around planning. The preplanning staff development day, planning a nondisruptive work schedule for the construction to be completed, and the planning for the various tours and events held at the new school, the formation of the teacher handbook, preplanning staff development day, the dedication ceremony, PTO meetings, were all examples of this.

Precedent setting during the first year of occupancy, with the many issues involving different teachers, students, and parents that were brought together in the new school was also an important duty. Public relations was also an important responsibility. Contacting potential business partners and establishing a sunshine committee were important for public relations.

3. What characteristics or skills are needed to be a successful principal of a new school?

The literature, each principal interviewed, the assistant superintendent interviewed, and the case study suggest that having strong interpersonal skills is the most important characteristic for a principal of a new school to have in order to be successful. In the

review of literature poor interpersonal skills were cited as the number one reason why principals fail (Davis, 1998). The assistant superintendent and the two principals that began their principalships during the construction year of their schools stated that interpersonal skills were of paramount importance in gaining community support for the new school. These same interviewees along with the principal that was hired after the school was completed also stated that interpersonal skills were the most important skill a principal needed during the first year of occupancy to deal with the myriad of issues that surface during this year.

Throughout the construction year and the first year of occupancy properly and effectively dealing with parents was a required skill. Interpersonal skills were not only very important when dealing with parents, but also in the staffing theme as well as dealing with the community and other educators in the county.

Interpersonal skills were very important during the interviewing of the many candidates and weeding through to find the best choice. Organizational and time management themes were also prevalent during the interviews. Calming the frustration with not being able to move into the new building on time was the biggest interpersonal challenge once the faculty was established. Including the faculty in decisions via the BLT, (Building Leadership Team), and during the construction year with many of the building themes, helped to create cooperation. The preplanning staff development day, moral builders from the PTO, and creation of the sunshine committee created an atmosphere favorable to good interpersonal relationships with the faculty.

The duties and responsibilities associated with organizational and planning skills, and problem solving abilities were also prevalent throughout the year of construction and

first year of occupancy. These three are categorized together because organization and planning are problem-solving behaviors.

The decision to include the 6th grade teachers and students in any planning decisions avoided feelings of one group being left out when we moved in to the new school. The staffing decision to include the entire faculty in virtually all decision-making processes avoided possible pitfalls as well.

Another staffing theme was evident in the organization and planning for the nearly one hundred interviews, this was critical. Without a clear plan and very organized scheduling it would have been impossible to carry these out, still perform my principal duties, and make sure the best candidates were selected. This process had the time management theme at its center. The interviews themselves, especially the assistant principal interviews, took considerable planning. It was important for the interview committee to have a clear plan of action and understand the primary job responsibilities of the positions.

Even the seemingly simple tasks, such as the selection of the mascot and school colors and cheerleading tryouts took considerable planning and time management. Without this planning any of these issues could have turned quickly from simple to overwhelming. Planning a nondisruptive work schedule for the construction to be held at the new school during the first year of occupancy were also examples of this.

Each principal interviewed stated that organizational and planning skills are very important for any principal, but are imperative for a principal that is opening a new school. The assistant superintendent ranked organizational and planning skills only

slightly behind interpersonal skills as those needed for a principal to be successful in opening a new school.

Professional educational knowledge was also very important in performing the duties and responsibilities associated with opening a new school. The architect cited this as the most important attribute of a principal when opening a new school. He mentioned the improvements to the school, such as, design of the computer lab and home arts room and management issues like putting locking doors on isolated and thus hard to supervise restrooms, as reasons for this belief.

The principals interviewed also commented that this was an important attribute. All three principals stated that professional educational knowledge filters into many other areas. It aids in the planning and organization as well as interpersonal issues. Without educational expertise many other decisions will be flawed.

The necessity of educational expertise was evident from the beginning of the duties as principal. The parents that had supported another candidate for the position were appeased with sound curricular arguments. The BLT and ILT meetings required strong, sound educational knowledge. With parents and with other educators this knowledge was expected. In educational meetings many others had this knowledge as well.

In the construction meetings this educational expertise was unique. It was no less valuable than it was in the educational setting, although, it had to be presented in a different context. The reason for suggested construction changes had to be explained. The exact effect on instruction or school management needed to be illustrated. Once this was done the recommendation was accepted.

During the entire staffing and interview process educational expertise was paramount. The questions asked to teachers, classified personnel, media specialist, and counselors all were based on a strong educational knowledge. This was especially true for the assistant principal interviews with a diverse committee involved in that process. These educational professionals would expect no less.

