

A CASE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP TRAITS OF AWARD-WINNING MISSOURI
ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS FROM 2002 TO 2013

A Dissertation
presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

by
ERICA STEPHENSON
Dr. Carole Edmonds, Dissertation Supervisor

December, 2014

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

A CASE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP TRAITS OF
AWARD-WINNING MISSOURI ELEMENTARY
PRINCIPALS FROM 2002 TO 2013

presented by Erica Stephenson,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of education,

and here by certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Dr. Carole Edmonds

Dr. Kris Alexander

Dr. Jan Glenn

Dr. Tim Wall

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of David Mark Eblen. The world and the community of Columbia, Missouri lost a great man on August 7, 2006. Your dedication and ability to practice law always has encouraged me to do what I love and do it well. You were the one who inspired me to go back to school to become a teacher, because teaching was the one calling I loved. Each and every day I aspire to do the best work I can with my students. I applied for this program three months after you passed-I finally got this finished!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, I have to thank the love of my life, Russell Abbiatti. Russ has taken on this dissertation with me by ensuring every other aspect of our home life has been a supportive environment. Meeting you six years ago and marrying you has been the best part of my life. Thank you for your encouragement, kind words, and support. I am sorry I have not been able to perform the little things such as grocery shopping or laundry for the past year. I know we will laugh about it for years to come.

I also want to thank my mom, Cheryl Terry, dad, Steve Stephenson, and stepdad, Steve Terry for always encouraging me and instilling an importance of education to me. You all have made me into the person I am today.

I also want to thank Dr. Carole Edmonds for getting me fired up to finish this glorious project. Your time and support mean everything to me. You are an inspiration and thank you so very much! I also want to thank Dr. Messner and Dr. Piveral for the two wonderful years of coursework and the knowledge I have gained through this project.

I would also like to acknowledge my students. You are my best work. I am so inspired by every single one of you each day. You all have definitely left your mark on my life and in my heart.

I also want to thank all of my friends who have encouraged me and laughed at me for always saying, "Well, I've got to go work on my paper." You all know who you are.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....v

LIST OF FIGURES.....vi

ABSTRACT.....vii

CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY.....1

 Background

 Leadership Theory

 Elementary Principal Award Programs

 Evolution of the Principalship

 Problem Statement

 Purpose Statement

 Research Paradigm

 Research Question

 Design and Methods

 Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

 Definition of Key Terms

 Significance to the Study

 Summary

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....20

 Introduction

 Approaches to Leadership

 The National Association of Elementary School Principals

 The Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals

 The Principalship

 Summary

3. METHODOLOGY.....55

 Introduction

 Problem

 Purpose

 Grand Tour Research Question

 Research Design

 Data Analysis

 Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

 Researcher Role and Biases

Summary	
4. DATA COLLECTION.....	67
Setting for the Case Study	
Relationship of Researcher to Research	
Participants	
Data Collection Procedures	
Data Analysis	
Research Findings	
Summary	
5. DISCUSSION.....	116
Grand Tour Research Question	
Discussion of Findings	
Limitations of the Study	
Implications	
Conclusions	
REFERENCES.....	132
APPENDIXES	
A. Participant Cover Letter.....	139
B. Participant Signed Consent Form.....	141
C. Interview Questions.....	142
D. Leadership Trait Questionnaire.....	143
E. Permission to Use the Leadership Trait Questionnaire.....	146
F. Document A from Participant A.....	147
G. Document B from Participant B.....	155
H. Document C from Participant C.....	167
I. Document E from Participant E.....	170
J. MAESP Brochures for Participants A, B, E, F, G, and H.....	172
VITA.....	178

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE

1. Northouse's (2010) Studies of Leadership Traits and Characteristics.....31
2. Missouri Distinguished Principal Demographics.....74

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE

1. Concept Map of the Case Study on Leadership Traits of Award-winning Elementary Principals.....16
2. Classical Theory Chart Illustrating an Adapted Hierarchy of Command in a School District.....43
3. Data Collection Process-Triangulation.....64
4. Themes and Subthemes Emerging from Data.....79
5. Traits of Award-winning Elementary Principals.....117

A CASE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP TRAITS OF AWARD-WINNING MISSOURI
ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS FROM 2002 TO 2013

Erica Stephenson

Dr. Carole Edmonds,

Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The role of the principal has been complex since its origin (Rousmaniere, 2013). The publishing of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 stated, "principals must play a crucial leadership role in the development of school and community for reform" (Weiss, 1992). Accountability was placed on the principal for the overall effectiveness of their school (Weiss, 1992) in the areas of climate, personnel, curriculum, student achievement, and change agents. Within the next two decades, reform concerning student achievement would continue to have an impact on the role of the principal.

The No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law in 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), ignited school reform efforts for more accountability based upon student achievement. All stakeholders in the educational field were looking at ways to ensure students were achieving by exploring programs and resources to promote student achievement, closing achievement gaps between low socioeconomic schools and higher socioeconomic schools, and paying high costs for these efforts (Barton, 2004; Reeves, 2004; Rothstein, 2004; Whitaker, 2003). The leadership of school buildings, or the principalship, was now more critical than ever to lead through school reform (Kafka, 2009).

Today, the many demands on educational leaders have evolved into a complex role for the principal position (Kafka, 2009). Defining a leader as successful, by student achievement alone, is not reflective of the traits of successful leaders (Chastain, 2007). Identifying the traits of award-winning leadership at the elementary level provides school leaders and school district administration a guide for selecting the best candidates possible for principal positions (McEwan, 2003).

Eight Missouri Distinguished Principals were interviewed, provided documents reflecting their leadership, and took the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (Appendix D; Appendix E) in regards to their leadership traits. The researcher triangulated the data from the participants and found the common themes of leadership traits among them: a) building relationships with all school stakeholders, b) communication is key, c) belief systems build culture, d) seeking the right traits in teachers, and e) the structured leader.

The author of this study was a subordinate of one of the participants, but used an etic perspective when conducting research with this participant. The participants were selected using purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998). The researcher designed the research, collected data, and constructed themes through the collective case study approach (Merriam, 1998).

The research of this study adds to the body of knowledge about traits of effective principals. Research implications could assist school leaders designing instruments and interview questions for hiring principals, to assist principals in revitalizing their practice with mentoring and coaching, or university or college level programs using the data to implement curriculum design.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

It was August 2008. Teachers were nervous, as well as parents and students in the hallways of the recently re-named West Elementary. The bell rang in the newly painted halls with sparkling tiles dating back to 1990s in tropical pastels. The floors were old, but shone with a new coat of wax. It was a flagship day, the first day of West Elementary in Freedom Public Schools. It had been a part of Metro Public Schools for years. Hand-selected by Dr. Super from over 100 teachers and applicants, teachers waited outside the door for the first batch of students to enter their rooms. This leader, a Missouri Distinguished Principal, was an award-winning principal in Missouri. His leadership compared to the leadership of other award-winning principals could provide insight for new principals, school district administration, the research community, and leadership programs through universities. What leadership traits did he possess that others could utilize?

Background

The role of the principal has been complex since its origin (Rousmaniere, 2013). The publishing of the National Commission on Excellence in Education's *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 stated, "principals must play a crucial leadership role in the development of school and community for reform" (Weiss, 1992). Accountability was placed on the principal for the overall effectiveness of their school (Weiss, 1992) in the areas of climate, personnel, curriculum, student achievement, and change agents. Within the next two decades, reform concerning student achievement would continue to have an impact on the role of the principal.

The No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law in 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), ignited school reform efforts for more accountability based upon student achievement. All stakeholders in the educational field were looking at ways to ensure students were achieving by exploring programs and resources to promote student achievement, closing achievement gaps between low socioeconomic schools and higher socioeconomic schools, and paying high costs for these efforts (Barton, 2004; Reeves, 2004; Rothstein, 2004; Whitaker, 2003). The leadership of school buildings, or the principalship, was now more critical than ever to lead through school reform (Kafka, 2009).

Today, the many demands on educational leaders have evolved into a complex role for the principal position (Kafka, 2009). Defining a leader as successful, by student achievement alone, is not reflective of the traits of successful leaders (Chastain, 2007). Identifying the traits of award-winning leadership at the elementary level, may provide school leaders and school district administration a guide for selecting the best candidates possible for principal positions (McEwan, 2003).

Leadership Theory

A theoretical framework was used to frame the researcher's dissertation. Through the leadership theory lens (Northouse, 2010), the following approaches and conceptual underpinnings led the research: skills, style, situational, and most specifically traits; the vision and criteria for the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP) Distinguished Principal Award; and the history and evolution of the principalship and their pertinence to the elementary principalship.

The leadership theory (Northouse, 2010) served as the lens to view the leadership approaches guiding the research. The approaches leading the study consisted of the skills approach, style approach, situational approach, and specifically, the trait approach of leadership. The traits approach to leadership was the main concept utilized for the research. Skills, style, and situational approaches were also reviewed in the study due to their possible emergence in the data collected through interviews, documents, and the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ).

Various studies and theorists have tried to define leadership, however, Stogdill, as cited in Northouse, asserted, “there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define it” (Northouse, 2010, p. 2). However, the various definitions from these studies and theorists conceptualized leadership as having four components: leadership as a process, leadership involving influence, leadership occurring in groups, and leadership involving common goals (Northouse, 2010). Northouse (2010) described the process of leadership as “a transactional event that occurs between leader and followers” (p. 3). The influence of leadership “is concerned with the how the leader affects and is affected by followers” (Northouse, 2010, p. 3). Leadership occurring within groups “involves influencing a group of individuals who have a common purpose” (Northouse, 2010, p.3). Leadership in the context of a group involved “leaders and followers have a mutual purpose” (Northouse, 2010, p3). Through the four concepts of leadership, Northouse (2010) derived the definition of leadership: “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (p. 3). The conceptualizing of leadership into a definition allowed descriptions of leadership to emerge (Northouse, 2010).

Descriptions of leadership involved the issues between leaders and followers (Northouse, 2010). Northouse (2010) emphasized the importance on addressing “how leadership as a trait differs from leadership as a process; how appointed leadership differs from emergent leadership; and how the concepts of power, coercion, and management differ from leadership” (p. 4). The researcher viewed the leadership traits of award-winning elementary principals through the trait approach, therefore distinguishing trait leadership from a process, appointed and emergent leadership, and power and management concepts was necessary.

Trait Leadership is not a Process

Trait leadership involved the belief that leaders were born with leadership qualities, whereas, process leadership “can be learned” and “makes leadership available to everyone” (Northouse, 2010, p.5). The qualities of trait leadership were viewed in the research data from participants and the researcher sought to find common themes among the participants.

Assigned and Emergent Leadership

Assigned or appointed leadership gave individuals a formal organizational role, whereas, emergent leadership was acquired by people following a natural leader through their effective communication (Northouse, 2010). The researcher distinguished assigned and emergent leadership from leadership traits in the study.

Power, Coercion, and Management

The concept of power manifested in organizations as positional by having a rank, or personal by being likeable or knowledgeable (Northouse, 2010). Northouse (2010) suggested power is related to the influence component of leadership and “should be used

by leaders and followers to promote their collective goals” (p. 8). The process or interactions, influence, and groups achieving a common goal can be seen between principal and teachers because, “it is the role of instructional leader that principals have the greatest impact on student achievement, mediated through their affective influence on teachers” (Houchens & Keedy, 2009, p. 53).

Coercion was a descriptor that must be distinguished from leadership because it “involves the use of force to effect change” (Northouse, 2010, p. 9), whereas, leadership “is reserved for those who influence a group of individuals for a common goal” (Northouse, 2010, p. 9). The coercive description was viewed by I and I (2004) as the control orientation and was seen as “ineffective instructional leadership” by “limiting teacher involvement in decision-making, unilaterally directing a wide range of instructional aspects of teachers’ work, and manipulating teachers to control classroom instruction” (p. 146).

The final description of leadership compared management and leadership where Northouse (2010) asserted “management is about seeking order and stability; leadership is about seeking adaptive and constructive change” (p. 10) However, one could also have viewed the principalship through the description of management through leadership theory by the “common issues as scheduling, staffing, budgets and financing and facilities operations” (Houchens & Keedy, 2009, p. 53). The concepts of power, coercion, and management were distinguished from leadership traits by the researcher.

The researcher viewed the principal position through the leadership theory lens to seek traits of award-winning elementary principals. Viewing the principalship through the lens of leadership theory allowed one to see the four components Northouse (2010)

described through his definition of leadership. This allowed the researcher to distinguish leadership traits from a process, assigned and emergent leadership, power, coercion, and management.

Viewing leadership traits or behaviors through the leadership theory allowed one to see “instructional leadership as principal behaviors which were meant to promote higher levels of student achievement through the principal’s interactions with teachers” (Houchens & Keedy, 2009, p. 56). Houchens and Keedy (2009) suggested one view the approaches to leadership through leadership theory in for the trait approach to be used to identify leadership traits of the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award. In order for the researcher to view the leadership traits of award-winning principals through the lens of leadership theory the skills, style, and situational approaches were viewed as well to differentiate these approaches from the trait approach (Northouse, 2010) due to their possible emergence in the interviews, documents, and Leadership Trait Questionnaire (Northouse, 2010).

Skills Approach

The skills approach was a leader-centered theory with the fundamental that skills were abilities that fall into three basic categories: technical, human, and conceptual (Northouse, 2010). Technical skill was knowledge in a particular area, thus making it specialized; human skill was knowledge in regards to working with people to achieve goals; and the conceptual skill was knowledge and working with ideas and concepts (Northouse, 2010). The skills approach emerged in the research on award-winning leadership in elementary schools and was important for the researcher to distinguish from the style, situational, and trait approaches when making meaning from interviews.

Style Approach

The style approach to leadership concerned the behavior of the leader (Northouse, 2010). “The style approach focuses on what leaders do and how they act” (Northouse, 2010, p. 69). This approach was divided into two components of behaviors: task and relationship (Northouse, 2010). Setting and making goals were the facets of task behaviors, and feeling comfortable with others was a facet of the relationship behaviors of the style approach. Participants utilized the style approach to divide their behaviors into the task and relationship levels to reflect upon actions. The style approach was evident in this study’s results, and the researcher needed an awareness of its existence for data analysis and to differentiate from the skills, situational and trait approaches.

Situational Approach

The situational approach to leadership’s main focus was on the leader’s handling of different situations. “The premise for the theory is that different situations demand different types of leadership” (Northouse, 2010, p. 89). The situational leadership approach allowed leaders to evaluate their own leadership during different situations by distinguishing their response as either directive or supportive. This allowed leaders to assess situations and decide if the subordinates need direction or support (Northouse, 2010). The situational approach was necessary for review because its emergence in the data analysis of the research needed to be distinguished from the other leadership skills, style, and trait approaches.

Trait Approach

The trait approach was selected by the researcher to view the award-winning leadership of elementary principals due to the lack of prior research on traits of

educational leaders. When looking at traits of leadership, Northouse (2010) suggested the use of the trait approach to view the “innate qualities and characteristics possessed by great social, political, and military leaders” (p.15). Various studies conducted on leadership traits from Stogdill, Mann, Lord, DeVader, and Alliger, Kirkpatrick and Locke, and Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (in Northouse, 2010) have shown consistent traits of “intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability” (p. 36).

Modern research. Kirkpatrick and Locke “postulated that leaders differ from non-leaders on six traits: drive, motivation, integrity, confidence, cognitive ability, and task knowledge” (Northouse, 2010, p. 18). Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) found that leaders could learn these leadership traits or inherit them. Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004) found traits concerning conscientiousness, emotional stability, social intelligence, and emotional intelligence as effective traits common in leaders and social intelligence as a leadership trait emerged in recent years. Characteristics of the traits of Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) and Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004) were used to seek common traits of award winning elementary principals.

Leadership trait questionnaire. The leadership trait questionnaire (LTQ) (Northouse, 2010) was an instrument that allowed the researcher to see the perceptions on how participants viewed themselves on their own leadership traits (Northouse, 2010). The traits measured fourteen traits with a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagreeing to strongly agreeing to the degree which these individuals had these traits. These leadership traits could have manifested themselves into more traits when viewing the leadership in a school. Comparing the leadership traits of Dr. Super to other MAESP

award recipients could have suggested leadership traits for others to consider when leading a school.

Elementary Principal Award Programs

There were two award programs for elementary school principals pertaining to the study, the National Association of Elementary School Principals Award Program and its affiliate, the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals Award Program. The honorees received the distinguished principal award for Missouri and one honoree was recognized at the national level. Missouri Distinguished Principal elementary honorees shared common leadership traits in this study.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals' Award Program

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) was the creator of the National Distinguished Principal Award (NDP). NAESP was the national affiliate of the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals. NAESP was established in 1921 by 51 principals to “raise the standard” (NAESP website, 2014) of the principalship. Currently, membership was represented by elementary and middle school principals and had nearly 20,000 members. The mission and vision of NAESP centered on student success creating a culture (Bolman & Deal, 2003) of achievement. The NDP award, created in 1984, recognized outstanding principals representing the different states, overseas chapters, and the public and private sector. The distinguished principals shared in the common culture of creating high standards for student achievement within their buildings (NAESP website, 2014). The researcher investigated Missouri Distinguished Principal Honorees at the state affiliate level, MAESP.

The Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals' Award Program

The Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP) was formed to “serve the needs of elementary and middle school principals, assistant principals, and those educators with an interest in becoming principals” (MAESP website, 2014). MAESP had over 1,000 members. MAESP was an affiliate of the NAESP organization. The organization selected one of the Missouri Distinguished Principals each year to represent Missouri at the national level as a National Distinguished Principal. Each year 12 honorees were selected from MAESP’s districts. The guidelines for application required criteria in the areas of operation, high expectations of staff and students, contributions to educational community, vested five years in the position, active member of MAESP and NAESP, respected by all stakeholders in the educational community, and a leader outside of the school in the public community (MAESP Website, 2013).

The rigorous guidelines MAESP employed for selection of honorees reflected leadership traits consistently observed in the honorees chosen each year. The traits of the award-winning elementary principals in this study provided insight for school leaders, teachers aspiring to be administrators, the research community, and school administration programs.

Evolution of the Principalship

“The position of school principal as it currently exists is a relatively new phenomenon within the broader history of public education” (Kafka, 2009, p. 320). The principalship emerged in the early 1800s as populations began to grow in the United States and one-room school houses shifted to multi-level classrooms (Kafka, 2009). “Principal teacher” emerged as the needs of larger schools formed. The individual

assumed clerical and administrative duties, but also remained a teacher. In the latter part of the century, “the principal teacher lost his teaching responsibilities and became primarily a manager, administrator, supervisor, instructional leader and increasingly a politician” (Kafka, 2009, p. 321). The evolution of the principalship had the duties of the principal of the late 1800s, but the position had assumed more roles. The modern day principal was heavily tasked with student achievement and the components to ensure student success (Brown, 2009). The principalship roles and duties were viewed for the research inquiry, considering the history and evolution of the position. The various components of the position emerged in the data analysis.

Problem Statement

The evolution of the principalship has created a complex position in today’s schools (Lattuca, 2012). School reform laws, such as the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2010) centered around student achievement and outside political and social factors have added more roles and expectations (Rousmaniere, 2013). School leaders wore many hats: psychologist, teacher, facilities manager, philosopher, police officer, diplomat, social worker, mentor, public relations director, coach, and cheerleader (Trail, 2000). “Policymakers have discovered that teachers, tests, and textbooks can’t produce results without highly effective principals to facilitate, model, and lead” (McEwan, 2003). Exemplary leadership was studied to view successful principals. McEwan (2003) posed a question in her research on leadership traits of principals

What kind of principal is able to get results with scarce resources, raise achievement and maintain it while building a supportive and caring culture,

nurture and mentor novice teachers, energize experienced staff members and spontaneously leap tall buildings in a single bound? (p. 12)

McEwan (2003) defined ten leadership traits of effective principals, however, DeVita (2004, in Leithwood, 2004) claimed, “There is still much more to learn about the essentials of quality leadership, how to harness its benefits, and how to ensure that we don’t continue to throw good leaders into bad systems that will grind down even the best of them” (p.5) As stated by DeVita (2004, in Leithwood, 2004), there was a lack of information concerning the traits of award-winning elementary principals (Figure 1).

Purpose Statement

The elementary principalship is a complex role in modern times with management, serving as a facilitator of teacher leaders, and adhering to the teaching and learning mission of schools (McEwan, 2003). Lattuca (2012) claimed, “It has become increasingly difficult for public schools to attract, hire, and retain qualified individuals for the principalship” (p. 227). Qualified principals not only have the certification criteria required by the state to practice as an administrator, but they must have the leadership abilities and traits to move their building forward with goals pertaining to teaching and learning (McEwan, 2003). Principals served as many different roles in schools: facilitator, teacher, collaborator, liaison between the school and central office, analyst, evaluator, manager, and disciplinarian. The researcher studied leadership traits of successful principals due to their important role in education (McEwan, 2003). Successful leadership could be defined by the award-winning leadership traits exhibited by those that have won the Missouri’s Distinguished Principal Award. The purpose of

this collective case study was to describe the leadership traits of Missouri award-winning elementary principals.

Research Paradigm

The researcher used a phenomenological approach to identify the “‘essence’ of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by participants in a study” (Creswell, 2003, p.15). The researcher used the social constructivist paradigm to approach the study from a social and historical stance through the conceptual underpinnings to understand the multiple participant meanings from interviewing with open-ended questions to gather the interviewees’ stories of leadership experiences in the roles of a manager, facilitator, mentor, coach, and leader. The researcher made “sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world” (Creswell, 2003, p. 9). With phenomenological research, the researcher had to “bracket” personal experiences (Creswell, 2003) to understand the experiences of the interviewees.

Research Question

The grand tour question leading the inquiry was: “What leadership traits do Missouri award-winning elementary principals exhibit?”

Design and Methods

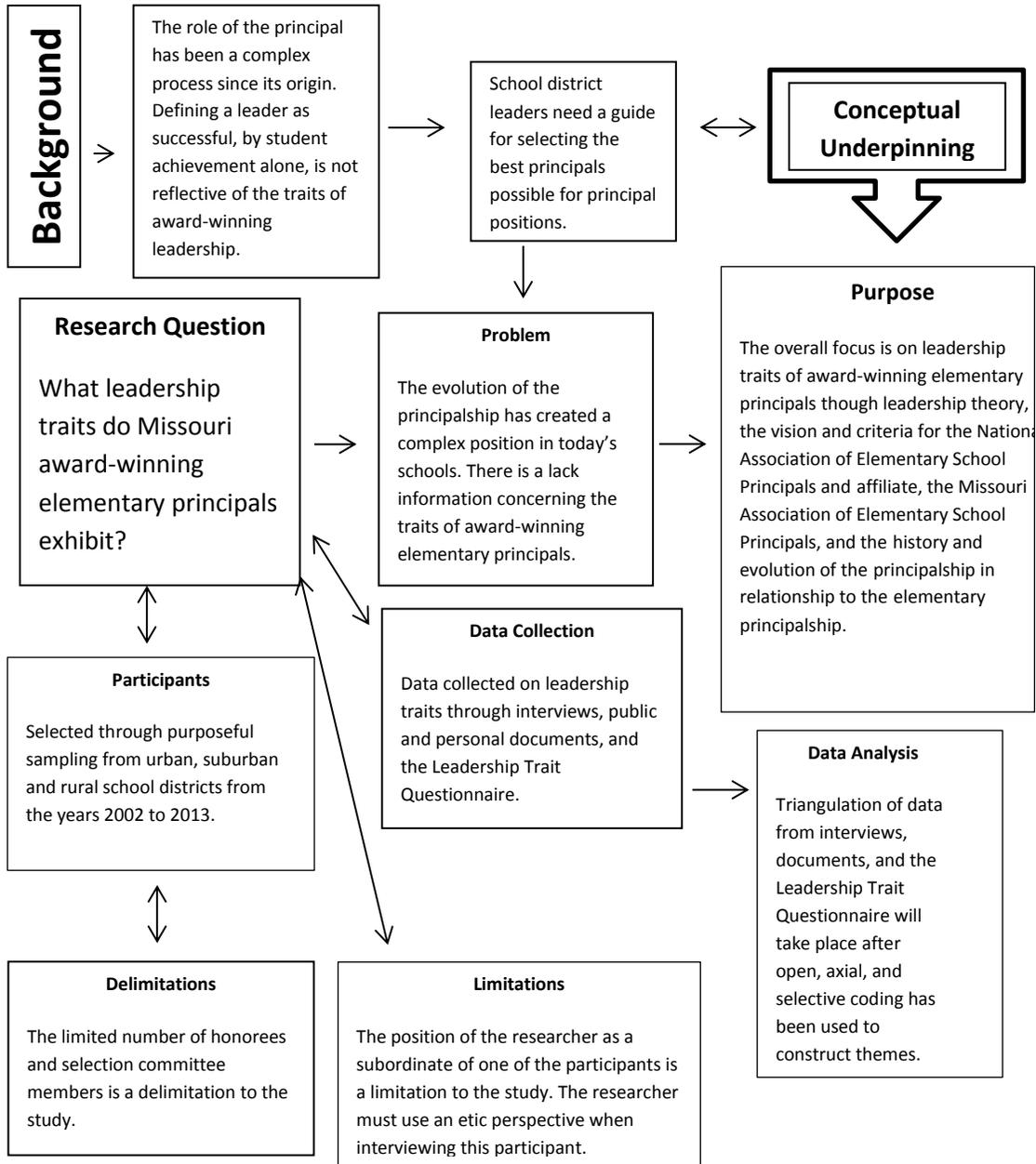
The design and methodology with which the researcher framed the research was led by the social constructivist view. The social constructivist used a lens to “seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). Subjective meanings experienced by the researcher were “leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas” (Creswell, 2003, p. 8). The researcher interviewed eight participants to gain a

complexity of views and to generate themes on leadership traits of award-winning elementary principals. The study looked at the views through the storytelling of the participants. A qualitative approach to research was selected due to understanding meaning constructed through identifying how component parts form a whole picture; the participant's view creating key phenomena; the researcher as the instrument for data collection and analysis; the fieldwork; concept building; and the rich, descriptive data (Merriam, 1998). The interpretive data from interviews allowed the researcher to construct meaning of the traits award-winning leaders share. The phenomenological research method was selected to provide a lens into the experience and interpretation of the qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). Creswell (2003) described, "understanding the 'lived experiences' marks phenomenology as a philosophy as well as a method, and procedure involved studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationships of meaning" (p. 15). The small number of participants in the collective case study (Merriam, 1998) allowed the researcher to develop patterns and meaning of the traits associated with award-winning leadership.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews of eight Missouri Distinguished Principal Honorees with open-ended questions. Two participants were Missouri Distinguished Principal Honorees and served on the selection committee to select the National Distinguished Principal. Survey questions for the interview were created using the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (Appendix D; Appendix E), Stogdill's (1974) ten characteristics of positive leadership traits (Table 1), Kirkpatrick and Locke's (1991) six traits associated with distinguishing leaders from non-leaders (Table 1), and Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader's (2004) eleven traits emerging from their social intelligence

findings (Table 1). The researcher ensured comfort of the participants by allowing them to select a location for the interview (Creswell, 2003). The researcher tape recorded the interviews and followed-up with participants for necessary clarification of transcription (Stake, 1995) (Figure 1). Limitations were present in the researcher being a former subordinate of one of the participants, where the researcher had to use an etic perspective (Merriam, 1998) while interviewing this participant. Delimitations were present in the limited number of participants and selection committee members partaking in the study. The researcher collected personal documents and public documents. The researcher had participants fill out the Leadership Traits Questionnaire (Northouse, 2010) where they reflected upon their own traits. The interviews, personal and public documents, and survey were triangulated by using open and axial coding to understand and construct meaning and then selective coding to interconnect (Creswell, 2003) the traits award-winning elementary principals shared.

Figure 1. Concept map of the case study on leadership traits of award winning elementary principals.



Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

A delimitation of the inquiry was the confinement to a qualitative collective case study. Delimitations of the study were present in the study by interviewing a limited

number of honorees of the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award as well as members of the selection committee. Interviewing more honorees could have enhanced the validity of the research. Delimitations were evident in the narrow scope of the study on Missouri honorees as opposed to honorees from other state affiliated organizations to the National Association of Elementary School Principals and National Distinguished Principal Award Winners.

A weakness of the qualitative study was the limitation of the researcher teaching for one of the participants. The position of the researcher as a subordinate of one of the interviewees could have potentially biased the research. The researcher must have used an etic (Merriam, 1998) perspective when interviewing this principal.

Assumptions presented themselves during the interview process by establishing a trust between interviewer and interviewee. Trust allowed the interviewee to express their leadership traits and stories freely so research was optimal. Open-ended questions during the interview process allowed information emerge on award-winning leadership traits and stories. An assumption of the researcher was to “identify any biases, values, and personal interest about their research topic and process” (Creswell, 2003, p. 184). Statements regarding background with the participants needed to be explicitly identified. The actions taken to obtain permission from the Institutional Review Board to protect participant’s rights were indicated (Creswell, 2003).

Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions of key terms will be used in the study.

Leadership. A process whereby an individual influenced a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2010)

MAESP award. The Missouri Association of Elementary School Principal's award for Missouri Distinguished principals. (MAESP website, 2014)

NAESP award. The National Association of Elementary School Principal's award for National Distinguished Principal. (NAESP website, 2014)

Situational approach. Leadership depended upon the demands of different situations (Northouse, 2010).

Skills approach. Leadership effectiveness depended upon the knowledge and abilities of the leader (Northouse, 2010).

Style approach. Leadership depended upon what leaders do and how they act through a combination of task and relationship behaviors (Northouse, 2010).

Trait approach. Leaders had innate qualities and characteristics and concerned the traits leaders exhibit (Northouse, 2010).

Significance to the Study

A study of the leadership traits of award-winning elementary principals was important for several reasons. First, understanding the traits of successful leadership could add to the body of knowledge for human resource heads during the hiring process. Second, understanding the traits of successful leadership could have helped design interview questions involved in the hiring of future principals. Third, research had been conducted in the field of the trait approach, but never pertaining to the stories and traits of successful, award-winning elementary principals.