Many of the tasks at the start of the year of occupancy also required educational expertise. The formation of the teacher handbook, preplanning staff development day, the dedication ceremony, PTO meetings, were all tasks that required this knowledge.

Through out the duties and responsibilities associated with professional educational knowledge the themes of the study were prevalent. Parent, construction, and staffing issues were the most common.

Vision was found to be an important ability to have in order to be a successful principal of a new school. The literature strongly supports the premise that having a clear vision of the future is a characteristic of a successful principal (Davis, 1998; Hallinger and Heck; 1996, Lyons; 1999; Vann; 1994). The principals, assistant superintendent, and the architect interviewed all stated that the ability of the principal to have a vision of what he or she wanted the school to be like, one, three, five, even ten years into the future was a characteristic of a successful principal of a new school as well.

The need for a clear vision manifested itself early in the construction year. From the first meetings with the BLT I needed to articulate this vision. The vision would be the parameters in which decisions would be made. The SST guidelines, substitute calling procedures, and even the fact that the BLT made most decisions, were reflections of this vision.

The vision was also reflected in the construction meetings. The input and suggestions made were all based on the vision for the school. The construction of the school was constantly being compared with the vision of the school not only the first year of occupancy, but also several years into the future. One example of this was the suggested lay out of the football and softball fields. There is still a vision of a fenced in softball field in which the team can play home games.

The vision was also prevalent during the entire interview process. A clear idea of what type of people were wanted to work in the new school and what type of administrators were wanted was established. Variety was a key to this. Students have many different learning styles; therefore many different teaching styles are needed. I did not need two clones of the principal as assistant principals either. These wants and desires were articulated to the interview committee for assistant principals, and kept in mind when interviewing for the variety of positions for the new school.

The need for a clear and concise vision continued into the first year of occupancy. From the planning for the assistant principals and head secretary, to the teacher handbook through all the precedent setting decisions that were made during this school year, the vision was the guiding light for these decisions. The PTO and BLT procedures also reflected the vision. Without a vision behind the decision making process the decisions have no direction and thus the school will not reach its full potential.

Flexibility is the constant, present in all of the other traits, which allows for success. Each principal interviewed and the assistant superintendent stated that it is very important to be flexible. They each remarked that the construction and occupancy of a new school holds many unexpected pitfalls. The best planning, educational knowledge,

vision, and interpersonal skills may encounter unexpected roadblocks. Therefore, flexibility in each of these areas is necessary for success. Of the five skills, abilities, or personal traits discussed here, flexibility is the only one that was not obviously evident in the review of literature on a successful principal.

However, the necessity for flexibility did manifest itself through out the construction year and the first year of occupancy. Virtually every task or duties required some flexibility since every step in opening a new school is uncharted ground. The tasks that required the most were those that were the most unfamiliar. The construction meetings and ILT meetings were prime examples of this. The construction meetings were a totally unfamiliar setting. With time, adaptation occurred and contributions made at these meetings. To a lesser extent the same was true for the ILT meetings. While these meeting were not as unfamiliar as the construction meetings, it was an unfamiliar setting. The mindset was shifted from that of principal to that of an instructional lead teacher, and these meeting became very beneficial to the new school.

The first major pitfall that required flexibility was the school not being ready for occupancy on the scheduled date. Warnings were headed, acquired through research and in conversations with other principals, that schools are rarely ready on time. It was a necessity to be flexible enough to operate out of the transitional schools' media center and then have the flexibility to deal with the storage of furniture and the teachers desire to set up their rooms. Flexibility along with other abilities such as interpersonal skills and organization, allowed these things to be taken in stride.

The need for flexibility continued through the first year of occupancy with the many issues involving different teachers, students, and parents that were brought together

in the new school. The many different tours and ceremonies, some with very short notice, especially required flexibility. There will always be a need for some flexibility for a principal. However, good planning and precedent setting during the first year of occupancy will reduce its necessity in future years.

Summary

The following summarize the findings of this study. The duties and responsibilities documented in this case study, and those cited in the interviews and review of literature can be divided into five skill, ability, or personal trait categories. These categories are as follows: 1. Interpersonal skills, 2. Organizational and planning, 3. Professional knowledge, 4. Vision, and 5. Flexibility. Although a lack of ability in any one of the categories could be fatal; the one category that can make up for deficiencies in other categories is strong interpersonal skills.