Summary

Successful, award-winning leadership was needed in the complex world of the principalship. Principals had taken on more roles than ever in the modern era. There was a lack of information regarding the leadership traits through leadership theory of award-winning elementary principals. The qualitative inquiry was designed as a phenomenological collective case study to explore the leadership traits exhibited by award-winning principals through storytelling and open-ended questions. Missouri distinguished principals as well as members of the selection committee were interviewed to find common leadership traits of award-winning elementary principals. The purpose of the inquiry was to add to the body of knowledge through research on the traits of successful leadership in the ever-changing, complex world of the principalship.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

Leadership is the force behind all organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2003). When considering leadership in educational settings, one viewed the approaches and traits of successful leadership (Northouse, 2010; Yukl, 2006). In an elementary setting, the principal position was viewed to see the various approaches and traits of a successful leader. Determining the characteristics and traits of a successful leader in educational organizations may be seen in award-winning leaders. The Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals recognizes distinguished principals annually where one honoree was selected to be recognized at the national level with the National Distinguished Principal Award. This award process may lead to the discovery of common leadership traits exhibited by honorees of the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award.

Chapter 2 explored current literature to support the development of the study, which sought common leadership traits of award winning elementary principals. The literature review consisted of the framework of the leadership theory used to view the leadership approaches: skills, style, situational and traits. An emphasis was placed on the trait approach due to the significance of the study focusing on traits of award-winning principals. The literature review explored the history and evolution of the principal position geared towards the elementary level. The final piece of the literature review examined the National Distinguished Principal Award's history, criteria, and traits looked for at the state level to become an honoree. The researcher's study sought common

leadership traits through documentation of interviews of principals honored with the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award.

Approaches to Leadership

Viewing leadership is a complex process. A variety of leadership approaches lend themselves to “improve leadership in real situations” (Northouse, 2010, p.13).

Considering leadership of award winning principals through the leadership approaches of the skills approach, style approach, situational approach, and trait approach allowed educators to improve leadership. The trait approach was used in a broader spectrum as a lens into the leadership traits of award winning principals. The skills, style, and situational approaches were reviewed in order differentiate the traits approach through the lens of leadership theory.

The Skills Approach

The skills approach within educational leadership was considered through the skills and abilities lens, rather than looking at personality characteristics the researcher saw “knowledge and abilities are needed for effective leadership” (Northouse, 2010, p. 39). Morgan (2006) suggested we view the skills approach to leadership as mechanistic, “as a consequence we tend to expect them to operate as machines: in a routinized, efficient, reliable, and predictable way” (p.13). Through the machine lens, one viewed the skills approach as a division of labor, harboring skills and abilities towards tasks in the educational field.

Northouse (2010) found the three-skill approach as technical, human, and conceptual and the use of each skill depending upon a hierarchy of management: upper, middle, and lower. Yukl (2006) further defined the skills approach “as the ability to do

something in an effective manner” (p.181). Yukl (2006) interchanged the terminology of the human category with interpersonal, and added a fourth category of skills, administrative. Bolman and Deal (2003), viewed this hierarchy of management as structural, however declared, “leadership is also different from management, though the two are easily confused” (p. 337).

The machine lens (Morgan, 2006), suggested one view the technical skills as being specialized in a certain area of work or activity. Through Bolman and Deal’s (2003) structure frame, one saw technical skills when organizational management “realign roles and responsibilities to fit tasks and environment” (p.306). The human skills were considered to be “knowledge about and ability to work with people” and “quite different from technical skill, which has to do with working with things” (Northouse, 2010, p. 40). Bolman and Deal (2003) suggested using the human resource frame to view the human skills. Findings from a series of studies focusing on the two styles of consideration and initiating structure by Fleishman and Harris (1962, in Bolman & Deal, 2003) proposed, “higher consideration for employees is generally associated with lower turnover, fewer grievances, and less absenteeism” (p.170). When considering educational leadership, the conceptual skill or, “ability to work with ideas and concepts,” (Northouse, 2010, p. 42), could have manifested itself through knowledge-seeking school leadership. Northouse also concluded, “Whereas technical skills deal with things and human skills deal with people, conceptual skills involve the ability to work with ideas” (p. 42). Leaders through the brain metaphor (Morgan, 2006), could have used the double-loop feedback model to change the operational norms of any educational setting when one considered the use of conceptual skills. Knowledge and feedback were components of

conceptual skills. Implications the three-skill approach could have manifested themselves in the day-to-day operations of a school, the human resource area of empowering staff, and the conceptual knowledge sharing in meetings to make and meet goals for buildings. An empirically-based skills approach emerged from the three-skill approach (Northouse, 2010).

Northouse (2010) found a four-skill model (Mumford, Campion, & Morgenson, 2007, in Northouse, 2010) assessing the cognitive, interpersonal, business, and strategic skills showed that “managers at the junior, middle, and senior levels of an organization,” (p.53) were required to use more interpersonal and cognitive skills than business and strategic skills for lower management. Findings also showed, the higher one ascended into upper management, the more they used all four of the skills equally (Northouse, 2010). Yukl (2006) examined a fourth skill, administrative, which “usually involve a combination, of technical, cognitive, and interpersonal skills” (p. 181). This could be seen in educational leadership as individuals moved from positions of assistant principal, principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent.

Northouse (2010) also looked at the skills model from Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al. (2000, in Northouse, 2010) to view the “more complex picture of how skills relate to the manifestation of effective leadership” (p. 53). “Their skills model contends that leadership outcomes are the direct result of a leader’s competencies in problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge” (Northouse, 2010, p. 53). The implications of the skills model on school leadership were the everyday occurrences that come into the office with budget problems, student behavior problems, parent concerns, and basic knowledge of effectively running a school. Viewing school

leadership though the skills approach was necessary, because most administrative training programs in education had a curriculum immersed in the skills approach (Northouse, 2010).

The Style Approach

Another approach to examine leadership in an educational setting was the style approach, which “emphasizes the behavior of the leader,” and “focuses exclusively on what leaders do and how they act” (Northouse, 2010, p. 69). The style approach consisted of two interacting behaviors, task and relationship (Northouse, 2010). Task behaviors were utilized to achieve goals, and relationship behaviors made co-workers feel comfort in the work environment (Northouse, 2010). Yukl (2006) associated task behaviors to “planning, coordinating, and organizing operations...supervising subordinates (directing, instructing, monitoring performance)” whereas, relationship behaviors are associated with “establishing and maintaining good relationships with subordinates...superiors, peers, and outsiders...assuming responsibility for observing organizational policies, carrying out required duties, and making necessary decisions” (p. 58-59). A combination of task and relationship behaviors in the workplace could be seen in leadership styles of school administrators. Administrators had everyday tasks and goals to meet for school operations to run smoothly. Yukl (2006) referred to the style approach as the behavior approach and recognizes “leadership effectiveness depends in part on how well a manager resolves role conflicts, copes with demands, recognizes opportunities and overcome restraints” (p.13). The framework with the style approach added the dimension of the relationship with subordinates and leaders. Ferree (2013) completed a study on school leadership style of elementary administrators and school climate and suggests:

School leaders have been expected to build trusting relationships, act consistently, monitor and assess needs while celebrating success and holding high expectations. An instructional leader in the school system facilitated change, motivated others, and demonstrated dedicated to lifelong learning. This standard created a frame for the leadership style of the principal to impact the school climate. (p. 19)

The relationship piece in the style approach was also a necessary component for school administrators to establish trust between themselves and the staff. The human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2008) suggested through the style approach, “Higher consideration for employees is generally associated with lower turnover, fewer grievances, and less absenteeism” (p. 170). The style approach of award-winning principals could manifest itself through a study on the traits of leadership.

The Situational Approach

The situational approach to leadership theorized, “different situations demand different kinds of leadership” (Northouse, 2010, p.89). This was a dimensional approach on how a leader handles situations and involves the leader having to gauge and change for subordinates’ needs (Northouse, 2010). Yukl (2006) claimed:

The situational approach emphasizes the importance of contextual factors that influence leadership processes. Major situational variables include the characteristics of followers, the nature of the work performed by the leader’s unit, the type of organization, and the nature of the external environment. (p. 14)

One situational approach sector of research looked at comparing different leaders processes and actions with two or more situations (Yukl, 2006), whereas the other sector

“attempts to identify aspects of the situation that ‘moderate’ the relationship of leader attributes to leadership effectiveness” (p.14). The latter research sector on situational approaches to leadership could have manifested in research on award-winning principals with their response to different situations.

Bolman and Deal (2003) suggested the researcher use frames to address a situation, where the frames served as a lens to see situation from various aspects. Bolman and Deal (2003) claimed, “choosing a frame, or understanding others’ perspectives, involves a combination of analysis, intuition, and artistry” (p. 309). In a school setting, Bolman and Deal (2003) articulated, “A new curriculum in a school district will fail without teacher support” (p.309). This suggested that situational leadership was applicable to school leadership, the needs of the teachers must be met to implement new curriculum such as Common Core Standards. The principal must have gauged the needs of the change agent, and addressed it accordingly through professional development or collaboration (Reeves, 2010).

The different levels of management could have required different situational skills. Yukl (2006) asserted the leadership situation determined the different skills they used based upon management position: top, middle, and lower. Situations became more complex at different levels of the organization. Yukl (2006) claimed, “Relevant situational moderator variables include managerial level, type of organization, and the nature of the external environment” (p. 204). The hierarchal structure of management through scientific management theory (Morgan, 2006), allowed one to view the situational approach at different levels of authority in the educational field. An elementary principal will have handled situations as middle management, or an actor

between central office authority (superintendent) and the staff at the school. The different situations occurring at the school level and the central office level have varied. Studies on award-winning leadership of elementary principals could have found the situational approach manifested through the research.

The Trait Approach

The trait approach was selected through the leadership theory lens as the concept to view award-winning leadership of elementary principals since there was a lack of research pertaining to this area. Trait approach was viewed through Northouse's (2010) research centering on studies by Stogdill (1948, in Northouse, 2010); Mann (1959, in Northouse 2010); Stogdill (1974, in Northouse, 2010); Lord, DeVader, and Alliger (1986, in Northouse, 2010); Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991, in Northouse, 2010); and Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004, in Northouse, 2010). When considering the leadership of award-winning principals through achievement, whether or not their buildings meet the criteria, one could have assumed they exhibited some of the leadership traits within the trait approach (Northouse, 2010).

Early trait research. This approach was initially studied in the 1900s, "to determine what made certain leaders great" (Northouse, 2010, p.15). For leaders in every field, the traits of effective leadership could be replicated. The grassroots of research on the trait approach initially were "great man theories" and "that only the 'great' people possessed them" (Northouse, 2010, p.15). "The trait approach was one of the first systematic attempts to study leadership" (Northouse, 2010, p.15). This approach was the foundation for studying, "the innate qualities and characteristics possessed by great social, political, and military leaders (e.g., Catherine the Great, Mohandas Gandhi, Indira

Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Joan of Arc, and Napoleon Bonaparte)” (Northouse, 2010, p.15). Yukl (2006) claimed, “Underlying this approach was the assumption that some people are natural leaders, endowed with certain traits not possessed by other people” (p. 13). The traits approach might have allowed one to view an award-winning school leader as a model for future principals.

Stogdill’s trait research. An evolution of leadership theory and leadership traits stemmed from Great Person Theories of the early 1900s (Northouse, 2010). It was thought great social and political leaders possessed “innate qualities” which later evolved into the 1948 Stogdill study on traits interacting with situational demands in leaders in the 1930s to 1950s (Northouse, 2010). Earlier theories of the trait approach were later challenged by Stogdill (1948), suggesting “no consistent set of traits differentiated leaders from non-leaders” (Northouse, 2010, p. 15).

Simulations were studied and leadership was considered situational for different leaders (Northouse, 2010). Leaders’ decisions hinged upon situations because all situations were different and response could have been related to the different emotions and social factors. Yukl (2006) claimed early massive research in the 1930s and 1940s “failed to find any traits that would guarantee leadership success” (p. 13). However, Yukl (2006) asserted, “as evidence from better designed research slowly accumulated over the years, researchers made great progress in discovering how leader attributes are related to leadership behavior and effectiveness” (p. 13).

Mann’s trait research. Subsequently, Mann’s 1959 study suggested personality traits factoring into “distinguish leaders from non-leaders” (Northouse, 2010, p. 17). Mann found leaders possessing the six main traits of “intelligence, masculinity,

adjustment, dominance, extraversion, and conservatism” (Northouse, 2010, p. 17).

Personality traits found during the Mann study could have been reflected in the leadership of award-winning elementary principals, if one placed a lower emphasis on situational factors affecting leadership (Northouse, 2010).

Lord, DeVader, and Alliger and Kirkpatrick and Locke’s trait research. The significance of leadership traits emerged from Kirkpatrick and Locke’s (1991) findings and stated “leaders differ from non-leaders on six traits: drive, motivation, integrity, confidence, cognitive ability, and task knowledge” (Northouse, 2010, p. 18). Further research by DeVader and Alliger (1986, in Northouse, 2010), “found that personality traits were strongly associated with individuals’ perceptions of leadership” (Northouse, 2010, p. 15). This suggested that personality could be a strong factor when measuring the trait approach. Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) declared “effective leaders are actually distinct types of people in several key respects” (Northouse, 2010, p. 16). In their study, Kirkpatrick and Locke proclaimed, “the study of leadership traits has a long and controversial history” (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991, p.48). The Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) findings suggested traits that emerge from the leadership studies they conducted. Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) state:

Key leadership traits include: drive (a broad term which includes achievement, motivation, ambition, energy, tenacity, and initiative); leadership motivation, (the desire to lead but not to seek power as an end itself); honesty and integrity; self-confidence (which is associated with emotional stability); cognitive ability; and knowledge of the business. (p. 48)

Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) explained these traits can be inherited, learned, or both.

Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) suggested that any person could have reflected these traits observed in other school leaders in their own practice.

Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader's trait research. Recent studies by Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004, in Northouse, 2010) suggested effective leadership had a correlation with social intelligence, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and emotional intelligence. Yukl (2006) suggested leaders with emotional stability, “maintain more cooperative relationships with subordinates, peers, and superiors” (p. 191). The emotional intelligence trait surfaced from the Zaccaro et al. study (2004, in Northouse, 2010) and was necessary for effective leadership due to how it “can help leaders solve complex problems, make better decisions, plan how to use their time effectively, adapt their behavior to the situation, and manage crises” (Yukl, 2006, p. 202). Yukl (2006) also declared the social intelligence trait (Zaccaro, et al., 2004, in Northouse, 2010) had two components: social perceptiveness and behavioral flexibility. The social perceptiveness component of social intelligence (Yukl, 2006), was the capability of understanding “the functional needs, problems, and opportunities that are relevant for a group or organization, and the member characteristics, social relationships, and collective processes that will enhance or limit attempts to influence the group or organization” (p. 202). The behavioral flexibility (Yukl, 2006) component of the social intelligence piece was the “ability and willingness to vary one’s behavior to accommodate situational requirements” (p. 203). Yukl (2006) suggested the research on social intelligence and emotional intelligence is limited and how “more research is needed to clarify how these two competencies are interrelated and to assess the relevance of their component skills

for leadership effectiveness” (p. 203). Subsequently, the emergence of social intelligence traits (Zaccaro, et al., 2004, in Northouse, 2010) coupled with the traits found by Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) were used to view the leadership of award-winning leadership due to the lack of research in the area. Table 1 displayed the emergence of different traits from Northouse’s (2010) synthesized research on the trait approach from trait research’s emergence in the Stogdill studies (1948, in Northouse, 2010) to the Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004, in Northouse, 2010) research. Mann’s leadership trait of masculinity (1959, in Northouse 2010) and Lord, DeVader and Alliger’s leadership trait of dominance (1986, in Northouse, 2010) are included in the trait research pertaining to this study due to their emergence in the history of the principalship, although contemporary research has questioned their validity (Northouse, 2010).

Table 1

Northouse’s (2010) Studies of Leadership Traits and Characteristics

Stogdill (1948)	Mann (1959)	Stogdill (1974)	Lord, DeVader, and Alliger (1986)	Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991)	Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004)
Intelligence	Intelligence	Achievement	Intelligence	Drive	Cognitive abilities
Alertness	Masculinity	Persistence	Masculinity	Motivation	Extroversion
Insight	Adjustment	Insight	Dominance	Integrity	Conscientiousness
Responsibility	Dominance	Initiative		Confidence	Openness
Initiative	Extroversion	Self-confidence		Cognitive ability	Agreeableness
Persistence	Conservatism	Responsibility		Task knowledge	Motivation
Sociability		Cooperativeness			Social intelligence
Self-confidence		Tolerance			Self-monitoring
		Influence			Problem solving
		Sociability			Emotional stability
					Emotional intelligence

Adapted from P.G. Northouse, 2010.

Evaluations of trait research. Evaluations of trait research have shown conceptual and methodical limitations (Yukl, 2006) due to the “abstract nature of most traits limits their utility for understanding leadership effectiveness” (p. 207). Studying one trait at a time proved to be limited and challenging to interpret (Yukl, 2006). Yukl (2006) suggested, “One possible remedy is to use cluster analysis to develop typology of leaders based upon distinct trait (or skill) profiles” (p. 207). Another suggestion was to balance or temper “one trait with another, which gets back to the analysis of trait patterns” (Yukl, 2006, p. 207). In educational administration, this type of clustering or balancing the trait approach could have lent itself to studying effective leadership by testing to see if a “curvilinear relationship is supported by the data” (Yukl, 2006, p. 207) as opposed to a linear approach on one trait.

Leadership trait questionnaire. Northouse (2010) found a central list of leadership traits “include intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability” (p.19). These traits combined provided a rationale for observing the leadership traits central to effective leadership of award-winning school administrators. The Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ) was a survey designed to quantify “the perceptions of the individual leader and selected observers, such as subordinates or peers” (Northouse, 2010, p. 33). The survey administered to school leaders used a Likert scale of one to five, from strongly disagreeing to strongly agreeing, respectively. The LTQ measured the following trait characteristics of leadership: articulation, perceptiveness, self-confidence, self-assurance, persistence, determination, trustworthiness, dependability, friendliness, outgoingness, conscientiousness, diligence, sensitivity, and empathy. The traits measured by the LTQ contributed to the study of award-winning leadership of elementary

principals through development of the interview questions and administering of the survey to participants.

The traits approach was selected as the focus of this study over the skills, style, and situational approach since the research (Northouse, 2010) states that these traits may be learned or inherited. The skills, style, and situational approaches could have been embedded in the research. A qualitative collective case study concerning the leadership traits of MAESP award winners have provided emergent themes which school leaders could have utilized for hiring effective leaders for school districts.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) has served elementary and middle school principals for over 90 years. NAESP is the national affiliate of the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP). The following section discusses the history of NAESP, as well as the purpose and vision of NAESP.

History

Established in 1921, The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) is a professional organization serving elementary and middle school teachers (NAESP website, 2014). A group of 51 elementary school principals established the organization to “promote their profession and to provide a national forum for their ideas” (NAESP website, 2014). After five years, there were 3,000 members and today’s membership is nearly 20,000 elementary and middle school principals (NAESP website, 2014). Members can be found throughout the United States, Canada, and overseas (NAESP website, 2014).

NAESP Purpose and Vision

The purpose of NAESP is viewed within the evolution lens of the organization as organisms metaphor (Morgan, 2006) and organizations as flux and transformation (Morgan, 2006), as NAESP (2014) claimed, “Principals face many challenges in leading for the 21st century. Transformations in school systems and communities in the U.S. and around the world have greatly expanded the leadership role of principals” (NAESP website, 2014). NAESP serves as an advocate for principals to be successful and have high achievement for children, families and communities (NAESP website, 2014). The original vision behind NAESP was “to help the nation’s schools by ‘raising the standards of professional services they rendered’” (NAESP website, 2014). Today’s vision has evolved into much more as the organization evolved and experienced flux and transformation.

When one considered the vision behind NAESP, Morgan (2006) suggested viewing NAESP through the shared reality lens of the organization as culture metaphor, “Shared values, shared beliefs, shared meaning, shared understanding, and shared sense-making are all different ways of describing culture” (p134). The shared values of NAESP are embedded within the vision:

The Association believes that the progress and well-being of the individual child must be at the forefront of all elementary and middle-school planning and operations. Further, NAESP supports elementary and middle-level principals as the primary catalyst for creating a lasting foundation for learning, driving school, and student performance, and sharing the long-term impact of school improvement efforts.

As a national organization, NAESP operates through a network of affiliated associations in every state, the District of Columbia, Canada, and overseas.

As the representative of principals who serve 33 million children in grades pre-kindergarten through 8, the Association seeks to:

Serve as an advocate for children and youth by ensuring them access to an excellent education;

Sustain and promote high professional standards and leadership among principals;

Heighten public awareness of elementary and middle school education as the foundation for all future academic achievement;

Serve as a national representative for elementary and middle-school education to Congress, the Executive Branch, state and federal agencies, the news media, researchers, educators, and other education and child advocacy groups;

Serve as an advocate for the professional tenets and priorities of elementary and middle-school principals; and

Ensure that education continues to be recognized as a matter of national priority. (NAESP website, 2014)

The vision of NAESP creates shared beliefs to include and promote the well-being and achievement of students as a culture among principals. Through the symbolic frame's culture lens, Bolman and Deal (2003) referred to "every organization develops distinctive beliefs, values, and patterns...many of them are unconscious or taken for granted...managers who understand the power of symbols are much better equipped to

understand and influence their organizations” (p. 244). NAESP’s National Distinguished Principal Award serves as a symbol through the cultural lens that supports the vision of the organization so the Association and can be reminded of the vision.

The NAESP Award and Criteria

The symbolic frame within the culture frame (Bolman & Deal, 2003) allowed the researcher to view the National Distinguished Principal (NDP) program as a celebration to reward excellence among principals. Every year the NDP event occurs in Washington D.C. to honor outstanding elementary and middle school principals:

Each year, NAESP congratulates principals from across the nation in both public and private schools and schools from the United States Departments of Defense Office of Educational Activity and the United States Department of State Office of Overseas Schools for their exemplary achievements. (NAESP website, 2014)

The NDP was formed in 1984 to “recognize and celebrate elementary and middle-level principals who set high standards for instruction, student achievement, character, and climate for the students, families, and staffs in their learning communities” (NAESP website, 2014). The NDP program is based on these ideals:

Children’s attitudes towards learning and their perceptions of themselves as lifelong learners are established in the beginning school years.

The scope and quality of children’s educational experiences are determined primarily by the school principal, who establishes, through the important work of teachers and the support of caring parents, the character of a particular school’s program.

The dedication and enthusiasm of all outstanding principals who guide children's early education experiences should be acknowledged to both show appreciation for their work as well as to allow them to serve as models for others in the field. (NAESP website, 2014)

Every year elementary and middle school principals are nominated by peers within their state. "Final selections are made by committees appointed by each of NAESP's state affiliate offices. Honorees from private schools and overseas schools are selected by special committees" (NAESP website, 2014). The framework of the criteria requires the principals to be a practicing principal of five years, planning to stay a practicing principal. Criteria for the NDP:

The principal must demonstrate evidence of outstanding contributions to the community and to the education profession and should lead a school that:

Must be a member of NAESP at the time of the award;

Is clearly committed to excellence;

Has programs designed to meet the academic and social needs of all students; and

Has firm ties to parents and the community. (NAESP website, 2014)

Through the symbolic frame (Bolman & Deal, 2003), the celebratory nature of the NDP Award reminds members of the vision of NAESP. The symbolism of the celebration of the NAESP award may provide insight for establishing a commonality of traits exhibited by award-winning leaders.

The Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals

The Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP) is “the only statewide association in Missouri that exists for the purpose of serving the needs of elementary and middle school principals, assistant principals, and those educators with an interest in becoming principals” (MAESP website, 2013). MAESP is the state affiliate of the NAESP organization. Currently, MAESP has over 1,000 members. MAESP’s key services offered counsel and solutions by “understanding the needs, concerns, and problems of elementary and middle school principals” (MAESP website, 2013).

MAESP Purpose and Vision

Bolman and Deal (2003) suggested viewing the purpose and vision of the MAESP organization through the symbolic frame of the culture frame. The purpose of MAESP:

To form closer relations with persons concerned with the education of children;

To bring about a greater unity of action among the elementary and middle school principals of Missouri, with particular emphasis on elementary and middle school education; and to foster activities that permit increased professional growth of all elementary and middle school principals. (MAESP website, 2013)

Through the purpose, a culture is created in the MAESP organization through members forming closer relations and creating a sense of unity. The mission statement for MAESP states, “MAESP will assist in the development of effective elementary school principals by providing creative resources and high quality opportunities for leadership, learning and networking” (MAESP website, 2013). The community that is shared through a common culture of the mission statement provides the foundation for MAESP’s vision:

Principals have the vision, courage, wisdom and professional knowledge to lead learning communities that create opportunities for all children to achieve their highest potential. Principals ensure that all children have a meaningful foundation for learning. We empower children to become global citizens who can learn and work together.

Principals are recognized as advocates for learning in a society that depends on knowledge, character and talent. We accept that responsibility and utilize leadership to facilitate change. Principals are trusted to speak passionately for schools and effective systems of learning that serves all children.

Principals promote excellence in a profession that values collaboration and diversity. We seek knowledge and share best practices through a network of colleagues. Principals mentor each other and celebrate accomplishments together. We inspire other leaders to follow in a career rich in its contributions to all children and society. (MAESP website, 2013)

The association and members are immersed in the culture of the organization, but could disconnect from the purpose, mission, and vision. The MAESP award program provides one with a symbol to recognize and honor principals adhering to the ideals of MAESP.

The MAESP Award Program

Each year twelve or thirteen honorees are selected from the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals' (MAESP) districts. The guidelines for application required the following criteria:

The individual must be an active principal of a school in which a commitment to excellence is clearly evident, in which programs have been designed to meet the

academic and social needs of all students and in which community ties with parents and local business organizations have been firmly established.

There should be evidence of outstanding contributions to the well-being of the educational community, including: ways in which curriculum, staff morale, community support, student interest and the learning environment have benefited from the principal's leadership; ways in which the principal provides creative leadership in inspiring and motivating teachers and others to achieve and contribute to the school environment; examples of service or achievements above and beyond what is expected in the usual school program; and how others have recognized the principal as a force for constructive change.

The individual should have been an active principal for at least five years and is in his or her sixth year as a principal.

The individual should show a strong commitment to the principalship by active membership in MAESP and NAESP.

There should be evidence that the individual is respected by students, colleagues, parent organizations and the community at large.

The individual should be active and fulfill useful roles in the community as well as in the school, distinguishing himself/herself as a leader in civic, religious or humanitarian activities.

The individual should show strong educational leadership and operate orderly and purposeful schools, having set high expectations for school staff and students. (MAESP Website, 2013)

The rigorous guidelines MAESP employs for selection of honorees could have been utilized by school leaders to reflect traits consistently observed in the honorees chosen each year. These traits could have provided school leaders with a set of standards they look for when selecting elementary principals.

The Principalship

The principal position emerged in the United States as the population grew in the nineteenth century. The researcher reviewed the history of the principal position, the evolution of the principalship, and the elementary principalship. These components of the principalship provided the researcher with an understanding of the complexity of the modern principal position.

History of the Principal Position

The term *principal* originally referred to a leader, ruler or foreman in the mid-1400s (Lattuca, 2012). “The word ‘principal’ that appeared in the 1835 Common School Report of Cincinnati and again in the writings of Horace Mann in 1841 defined both a person and a role with a set of expectations” (Lattuca, 2012, p. 225).

The principal position did not emerge until the late nineteenth century when a “shift of the administrative leader from ‘head teacher’ to ‘principal’” (Brown, 2009, p.609). The head teacher was appointed to supervise students and teachers as buildings shifted from one-room schoolhouses to multi-classroom buildings (Brown, 2009). These principal teachers answered to the school board and “were expected to teach the highest class in their school, to implement specific board policies, and to perform certain clerical and janitorial tasks” (Brown, 2009, p. 609). Lattuca (2012) claimed, “as cities and schools continued to grow, a form of job specialization emerged as a way to achieve

managerial control” (p. 224). This was followed by a movement towards scientific management, professionalizing the principalship (Brown, 2009). Kafka (2009) claimed “By the 1920s, the modern school principalship had been established and looked markedly similar to the position today: Principals had bureaucratic, managerial, instructional, and community responsibilities” (Kafka, 2009, p. 324). Morgan (2006) suggested one view the scientific management of the principalship in this era as a machine though Taylorism operating on five principles:

Shift all responsibility for the organization of work from the worker to the manager. Use scientific methods to determine the most efficient way of doing work. Select the best person to perform the work designed Train the worker to do the work efficiently. Monitor the worker performance to ensure that appropriate work procedures are followed and that appropriate results are achieved. (p. 23)

Scientific management allowed the principal position to professionalize because “the main responsibility of the principal teacher was instructional leader, but principal teachers were also responsible for monitoring and directing the work of other teachers, hiring staff, maintaining the school building, and handling the building’s finances” (Lattuca, 2012, p. 225).