Five themes also emerged after analysis of the duties and responsibilities of a principal of a school during construction and during the first year of occupancy. They were issues involving parents, building or construction concerns, staffing issues, school organizational issues and time management. These themes were intertwined with the duties and characteristics of a principal of a new school. These themes were the main topics or task to be accomplished and the duties, skills and characteristics were the tools used to accomplish each task.

Recommendations

This study adds to the limited body of knowledge on the topic of a principal's role in opening a new school. It is suggested that the following recommendations be shared with educators that are involved in opening a new school, either directly as principal, or in the selection of the principal.

The qualities of a successful principal of a new school are very similar to the qualities of a successful principal of any school and successful leaders in general. The need for strong interpersonal skills, a strong clear vision, strong organizational and problem solving skills, and sound professional knowledge are required for success in both endeavors. The difference seems to be on the emphasis. Interpersonal skills carry more of an emphasis with a principal of a new school principal along with a requirement of flexibility.

1. When selecting a principal of a new school, interpersonal skills and flexibility should be primary considerations. Educational expertise, organization skills, and a clear vision should also be considered when appointing a principal of a new school, however, strong interpersonal skills and flexibility can mitigate weaknesses in these areas.

2. A principal of a new school should always remember that education is a business primarily concerned with people, and thus should make sure he or she emphasizes interpersonal skills. This emphasis should include not only themselves, but also the faculty and staff of the school. How the principal treats people, whether it is teachers, students, parents, other principals, or county office personnel, has the biggest impact on success. The principal should also remember to remain flexible no matter how knowledgeable or well prepared he or she believes himself or herself to be.

3. The principal should be selected and brought on contract during the planning phase of the new school. There are many issues that require the principal's attention long before the school construction is complete, such as, lab placement and set up and other instructional concerns. The middle school principal must make decisions about school colors, mascots, and athletics that elementary principals do not have to make, and the high school principal has even more of these issues than the middle school principal.

Future Research

The following are recommendations to be considered for future research.

“Creating a setting is one of man's most absorbing experiences, compounded as it is of dreams, hopes, effort, and thought. In the lives of individuals few things rival their participation in the creation of a setting for poignancy, memories, and meanings.”

(Sarason, 1972, p. 272). The autobiographical case study does lend insight to the author like no other method. It also gives the most thorough detailed personal description of a single event. However, the autobiographical case study should be a starting point for studying a particular topic not the conclusion. This study gave rise to other ideas for research projects.

1. Other autobiographical case studies could be preformed by a principal of a new high school and by a principal of a new elementary school. These studies could then be compared with this one for similarities and differences among the high school, middle school, and elementary school levels.

2. A quantitative study involving principals that have opened new schools should be conducted. Interviews or questionnaires of many principals that have opened new schools could be analyzed for any significant findings. Such a study could be limited to

just one level, (elementary, high, or middle), or it could involve all levels and analyzed for any significant differences.

3. A sample of assistant superintendents and superintendents who have been in charge of multiple school openings could be questioned about what they believe makes a successful principal of a new school.

4. Lastly a survey or study of parents and students who have been part of the opening of a new school would lend an interesting perspective to the body of knowledge concerning what it takes to be a successful principal of a new school.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

1. How many new schools have you been a part of opening?
2. At what point in the construction of the new school were you named as principal?
3. What role, or input, did you have during the construction of the new school?
4. What duties or roles did you have before the school was ever opened?
5. What are some of the main problems you encountered as principal of a brand new school and what were some of the solutions?
6. Is there anything that you, the superintendent, or school board could have done to alleviate some of these problems?
7. What do you believe you did right and wrong during your first year in the new school?
8. What do you believe are the most important characteristics for a principal of a new school to possess?
9. When do you believe is the best time to name the principal of a brand new school?
10. What suggestions would you have for someone that has just been named as principal of a brand new school?

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS FOR ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDANT

1. As assistant superintendent how many new school constructions have you been involved in?
2. What has been your role in the construction and occupancy of a new school?
3. How would you summarize the role of the Principal of a new school?
4. What input do you believe the Principal of a new school should have during the construction phase?
5. Of the schools you were involved with at what phase was the Principal named?
6. When do you believe is the ideal time to name a Principal of a new school and why

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONS FOR ARCHITECT

1. How many new schools have you been a part of constructing?
2. How many school systems have you constructed schools in?
3. How would you summarize your role as architect in the school construction project?
4. How would you summarize the principal's role in the school construction project?
5. When do you believe would be the ideal time to name the principal of the new school?