Morgan (2006) suggested one viewed new school systems at this time with the classical management theory. Brown (2009) described the growing trend of school districts:

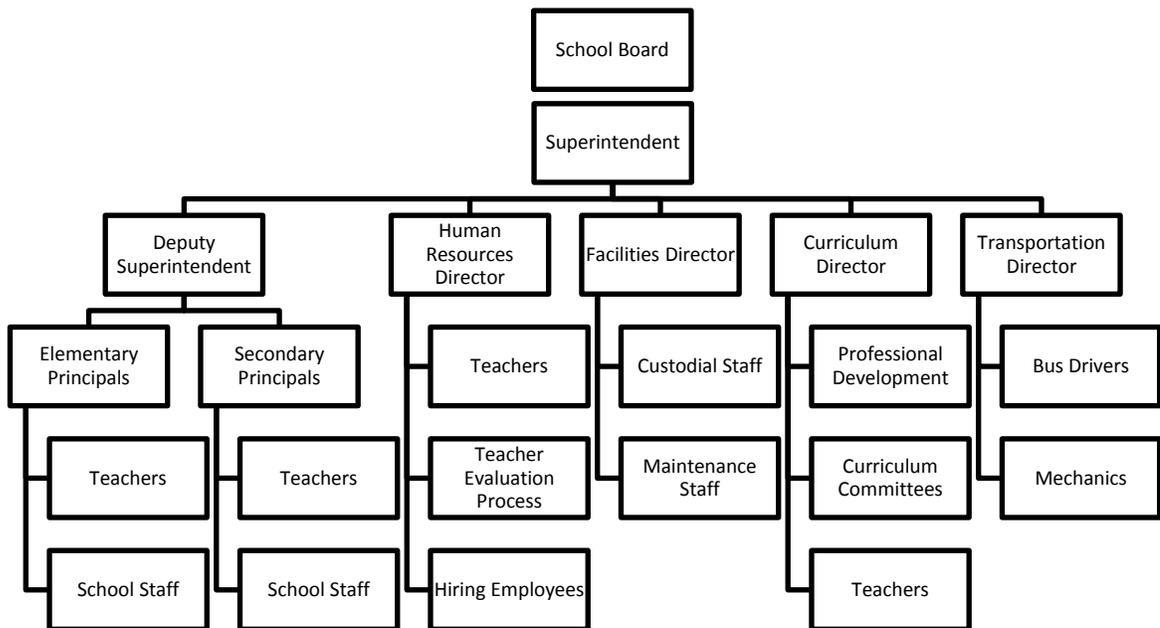
The development of eight-year, graded elementary school and the district system, combined with the common school ideal of a uniform curriculum for all children, the desire of the middle-class and native groups to protect their values and power,

the need for the socialization of students for an industrial workplace, and the position of principal and *his* accompanying “pedagogical harem” were all elements in the early development of a hierarchical, bureaucratic organization for administration of American education. (p.609)

Classical organizational theorists put forth the “idea that management is a process of planning, organization, command, coordination, and control” (Morgan, 2006, p. 18).

Modern management has followed suit with “a pattern of precisely defined jobs organized in a hierarchal manner through precisely defined lines of command or communication” (Morgan, 2006, p. 18). The following chart adapted from Morgan (2006), allowed us to see this chain of command in a school district from the classical theory perspective:

Figure 2. Classical Theory chart illustrating an adapted hierarchy of command in a school district.



Classical theory and scientific management from the early 1900s have influenced the structure of modern day school district structure. There was a chain of command throughout districts and some of the chains overlap in different components. Teachers were under the supervision in many components of the hierarchal structure because of different committees. A transition period in the principalship occurred after the Great Depression and World War II.

A shift in paradigm from the scientific management to human resource management occurred from 1940 to 1950 (Brown, 2009). Brown (2009) described this shift through the human resource frame:

A pivotal shift from top-down managerial philosophy to more of a democratic facilitative process of developing, supporting, and cooperative group efforts as both the end and the means of reform in schools. As a result, the principal's role changed from authority figure to process helper, consultant, curriculum leader, supervisor, public relations representative, and leader on the home front. (p.610)

For centuries the managerial assumption of work had been “workers had no rights beyond a paycheck; their duty was to work hard and follow orders” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 113-114). Morgan (2006) suggested one view the principalship through the organization as flux and transformation lens:

The organization is typically viewed as an open system in constant interaction with its context, transforming inputs into outputs as a means of creating the conditions necessary for survival. Changes in the environment are views as presenting challenges to which the organization must respond. (p. 243)

Kafka (2009) asserted, “the 1920s and 1930s principals were considered spiritual and scientific leaders, as both the church and scientific management played important roles in American political life” (p. 325).

The shift to the human resource frame occurred at a time when the United States was moving from conservative realm to democratic ideology following World War II. “The 1940s, however, brought World War II and fears of fascism and communism, and principals’ role as democratic leader was elevated over previous expectations” (Kafka, 2009, p. 325). Principal positions through flux and transformation (Morgan, 2006) had to change with the environment. Reform in schools was initializing by a shift to human resources. The human resource frame’s founders “argued that people’s skills, attitudes, energy, and commitment are vital resources that can make or break an enterprise” (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 114). School districts reframed the principalship through the human resource frame with the principal becoming a leader instead of a manager. Elements of this have been seen in the daily interactions between principal and staff in modern times. The principal served as a facilitator of collaboration, implementer of new processes and initiatives, and motivator through empowerment.

During the 1950s, principals’ roles fluxed and transformed (Morgan, 2006) back to administrator and school operations. Kafka (2009) asserted, “Principals were still expected to function as instructional leaders and use the professional training they received and the scientific theories they were presumed to have mastered to bring about the very best classroom teaching and learning” (p. 325). Modern day principals have often shifted between management of the scientific theory (Morgan, 2006) to leadership through the human resource frame (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Today’s principals have been

leading collaborative meetings and had to wear management lenses with school finances and operations.

The 1960s and 1970s brought about federal entitlement programs and principals took on this duty as well as curricular initiatives (Kafka, 2009). Through the flux and transformation lens (Morgan, 2006), “as a result of increased federal intervention in local policy, principals came to be seen as potential change agents” (Kafka, 2009, p. 325). The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 had ramifications on the principal position “and the notion of inequitable schooling were not truly dealt with until the 1960s and 1970s” (Brown, 2009, p. 609). Kafka (2009) explained trends in the 1960s and 1970s elementary principalship showed:

Women were more likely to be found in positions supervising women than supervising men, and were more likely to occupy lower status and lower paying supervisory positions. As Rousmaniere (2007) explained, the elementary school principalship fit both of these requirements. Not only were elementary school teachers most exclusively women, at the turn of the last century, but elementary school principals were more likely to have teaching and lunchroom duties than their secondary counterparts, and less likely to have clerical help, assistant principals, and their own conference rooms. (p. 327)

In the context of desegregation (Kafka, 2009), women principal positions declined in the early 1970s as “fewer than 20% of elementary schools were women, and less than 2% of high school principals were female” (p. 327). Consolidation of rural schools during this time also opened more appealing positions to men (Kafka, 2009). Another program, “the G.I. Bill also played an indirect role in the decline of female principals, as it opened the

door for millions of men to enroll in college and graduate programs” (Kafka, 2009, p. 328). Principalship studies of this era began to “paint a more expansive and more nuanced picture of who the school principal was (or was not) throughout American history” (Kafka, 2009, p. 328). A vast amount of the studies pertained to the “race, ethnicity, class, and gender into account, as these issues played important roles in individuals’ lived experiences” (Kafka, 2009, p. 328). The theme of accountability (Brown, 2009) grew out of the 1970s due to growth of social problems. School leaders dealing with social issues, had to flux and transform (Morgan, 2006) and the instructional arena (Brown, 2009) was neglected. Brown (2009) stated, “The role of the principal during this time shifted to that of protector of bureaucracy, user of scientific strategies, accountable leader, and inhabitant of a role for a social revolution” (p. 610). More external variants came into play with the principal position in this era, adding to the performance duties of school leaders. Principals had to change with the environment of the political and social arena and school reform was on the horizon.

The reform era of education occurred in the 1980s with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. English (2006) explains, “The purpose of the commission was to advise and make recommendations to the president, secretary of education, educational policymakers, and state boards of education” (p. 683). English (2006) claimed *A Nation at Risk* warned, “Our nation is at risk. The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very Nation and a people” (p. 683). The committee recommended four areas of the educational process have top priority: *content, expectations, time, and teaching* (English, 2006). *Content* of curriculum

needed reform, because it had become diluted across the nation, and “New Basics” (English, 2006) with foundational skills in English, Math, Science, and Social Studies were put forth. *Expectations* addressed the readiness high school seniors were for post-secondary education. *Time* addressed the number of hours students spent in school and on educational tasks in comparison to other countries in the world, and how the nation lacked in this area. *Teaching* referred to the shortages of quality teachers and a shortage of teachers in specific content areas. The reform movement from *A Nation at Risk* challenged the principalship to become a change agent. Brown (2006) asserted:

During this decade, principals were seen as problem-solvers, resource providers, instructional leaders, visionaries, and change agents. They managed people, implemented policies, and provided resources to facilitate the teaching and learning process. Principals also developed and communicated a picture of the ideal school while facilitating the needed changes in educational operations to ensure student learning and school effectiveness. (p. 610-611)

Principals had to flux and transform (Morgan, 2006) to meet the needs of schools with reform challenges through management of school structure, leadership and empowerment of teachers, and motivation of students.

The 1990s contrasted the reform movement of the 1980s, by transforming the principalship to leader of leaders (Brown, 2009). The “restructuring during the 1990s brought knowledge needed for school improvement back to the school and the role of the principal back to the image of leader, servant, organizational architect, social architect, educator, moral agent, and community member” (Brown, 2009, p. 611). This phase in the

principalship required school leaders to transition from the bureaucratic to postindustrial model of schooling (Brown, 2009).

The principalship today had “come full circle from ‘head teacher’ to ‘teacher of teachers’” (Brown, 2009, p. 611). There were more duties and roles the principal had assumed in the modern day era than ever. “The No Child Left Behind Act, and similar measures from states and cities, demands that educators be held accountable for student achievement at school and at the classroom level” (Kafka, 2009, p. 328). A shift in the principalship in the twenty-first century, required principals to move from a power-over to a power-with approach (Brown, 2009). Through the organization as organisms metaphor (Morgan, 2009), Brown (2009) emphasized the modern day principalship:

Charged with the mission of improving teaching and learning for all children, the position has become progressively more and more demanding and fraught with fragmentation, variety, and brevity. The role has evolved into a administering a highly specialized, extensively regulated, and enormously complex human organization-far more complex than at its emergence a hundred years ago. (p. 611)

Leadership traits commonly found among award-winning school elementary school leaders could help pave the way for the complex organism the school principalship has become through the evolution of the principalship.

Evolution of the Principalship

The position of principal had evolved from its emergence as a managerial position to the role it has become in the modern era (Rousmaniere, 2013). Morgan (2006) suggested using the organization as organisms metaphor as a lens for viewing the

evolution of the principalship. Morgan (2006) suggested, “Organizations, like organisms, are not really discrete entities even though it may be convenient to think of them as such. They do not live in isolation and are not self-sufficient. Rather, they exist as elements in a complex system” (p. 62). The organism metaphor allowed one to view the principalship position in the complex school structure that existed today.

Morgan (2006) asserted recent biological views on evolution “that organisms do not evolve by adapting to environmental changes or as a result of these changes selecting the organisms that are to survive” and rather “that evolution is always a pattern of relations embracing organisms and their environments” (p. 62-63). Viewing evolution through the organism metaphor allowed one to see the principalship position where the principal evolved with the environment since the pattern of the school environment changes. Through the organism metaphor (Morgan, 2006), the principalship was in constant collaboration with the educational leaders at the district and state level. The pattern of collaboration allowed all educational leaders, whether local, state, or national level, to move along together as new policies and legislation came into the spectrum.

The historical lens of the principalship, combined with the evolutionary aspect of the of organism metaphor (Morgan, 2006), allowed one to view the evolutionary stages of the principalship: head teacher, principal teacher, and building principal. Research by Geocaris (2004) studied the evolving role of the principal and linked the reality of the job and the skills needed to perform the job coupled with support structures. Geocaris (2004) suggested through the skills approach and conceptual component (Northouse, 2010), the evolved principal displays time management, organizational, and communication skills; knowledge of leadership and management theories; and personal skills such as self-

motivation and resilience. The results of the Geocariss (2004) study suggested ways principals could operate with job complexity as the position had evolved with environmental patterns through the organisms lens (Morgan, 2006), and defined roles of the principal shaping into instructional, managerial, and political duties. Trail (2000) defined the roles of the modern-day principal as a psychologist, a teacher, a facilities manager, philosopher, police officer, diplomat, social worker, mentor, public relations director, coach, and cheerleader. Rousmaniere (2013) offered a view of the evolution of the principalship from the historical perspective:

Contemporary principals work in the midst of modern challenges of ever-changing fiscal supports, school law and policy, community values, and youth culture. At the same time the job of the contemporary principal shares many of the characteristics of their predecessors two centuries ago. While social and economic contexts have changed, the main role of the principal has remained essentially the same over time: to implement state educational policy to the school and to maneuver, buffer, and maintain stability of the school culture at the local level. (p.2)

Despite the principal remaining the liaison between school and the district from a scientific management model of classical management theory (Morgan, 2006), the role had evolved into a very complex organism assuming the patterns of evolution in society and politics (Morgan, 2006).

Political efforts to reform education have caused the role of the principal to evolve with the patterns of the times. Murphy and Hallinger (1992) examined the changing environmental impact on the role of the principal and how “the school and the

principal have to work and survive in a very complex, changing and turbulent policy environment” (p. 3). Innovations to help improve education, have challenged the principalship as the evolutionary process continued. “Increasingly, principals are expected to display independent initiative and power over their environments to achieve both organizational effectiveness and efficiency” (Murphy & Hallinger, 2002, p.3). Morgan (2006) suggested, through the evolutionary lens of the organism metaphor, a study on traits of award-winning elementary principals could have provided insight as to how one selected our school leaders or learned from their traits.

The Elementary Principalship

The National Center for Education Statistics’ (NCES) school and staffing survey (Bitterman et al., 2013) showed 50,210 elementary principals in the United states worked at traditional public schools and charter schools, and another 14,510 principals worked at private schools during the 2011-2012 school-year. The elementary principalship was a large multi-faceted profession requiring an average 58.1 hours per week on school-related activities according to the NCES study. A great deal has changed since the emergence of the elementary principalship. In 1918, Gray completed a study on the work of elementary school principals. During the earlier era of the principalship Gray (1918) “concentrated on one phase of the principal’s work, that of supervision” (p. 24). Gray’s (1918) study found the supervisory elements of the elementary principal:

That the principal should train his teachers in service; that he should cooperate with his teachers in the making and adaptation of the curriculum; and that in the cooperation with his teachers he should work out a list of outcomes, aims, and skills for the judging of instruction. (p.24)

The basic components from the study Gray found in 1918, have resonated in the elementary principalship today, however, many other factors from the political and social aspects of education have caused the elementary principalship to evolve into much more, requiring the principal to be a collaborative leader, facilities manager, teacher, evaluator, student and middle management liaison between central office and the school.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher explored literature related to traits of the honorees and winners of the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award. The literature was presented in three areas: leadership approaches through the leadership theory lens, the National Distinguished Principal Award and its affiliate, the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award, and the principalship. The three areas provided the researcher with a fundamental framework for the study of traits of award-winning elementary principals.

The skills, style, situational, and trait approaches were reviewed due to the significance their framework provides to the study through the leadership theory lens. Although an emphasis was placed on the traits approach, the skill, style and situational approaches could have emerged in this study. Within the leadership theory lens the researcher was provided with a view to see the traits approach characteristics emerging from the research, along with the skill, style, and situational approaches.

The reviewing of the principalship through the history, evolution, and elementary principalship provided the researcher with insight into the complex organism the position was today. The original role of the elementary principal as a supervisor, had evolved into a role with many 'hats': collaborator, facilitator, site manager, counselor, teacher,

evaluator, liaison between central office and school, public relations figure, and disciplinary figure. The assorted ‘hats’ of the modern day principal could have manifested themselves in the research on award-winning elementary principals.

The NAESP organization’s vision and criteria for members, coupled with its affiliate, MAESP’s vision and criteria, provided insight into the attributes an award-winning principal must exhibit. The fundamental components in the criteria to win the National Distinguished Principal Award or the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award, provided a framework for the researcher to seek the traits of award-winning principals.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

There is a lack of information regarding the traits of award-winning elementary principals (Leithwood, 2004; McEwan, 2003). The principal position has become a multi-faceted role since its emergence (Weiss, 1992), and leaders who exhibited the award-winning criteria to become an honoree or winner of the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award (MAESP website, 2014) have shown their merit in the principalship. These award-winning principals demonstrated through the evidence supplied during the application process, their impact upon schools and communities. However, little is known about the traits these elementary principals exhibit.

The researcher framed the methodology around the problem and purpose for the study. Next, the rationale for qualitative research through the social constructivist approach (Creswell, 2003) was discussed, coupled with the grand tour research question. The design for the study was presented with rationale as a phenomenological collective case study (Creswell, 2003). A description of participants was presented before data collection and data analysis techniques. The researcher's role and biases were discussed to provide validity and trustworthiness (Creswell, 2003). Limitations and assumptions of the study were declared to improve the study on common leadership traits exhibited by award-winning principals.

Problem

The principalship has evolved into a complex position. Leaders of elementary schools have more roles and expectations (Weiss, 1992). Elementary principals meeting

those roles and expectations, while providing exemplary leadership, traits needed to be studied. Award-winning leadership through the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award provided a basis for studying the traits of highly effective elementary principals (MAESP website, 2014). There is a lack of information on the leadership traits exhibited by award-winning elementary principals (Leithwood, 2004; McEwan, 2003).

Purpose

As the elementary principalship had evolved since its beginnings as a profession, the role of the principal shifting from ‘principal teacher’ to ‘teacher of teachers’ had emerged (Brown, 2009). Success of modern-day elementary principals hinged upon many different expectations (Mitgang, 2012). The purpose of this paper was to view the success of these principals through award-winning leadership and the traits they exhibited. Experiences and stories the individuals described allowed the researcher to make meaning and construct traits emerging from these participants.

Grand Tour Research Question

For the purpose of this study the following research question served as the grand tour question: What leadership traits do award-winning elementary principals exhibit?

Research Design

The research design emerged as a phenomenological case study through an alternative knowledge claim (Creswell, 2003) where the researcher carried assumptions about the knowledge sought to be learned and how the researcher would learn in the study. Rationale for qualitative design was presented due to the construction of themes through the parts or components of participants’ data creating a whole picture (Merriam, 1998). Participants were obtained through honorees of the Missouri Distinguished

Elementary Principal Award and the selection committee members. The data collection was presented through triangulation of interviews, documents, and the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ) (Northouse, 2010) administered to the interview participants. Researcher roles and biases were presented, as well as delimitations, limitations, and assumptions (Creswell, 2003).

Methodology: Phenomenological Collective Case Study

This dissertation was a collective case study. The collective case study approach (Merriam, 1998) was chosen because it is one way to discover patterns in effective leadership in a contemporary situation. Stake (1995) suggested the holistic approach of a case study could contribute to the body of educational research theoretically and pragmatically. The descriptive, interpretive, and evaluative nature of the qualitative approach offered itself to view the leadership traits, including the lifetime career and achievements of award-winning elementary school principals.

The study was approached from an alternative knowledge claim, because “researchers start a project with certain assumptions about how they will learn and what they will learn during their inquiry” (Creswell, 2003, p. 6). The selected paradigm within alternative knowledge claims for this inquiry was social constructivism, which allowed the researcher “to seek understanding of the world in which they live and work...develop subjective meanings of their experiences...look for complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into few categories or ideas” (Creswell, 2003, p. 6). This paradigm served as a lens for the researcher to “rely as much as possible on the participant’s views of the situation being studied” (Creswell, 2003, p. 6).

The concept of phenomenology provided a lens which to view all human phenomena as meaningful, because we, as humans, feel, experience, and then commit to conscience the phenomenon (Peterson, 1997). The phenomenologist was concerned with understanding human behavior from the actor's own frame and reference (Bogdan & Taylor, 1998). The researcher sought to understand the "lived experiences" of the participants through story-telling and open-ended questions that would possibly reveal leadership traits (Creswell, 2003).

Rationale

When selecting the qualitative research process as opposed to a quantitative research approach, "Neither quantitative nor qualitative research is superior to the other, regardless of the research problem being addressed" (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1996, p. 6). This suggested that one looked at the reasoning for selecting qualitative methodology instead of quantitative methodology, to seek meaning for the selected research process because both were acceptable research designs. Merriam (1998) claimed that data collected through qualitative methods such as interviews and observations of participants in the study was a fundamental way of doing educational research. Merriam (1998) concluded that qualitative case studies were appropriate methods to frame a study around multiple qualitative sources, however, in the collective sketch the leaders told their story. The procedures of qualitative research design, suggested one viewed the administrative leadership careers of award-winning leaders of the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Awards through the qualitative process.

The rationale for selecting a qualitative design for the research was to allow for the emergence of themes and subthemes in the data gathered through interviews,

documents, and the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (Northouse, 2010). The participants were able to answer open-ended questions to share their stories and knowledge regarding their thoughts on leadership traits. The data emerging from the interviews and documents was compared to the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (Northouse, 2010) to seek common traits the award winning Missouri Elementary Principals shared.

Participants and Sampling Procedures

This was a collective case study of Dr. Super's 25 year career serving as an elementary principal as well as the careers of the other award-winning principals chosen from the years 2002 to 2013. The researcher also interviewed MAESP leaders regarding the process for selecting honorees from the pool of nominations. Non-probable (Merriam, 1998) or purposeful sampling (Seidman, 1998) was used to select participants to "discover what occurs, the implications of what occurs, and the relationships linking occurrences" (Honigmann, 1982 in Merriam, 1998, p. 61) and "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p.61). Purposeful sampling (Seidman, 1998) was conducted through selecting award-winning elementary principals between the years of 2002 to 2013. Eight participants were selected out of 148 honorees for the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award from large and small school districts to represent a range of different leaders, from different award years, and from the different regions of Missouri. Large school districts consisted of leaders from urban and suburban districts and small school districts consisted of leaders from rural districts. MAESP leaders were interviewed as experts to provide insight into the selection process. This added to the body of knowledge

of the literature review about the selection process and could provide insight into the traits award-winning elementary principals exhibit.

Data Collection

The research study sought to identify leadership traits of award-winning elementary principals. This section explained the data collection procedures, interview procedures, survey procedures for the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ) (Northouse, 2010) and collection of personal and public documents. Human subject and ethical considerations were explained to protect the participants.

Data collection procedures. The researcher submitted a proposal for Institution Review Board (IRB) approval. After IRB approval, the researcher sent an email to potential participants with the participant cover letter (Appendix A) requesting participation. Participants responding to the email were contacted within three business days to secure participation and were sent the participant signed consent form (Appendix B). Participants were informed they were to participate in an hour-long interview, completion of the Leadership Trait Questionnaire, collection of personal documents, and participation of a quick follow up interview. The participant's signed consent form (Appendix B) informed participants of their rights, their ability to withdraw from the study at any time, the purpose of the study, the procedures of the study, the right to ask questions and obtain the results, their privacy, the benefits the study will have for them, and signatures of the participant and the researcher agreeing to the provisions and tape-recording of the interviews (Creswell, 2003). Principals were asked for personal documents relating to their effective leadership for the researcher to interpret data from documents using content analysis (Merriam, 1998).

Interviews. Interviews were conducted with eight Missouri Distinguished Principal Honorees. Three of the honorees were selected as National Distinguished Principals the year they were honored. Two of the participants were also on the Missouri Distinguished Principal Selection Committee and helped select National Distinguished Principals. Interviews were conducted person-to-person (Merriam, 1998) within an hour-long time frame. Specialized information (Merriam, 1998) was gained through asking the primary question, “What leadership traits do award-winning elementary school principals exhibit?” A semi-structured interview (Merriam, 1998), allowed for open-ended questions where the “largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of questions is determined ahead of time” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). The views of the participant are freely expressed through semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions (Appendix C), allowing the researcher through the social constructivist paradigm to make meaning through an exploratory phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). Interview questions were cross-referenced with the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ) (Northouse, 2010) to compare the data sources of the interview, the LTQ, and document analysis (Creswell, 2003).

The researcher used member-checking and follow-up questions to ensure trustworthiness and validity (Merriam, 1998). Participants validated their responses concerning traits as effective leaders to ensure trustworthiness (Merriam, 1998). Corrections were completed if concerns arose from responses.

Leadership trait questionnaire. The Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ) (Northouse, 2010) was used by the researcher for participants to self-reflect on their leadership traits. This allowed the researcher to compare responses to interview questions

and document analysis with the results of the questionnaire. With a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, the researcher could cross-reference the data and improve the study. Priority of interviews as the primary method for data collection, allowed for this to be a qualitative design (Creswell, 2003). However, integration (Creswell, 2003) allowed the researcher to compare the LTQ as a cross-reference to the interviews and document analysis.

Human subjects' protection and other ethical considerations. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) existed “because of federal regulations that provide protection against human right violations” (Creswell, 2003, p. 64). The researcher submitted the proposal to the campus IRB to review any “physical, psychological, social, economic, or legal harm” (Creswell, 2003, p. 64). The submitted proposal was low-risk with no participants under the age of 19 (Creswell, 2003). IRB protocol was followed in the participant cover letter (Appendix A) and the participant signed consent form (Appendix B). The signed consent form informed participants of their rights, their ability to withdraw from the study at any time, the purpose of the study, the procedures of the study, the right to ask questions and obtain the results, their privacy, the benefits the study will have for them, and signatures of the participant and the researcher agreeing to the provisions and tape-recording of the interviews (Creswell, 2003). Signing of the participant consent form occurred before interviews and recordings took place. Confidentiality of participants was ensured through use of pseudonyms and coding the participants' names with letters of the alphabet. The researcher was the only individual with access to the data which would be discarded after five years after the study's completion (Creswell, 2003). Participants were allowed to decide the location of the

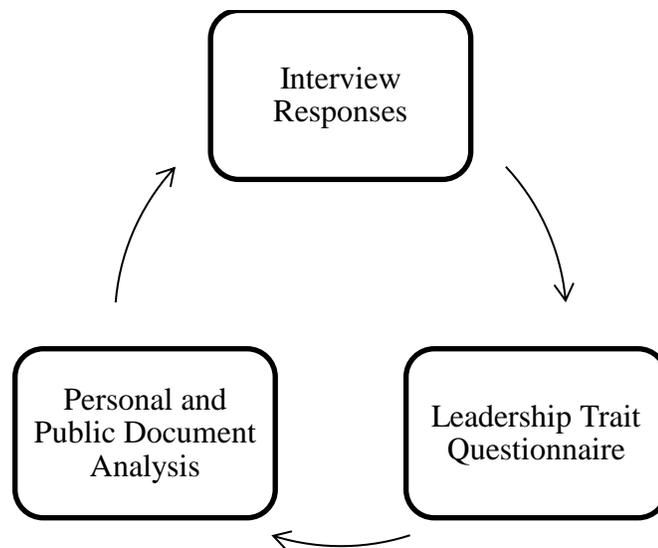
interview and the personal documents they wanted to provide. Member-checking and follow-up questions (Merriam, 1998) allowed participants to use the transcription of the interview to make any explanations or elaborations on their interview.

Data Analysis

The researcher used triangulation (Merriam, 1998) of interviews, personal and public document analysis, and results of the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ) (Northouse, 2010) to analyze data. The researcher used the grounded theory's processes of "generating categories of information (open coding), selecting one of the categories and positioning it within a theoretical model (axial coding), and explicating a story from the interconnection of each of these categories (selective coding)" (Creswell, 2003, p. 191). Open and axial coding was used to construct meaning from the research on the traits the leaders share and selective coding was used to connect the traits of award-winning leadership. The phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2003) allowed the researcher to analyze significant statements of the participants, generate meaning units, and develop a description coupled with open, axial, and selective coding. The researcher organized and prepared the data for analysis through typing up interview notes, transcribing the interviews, and organizing the personal and public documents (Creswell, 2003) along with the completed LTQ (Northouse, 2010). The researcher read through the data and recorded general thoughts in the margins (Creswell, 2003). The coding process included "chunking" (Creswell, 2003) the data into categories and labeling those categories with a term based on what the participant used to name the phenomena. Analysis of textual data (Creswell, 2003) yielded categories or themes on leadership traits of award-winning elementary principals.

The interviews, personal and public document analysis, and LTQ (Northouse, 2010) results were triangulated (Merriam, 1998) to “confirm emerging findings” (p. 204). Triangulating the data from multiple sources allowed the researcher to establish validity of the study and construct “plausible explanations about the phenomena being studied” (Mathison, 1988 in Merriam, 1998). Figure 3 represents the relationship between the data sources to triangulate and validate the findings in the study.

Figure 3. Data collection process-triangulation.



Adapted from J. Gregory, 2012.

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

The researcher “uses delimitations of the study to narrow the scope of a study” (Creswell, 2003, p. 148). The study was confined to a qualitative collective case study. A delimitations of the study was interviewing a minimum of seven honorees of the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award. Interviewing more honorees could have enhanced the validity of the research. Delimitations could have arisen from the narrow

scope of the study on Missouri honorees as opposed to honorees from other state affiliations and National Distinguished Principal Award winners.

Limitations of the research presented the weaknesses of the qualitative study (Creswell, 2003). The position of the researcher as a subordinate of one of the interviewees could have potentially biased the research. The researcher as the primary instrument (Merriam, 1998) used etic perspective (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2003) when interviewing this principal to validate the research.

Qualitative research “is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6) and the researcher sought to understand the view of the participant, not their own. Assumptions presented themselves during the interview process by establishing a trust between interviewer and interviewee. Trust allowed the interviewee to express their leadership traits and stories freely so research was optimal. Open-ended questions during the interview process allowed information to arise on award-winning leadership traits and stories. Another assumption was descriptive data arose from the interviews. An assumption to the study was the interview process will occur in a natural setting of the participant’s choice. The attempt to understand the multiple realities of the participants through their experiences and perceptions was an assumption of the researcher (Creswell, 2003).

Researcher Role and Biases

The primary goal was for the researcher to gather data through a phenomenological lens (Peterson, 1997). The researcher worked collaboratively with the participants to gather data through interviews. Biases could have emerged through the

personal relationship of working for Dr. Super for three years. The researcher eliminated bias through securing data collected from Dr. Super by keeping data locked in a cabinet, providing a comfortable interviewing environment for all participants at their choice, was consistent, was forthright, met deadlines, and was available. The researcher was a teacher at West Elementary for four years, three of which were taught for Dr. Super. The researcher was aware of the biases and separated themselves from former teacher for Dr. Super to role of the researcher using an etic perspective (Merriam, 1998) because the researcher was the primary data collection instrument (Creswell, 2003).

Summary

The qualitative inquiry was designed to explore the leadership traits exhibited by award-winning principals through storytelling and open-ended questions. Missouri Distinguished principals were interviewed to find common leadership traits of award-winning leadership as well as MAESP selection committee members for the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award. There was a lack of information on award-winning leadership traits, and this research study could inform school organizations on the interviewing and hiring processes for school leaders. The researcher hoped to add to the body of knowledge concerning leadership traits of award-winning principals in an era where the principalship is a complex position. In Chapter 1, the researcher posed a research question and framed a qualitative collective case study with socially constructed and phenomenological stances. In Chapter 2, the researcher reviewed literature relevant to the study to understand how the inquiry will add to the body of research. In Chapter 3, the researcher framed the qualitative methodology for the inquiry.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA COLLECTION

The data collected in this study were interviews with eight Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principals exploring the leadership traits of award-winning principals. In addition, the researcher was granted permission to give the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ) (Northouse, 2010) survey to Participants A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H (Appendix D; Appendix E) in regards to how they perceive their leadership traits. Participants shared personal documents reflecting their leadership, coupled with public documents the researcher collected. The researcher used follow up questions and member-checking (Seidman 1998) to ensure validity of data. The data collected from the interviews, leadership trait questionnaire, and documents were triangulated, coded, and organized for the researcher to analyze with open, axial, and selective coding. The research question was addressed on leadership traits of award-winning elementary principals. In this chapter, the settings of the case study were described, the relationship of the researcher to research, participant descriptions and demographics, data collection and analysis, and research findings of themes emerging from the data.

Settings for the Case Study

The settings for the case study on traits of award-winning elementary principals took place in urban, suburban, and rural schools. Each participant came from different backgrounds and school settings. Several participants were administrators in more than one district. One participant was still in the same area, but had changed positions as a principal in a private school. This section sought to describe the settings where each

participant was employed as an administrator at the time they received the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award.

Description of Elementary Schools

School A was located in an urban area and changed school districts when voters passed the decision to take the school into the suburban district. The student population was projected at 450, but over 550 enrolled by the end of the 2008-2009 school year in the new school district (DESE website, 2014). The school's free and reduced lunch rate was 87% during the 2008-2009 school year (DESE website, 2014). Under Participant A's administration, School A made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), or met state standards, in the areas of Math, Communication Arts, and Attendance within three years of becoming part of a new school district during the 2010-2011 school year. East Elementary School, located within the same school district as the newly acquired School A, was Participant A's previous building. Under his administration, East Elementary School had a 87% free and reduced lunch rate, a student population of 379, and met Adequate Yearly Progress by increasing student achievement in Mathematics and Communication Arts on the Missouri Achievement Program (MAP) exams from 24% to nearly 60% Advanced and Proficient over his five year tenure there (Appendix J; DESE website, 2014). East Elementary and School A were pre-Kindergarten to fifth grade.

School B was a Kindergarten through sixth grade building located in a suburban area and had a student population of 971 students when Participant B was a Missouri Distinguished Principal (Appendix J). The building had a 21% free and reduced lunch rate during the 2006-2007 school year (DESE website, 2014). School B had 50% to 52%

of students scoring Advanced and Proficient in Communication Arts and Mathematics on the MAP exams in 2007, respectively (DESE website, 2014).

School C was a Kindergarten through first grade school building located in a rural area and had a student population of about 250 students when Participant C was a Missouri Distinguished Principal (DESE website, 2014). The building had a 50% free and reduced lunch rate during the 2001-2002 school year (DESE website, 2014). Students did not take MAP assessments at this building.

School D was a pre-Kindergarten through sixth grade school building in an urban school district with a student population over 450 kids with a 94% free and reduced rate (DESE website, 2014). School D had about 35% of students scoring Advanced and Proficient in Mathematics and Communication Arts on the MAP exams in 2002 and increased to about 60% of students scoring Advanced and Proficient in Mathematics and Communication Arts on the MAP exams in 2004 (DESE website, 2014).

School E was a Kindergarten through fifth grade school building in a suburban school district with a student population of 471 students with a 50% free and reduced lunch rate (DESE website, 2014). School E had 57% to 63% of students scoring Advanced or Proficient in Communication Arts and Mathematics on MAP exams in 2011, respectively (DESE website, 2014).

School F was a Kindergarten through fifth grade school building in a suburban school district with a student population of 562 students with a 16% free and reduced lunch rate (DESE website, 2014). School E had 67% to 82% of students scoring Advanced or Proficient in English Language Arts and Mathematics on MAP exams in 2012, respectively (DESE website, 2014).

School G was a pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade school building in a rural school district with a student population of 375 students with a 70% free and reduced lunch rate (DESE website, 2014). School G had 36% to 40% of students scoring Advanced or Proficient in Communication Arts and Mathematics on MAP exams in 2005, respectively (DESE website, 2014). In 2006, students scored 62% and 56% Advanced or Proficient in Communication Arts and Mathematics on MAP exams, respectively (DESE website, 2014).

School H was a Kindergarten through fifth grade school building in a suburban school district with a student population of 638 students with a 23% free and reduced lunch rate (DESE website, 2014). School H had 68% to 81% of students scoring Advanced or Proficient in English Language Arts and Mathematics on MAP exams in 2012, respectively (DESE website, 2014).

History of the National and Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Awards

The National Distinguished Principal (NDP) Award was created in 1984 to honor outstanding principals in every state, overseas chapter, and for the public and private sector (NAESP website, 2014). The NDP award sought principals sharing in a common culture of creating standards for high student achievement (NAESP website, 2014). The Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award was given to 12 honorees selected from the different Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals (MAESP) districts (MAESP website, 2013). One principal was selected from the 12 Missouri Distinguished Principals honorees to represent Missouri principals at the national level as the National Distinguished Principal (MAESP website, 2013). The Missouri Distinguished Principal Banquet was honored in Jefferson City, but moved dates and

locations to occur simultaneously with the MAESP Conference at Tan Tara Resort in March to increase attendance at the awards ceremony.

Relationship of Researcher to Research

As a former teacher for Dr. Super (Participant A), the researcher was part of the school data for West Elementary during his three-year principalship there. The researcher had knowledge of the building and Dr. Super's winning a Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award for his work in Freedom Public Schools. Following Dr. Super's retirement in 2011, the researcher taught at West Elementary for one more year, and then interviewed and moved to a new building in the district. The researcher continues to teach in the district at the new elementary building. The researcher's relationship with Dr. Super led to seeking leadership traits of other Missouri Distinguished Principals. All participants were informed of the purpose of the research and the implications of seeking leadership traits award-winning elementary school principals.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to select participants (Merriam, 1998; Seidman, 1998). Participants were selected to represent rural, urban, and suburban districts. These participants were selected from award years between 2002 and 2013. The researcher selected eight participants from the 2002, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2012, and 2013 award years (Table 2). Three participants selected were honored as National Distinguished Principals out of the 13 Missouri Distinguished Principals the year they won. Two participants served on the selection committee at the Missouri Distinguished Principal Banquet and were interviewed as Missouri Distinguished Principal participants and as experts on the

selection process for choosing the National Distinguished Principal from the 13 Missouri Distinguished Principal honorees.

Interview Participant Demographics

A demographic profile of participants was provided for each participant in the study. Information included: (a) years of teaching experience, (b) years of administrative experience, (c) year honored as a Missouri Distinguished Principal, (d) number of school districts they were employed, (e) the type of school district they were employed, urban, suburban, or rural, (f) if they were selected as a National Distinguished Principal, and (g) if they were on the selection committee for selecting a National Distinguished Principal among the Missouri Distinguished Principal Honorees.

Participant A had 34 years combined as a teacher and administrator. Participant A was a classroom teacher for nine years. Participant A was a building administrator 25 years. Participant A was honored as a Missouri Distinguished Principal in 2009. Participant A was employed in five districts, three suburban and two urban (Appendix F; Appendix J).

Participant B had 28 years combined as a teacher and administrator. Participant B was a classroom teacher for eight years. Participant B was a building administrator for 20 years. Participant B was honored as a Missouri Distinguished Principal in 2008. Participant B was employed in 3 districts, one rural and two suburban (Appendix G; Appendix J).

Participant C had 37 years combined as a teacher and administrator. Participant C's career was a classroom teacher for 17 years. Participant C was a building administrator

for 20 years. Participant C was honored as a Missouri Distinguished Principal in 2002. Participant C was employed in one district, rural.

Participant D had 23 years combined as a teacher and administrator. Participant D was a classroom teacher for five years. Participant D was a building administrator 18 years. Participant D was honored as a Missouri Distinguished Principal in 2002. Participant D was employed in two districts, one rural and one urban. Participant D was selected as the National Distinguished Principal among the Missouri Distinguished Principals in 2002.

Participant E had 23 years combined as a teacher and administrator. Participant E was a classroom teacher for eight years. Participant E was a building administrator 15 years. Participant E was honored as a Missouri Distinguished Principal in 2012. Participant E was employed in one district, suburban. Participant E was selected as the National Distinguished Principal among the Missouri Distinguished Principals in 2012 (Appendix J). Participant E served on the selection committee for selecting a National Distinguished Principal among the Missouri Distinguished Principal Honorees.

Participant F had 15 years combined as a teacher and administrator. Participant F was a classroom teacher for seven years. Participant F was a building administrator for eight years. Participant F was honored as a Missouri Distinguished Principal in 2013. Participant F was employed in one district, suburban (Appendix J).

Participant G had 30 years combined as a teacher and administrator. Participant G was a classroom teacher for two years. Participant G was a building administrator for 28 years. Participant G was honored as a Missouri Distinguished Principal in 2006. Participant G was employed in one district, rural. Participant G was selected as the

National Distinguished Principal among the Missouri Distinguished Principals in 2006 (Appendix J). Participant G served on the selection committee for selecting a National Distinguished Principal among the Missouri Distinguished Principal Honorees.

Participant H had 17 years combined as a teacher and administrator. Participant H was a classroom teacher for seven years. Participant H was a building administrator for ten years. Participant H was honored as a Missouri Distinguished Principal in 2013. Participant H was employed in one district, suburban (Appendix J).

Table 2

Missouri Distinguished Principal Demographics

Participant	Total Yrs. Education	Total Yrs. Teaching	Total Yrs. Administrator	Total Districts Employed	Year Honored as MDP	School District Demographic
Participant A	34	9	25	5	2009	Suburban/Urban
Participant B	28	8	20	3	2008	Suburban
Participant C	37	17	20	1	2002	Rural
Participant D	23	5	18	2	2002	Rural/Urban
Participant E	23	8	15	1	2012	Suburban
Participant F	15	7	8	1	2013	Suburban
Participant G	30	2	28	1	2006	Rural
Participant H	17	7	10	1	2013	Suburban

Data Collection Procedures

Interview Settings

Eight out of eight selected participants chose to participate in the interview process. Participants were given the choice of interview location to ensure comfort so optimal data would emerge (Creswell, 2003; Seidman, 1998). Participant A selected the researcher’s building and classroom due to location by a college where he instructed teacher education classes. Participant B selected her home due to comfort and location.

Participant C selected her office in her school building. Participant D was visiting the researcher's school district for professional development and selected to be interviewed in a conference room at the school where the professional development was held.

Participant E selected to be interviewed in her office at her school building. Participant F selected to be interviewed in his office at his school building. Participant G selected a phone interview on speaker phone for recording purposes and due to her schedule and location. Participant H selected to be interviewed in his office at his school building.

In the initial contact email, the researcher allowed participants to select their interview location or mode of communication due to comfort level so thoughts could freely flow (Creswell, 2003). Each location was a private setting with the door closed to outside contact to ensure confidentiality and have a distraction-free environment, including the phone interview on speaker phone. Prior to the interview questions and audio recording, the researcher made casual conversation to build a rapport and comfort with the participant (Seidman, 1998). Prior to the interview, participants were told of the methods for confidentiality and their choice to withdraw from the investigation at any time. Participants signed the consent form prior to the interview and were given the cover letter prior to meeting as the researcher purposefully selected and contacted participants by phone or email. Participants were told the reason for audio recording the interview and how the researcher would use the data. Participants were informed the researcher would contact them for follow up questions and member-checking if they wanted to elaborate on a statement or change it (Seidman, 1998).

Interview Questions

The interview questions were formed around the Leadership Trait Questionnaire

(LTQ) (Northouse, 2010; Appendix D; Appendix E). Open-ended questions regarding leadership traits were asked of the participants to allow data gathering and themes to emerge on the leadership traits of award-winning elementary principals. The researcher asked 15 questions in a semi-structured interview. The participants were also asked a question reflecting the grand tour research question: What leadership traits do award-winning elementary principals exhibit? The interview questions asked the participants to consider their top traits and their most important characteristics as an effective leader.

At the beginning of the interview, each participant was asked about themselves and their backgrounds in education and as an administrator. This established a level of comfort for the participants to freely discuss the questions and build a rapport between the researcher and participant (Seidman, 1998).

The semi-structured interview format (Merriam, 1998) allowed the researcher to ask a few additional questions for more data on the participant's leadership traits. The participants freely expressed their thoughts, opinions, and stories pertaining to each question. Each participant was allowed additional response time after each question. At the end of the interview, the researcher inquired if there was anything else the participant wanted to add.

The transcription of the interviews referred to participants as Participant A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H (Table 2). Participant's school buildings were referred to as School A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H. Participant's school districts were referred to as A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H. This allowed the identity of the participant to remain anonymous throughout the interview and data analysis. Participant A was the only participant with a prior relationship with the researcher. Participant A is interchanged with the pseudonym, Dr.

Super in the study. Participant A's school district is interchangeably referred to as Freedom Public Schools, as well as school buildings interchangeably referred to as East Elementary and West Elementary in sections of the study.

Document Collection

Documents were collected during the interview. The researcher asked prior to the interview for the participant to gather any documents they wanted to share pertaining to their leadership. Documents were copied and sections identifying the name, school, or district were blocked out and referred to as Participant, School, or District with the letter of the alphabet coordinated with the participant (Table 2).

Leadership Trait Questionnaire

The researcher was granted permission to administer the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ) (Northouse, 2010; Appendix D; Appendix E). The researcher asked the participants to fill out the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ) after the interview was finished. The participant was given ample time to reflect on how they perceived their own leadership traits in the 14 areas on the LTQ. The researcher collected the leadership trait questionnaire, copied the questionnaire, and blocked the name by referring to the participant as Participant followed by the letter of the alphabet coordinated with their participation. The LTQ was compared to the data that emerged as key phrases from the participants' interviews and documents through triangulation and themes emerged from this process.

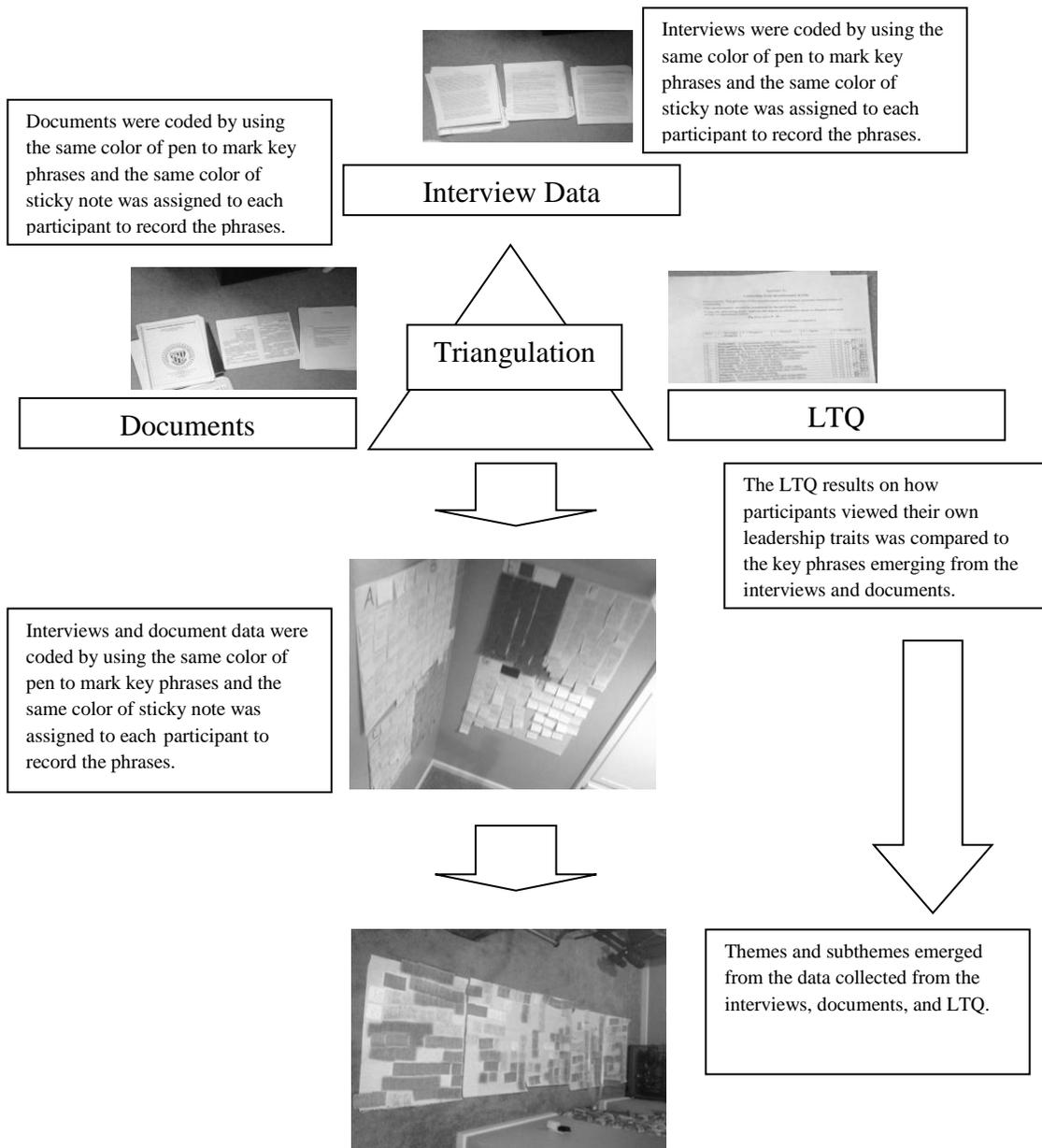
Data Analysis

The researcher used triangulation (Merriam, 1998) of interviews, personal and public document analysis, and the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ) (Appendix D;

Appendix E). The researcher paralleled triangulation with a constant comparative method (Merriam, 1998) to compare the participants' data while mining through the interview transcripts, documents, and LTQ.

Each participant, their school building, and their school district was assigned a letter for transcriptions. The researcher assigned each participant a different color of pen and to underline each key phrase in the transcription (Figure 4). Notes in this pen color were made in the margins of the transcription. The same color of sticky note as the pen was assigned to each participant and the key phrases related to the study were written on the sticky note. Key phrases were determined by identifying repeated and similar statements (Merriam, 1998). Copies of the personal and public documents provided by the participant and the LTQ were compared with their interview transcription. The researcher made notes of key phrases in the documents and compared these to similar key phrases in the interviews. The LTQ was also used to rank where the participants saw themselves on their leadership traits. The LTQ was compared to the interview transcriptions' key phrases and documents' key phrases. The researcher stuck the notes on chart paper divided into the different participants (Figure 4). This process was completed with all eight transcribed interviews. The researcher then identified the themes threaded across the participants' key phrases related to the study. These threaded themes were placed on separate chart paper for recoding to occur. At this time, the researcher reread the transcripts to pull any additional key phrases from the interviews. The themes generated were subdivided into key traits or subthemes that emerged from the interview transcriptions, documents, and LTQ (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Themes and subthemes emerging from data.



The researcher ensured internal and external validity (Creswell, 2003) by utilizing the qualitative methods of interviewing, personal and public document analysis, and the LTQ to triangulate and compare the data. These methods were mined and coded (Merriam, 1998) to identify themes and subthemes embedded within the three sources.

The Institutional Review Board approval to conduct the study was in place before research was conducted. The researcher sent the cover letter (Appendix A) and consent form (Appendix B) to participants before research was conducted. The researcher collected the cover letters (Appendix C) before the interviews. The researcher ensured validity by triangulation of the three sources and the constant comparative method (Merriam,1998). The researcher also ensured validity with member-checking and asking follow up questions if something was not clear in the interview or documents provided by the participant (Seidman, 1998). The researcher used purposeful sampling (Merriam, 1998; Seidman, 1998) to select the participants and the sample size of eight participants was sufficient for the data gathered to support the results and findings of the study. The researcher identified potential biases with a prior relationship with a participant to ensure reliability (Creswell, 2003).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Building Relationships with all School Stakeholders

The data gathered through the interviews, documents, and LTQ indicated that each participant stressed the importance of building relationships with all school stakeholders. Each participant mentioned building relationships in some capacity with students, teachers, and parents. Participants mentioned building relationships as their most important trait or characteristic in the interview. Participant A stated:

Relationships with kids in the classroom is probably the most determining factor for student learning. The relationships that the principal house with staff is probably the most important thing to creating a positive learning environment that is conducive to learning.

Some of the leadership traits embedded within building relationships with all school stakeholders were the subthemes of empathy, trustworthiness, outgoingness, and friendliness.

Empathy Trait Emerges in Award-winning Principals for Building Relationships

Empathy, the ability to understand and identify with others, emerged as a theme from the data gathered by the researcher. Each participant saw themselves as empathetic during the interview process. Research indicated empathy emerged as a trait for building relationships in each participant's interview. Participant A mentioned the importance of being empathetic and always asking in teacher interviews, "Can a teacher be too empathetic? Can you ever put yourself enough in another person's shoes?" Participant A also indicated empathy in his data with the statement, "I have a very deep, sincere passion for working with children. And I care about kids and I care about the staff that works in the school and I care about parents." The researcher found commonalities in key phrases from participants on empathy. Document A from Participant A's National Distinguished Principal application stated in a school leadership statement regarding struggling learners:

At the heart of all learning is the motivation of the learner. When considering a student's motivation to learn, I reflect on a quote from Mike McNight, 'People (children) don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care.' Whether a child is a struggling learner or working above grade level, the relationship of the teacher and the child is crucial. If the child is going to reach their academic potential, a mutual and genuine feeling of caring and respect must exist. (Appendix F)

Participant B stated the importance to “put myself in someone else’s position.” Participant C stressed, “I think it is important to be empathetic and sympathetic.” Key words and phrases such as “empathy” and “understanding” were common in the data. Participant E articulated how she sought, “understanding the thoughts of each staff member.” Participant F reflected how it was a trait of his to “let people know you care about them.”

Some thoughts on empathy reflected deeper insight into the leadership trait. Participant D felt that she was empathetic and articulated how people “have to be human,” but articulated that she is confident and that “can be read as I’m not as sensitive.” Participant D also stated, “Am I empathetic to people? Absolutely! But does it change expectations? No.” Participant G indicated you have to be empathetic, but realistic so people do not take advantage of that empathy. Participant F felt that he was very empathetic, but “could be short with people because of time.” Participant D, G, and F led the researcher to conclude that empathy can be affected by other traits.

The researcher compared the data from the interviews and the documents to how the participants ranked themselves on empathy within the building relationships with all school stakeholders theme on the LTQ. Half of the participants ranked themselves as a four (agree), and the other half of the participants ranked themselves as a five (strongly agree) on the trait of empathy on the LTQ.

Leadership Trait of Trustworthiness Lays a Solid Foundation for Relationships

The researcher inquired about participants’ feelings on the trait of trustworthiness. Each participant felt there was either a large level of trust between themselves and the staff or that trust was essential. Participant H reflected, “Trust is key because everybody

wants to succeed” and “trust starts with me and teachers knowing they can trust me.”

Participant C articulated, “If you don’t trust your leader, you can’t accomplish all of those goals I’ve told you about.” The researcher found trust as a critical trait these leaders possessed.

As trust emerged within the theme of relationships, the researcher identified traits on how the award-winning elementary felt about and built trust. Participant E stressed, “Teachers just have to trust that no matter what the situation is, the principal will walk beside them through things, even tough situations.” Two principals felt trust was something that had to be built. Participant D felt trust is “critical” and that “you build it by delivery” and also that trust had to be reciprocated by other staff. Participant F reflected on trust:

It is really difficult to build, and very easy to break. And you can build trust over time. You can spend two or three years building trust through 100 different things, but the second you do something wrong, people just don’t forgive that easily...if people don’t trust each other, then it’s going to be really difficult to get things done.

Participant F also articulated on building trust as a new administrator:

So those first couple of years are hard because everyone questioned everything that you did because they didn’t have any trust and I didn’t have any credibility yet. And over seven to eight years, I’d like to think that I’ve built a lot of credibility so that people trust me a lot more to make the right decision.

The emergence of trust was evident in the data collected through interviews with an overall feeling that it was a crucial component that had to be built and maintained.

Relationships between the participants and their school constituents were evident from the trust established.

The researcher compared documents to the data from interviews on trustworthiness. Document B from Participant B (Appendix G), the National Distinguished Principal application, contained a letter of reference from a staff member reflecting that Participant B, “At the end of the day Participant B and I often monitor the same hallway. It is there that I noticed the trust and relationships she builds with students.” Document C, a school agenda from Participant C, asked teachers, “Make positive phone calls and send notes often. Build those relationships with parents and students. When you have problems with a student, let me know.” Participant C not only wanted relationships built between teachers and students, but had trust established with the teachers that she was there to support students in difficult situations.

The researcher compared the data from the interviews and the documents to how the participants ranked themselves on the trait of being trustworthy within the building relationships with all school stakeholders theme on the LTQ. All eight of the participants ranked themselves as a five (strongly agree) on the trait of trustworthy on the LTQ. Several participants felt that their sharing of ownership and bringing people on board with decisions built trust that supported the relationships between the principals and their staff.

Being Approachable through Friendliness and Outgoingness Builds Relationships

The traits of being friendly and outgoing were evident in the relationship building between the stakeholders in the building. Three of the participants stressed that a sense of humor and laughter were important traits for building relationships.

Relationships through friendliness were reflected by Participant G as she reflected on her reading and rambling time set aside for two hours a day. She would read with students for an hour and a half a day and then walk and talk on their building's trail with students for another 30 minutes a day. Participant G supported her friendly trait by explaining the reason she retired:

When the evaluation system changed...I was going to have to do 247 evaluations on my staff...I just didn't want to sacrifice my time with kids. I know it's critical to be in the classroom as well, I don't argue that point at all, but I didn't want to sacrifice the time I had with kids.

Participant B stressed that a sense of humor was her best characteristic. This allowed her staff members to freely approach her within the relationship theme. Document B from Participant B (Appendix G) contained a letter of recommendation stating, "Participant B has a wonderful sense of humor. With her administrative team at Building B, she welcomes her staff back in the fall with some in-house entertainment." Participant D indicated that she was friendly by hosting social events with her staff and how they "would always have fun" and laugh.

Outgoingness was indicated in each interview as the researcher felt at ease with each participant. Participants were open to describing uncomfortable or difficult situations, and how they dealt with the situation. The researcher found that the trait of being outgoing was reflected by Participant A after he was asked to resign from a position towards the end of the year:

At the end of the meeting, they (central office administration) said, 'I know that this is a lot if you just want to take the rest of the day off, a couple of days, you

know it's okay.' I looked back at them and said, 'No, I have three kids, Star Students, and we are off to McDonald's.' And I went back to school and took the three kids to McDonald's for lunch and finished out the school year.

The researcher identified the outgoingness trait and relationship theme embedded in Principal A's story as he reflected that the relationship he had with those students outweighed any distress he had over the situation.

The researcher compared the data from the interviews and the documents on friendliness and outgoingness within the building relationships with all school stakeholders theme to how the participants ranked themselves on being outgoing on the LTQ. Half of the participants ranked themselves as a four (agree), and three of the participants ranked themselves as a five (strongly agree), and one participant ranked herself as a three (neutral) on the trait of being outgoing on the LTQ.

Communication is Key

The data gathered through the interviews, documents, and LTQ indicated that each participant valued good communication with school personnel. Participant B's statement, "Communication is key" coupled with Participant G's statement, "Communication is huge," manifested into a common leadership trait all participants shared: the ability to articulate and communicate effectively within their school community. In Document A, Participant A reflected on his thoughts of communication in regards to student achievement:

I can attest through collegiality, open honest communication, establishing and communicating high standards for staff and students, monitoring student progress, and insuring decisions were based on data—East Elementary transformed from

the lowest performing school to a school where student scores on assessments became some of the highest in the school district. (Appendix F)

Communication was an instrumental trait for all participants. Common subthemes of leadership traits through communication were a preference for face-to-face communication, the ability to listen, being a people person, and positive praise.

The Preference of Face-to-Face Communication

The researcher inquired about the actions and processes the award-winning elementary principals used for communication. Six out of eight participants described their preferred method of communication as “face-to face” or “one-to-one” during their interview. Participant E reflected:

I think emails are overrated and overused. I think that I like to know what’s going with my staff both outside and inside of school. And so I think that those personal conversations in the morning or in the afternoon and just talking with them about kids, families, summer, how was your weekend? They go a long way in building morale in doing things like that.

Participant F also articulated in regards to communication with staff:

If I need something, I just go talk to them. I try to check in the mornings. I try to check in about things more than just school. Check in about their family, learn something about them, and ask them how their kids are doing, and that kind of thing.

Face-to-face communication was evident in the data emerging from participants’ interviews. Participants also maintained relationships with all school stakeholders within the communication is key theme through face-to-face communication because it

demonstrated they cared about their staff, students, and parents. The extra time it took to walk to a classroom, rather than send an email was important.

A letter in Document B from Participant B (Appendix G) from a sixth grade student stating, “Participant B is very approachable and easy to talk to when you have a problem. At dismissal Participant B will always stand at her place in the hall to greet the students with a smile and give an encouraging word.” Participant B’s students felt her approachable and reflected her preference for face-to-face communication.

The preference for face-to-face communication emerged as a consistent subtheme within the communication is key theme throughout the interview process and within the documents. The researcher compared participants’ reflections on communication from their interviews and documents to how they ranked themselves on the articulation trait on the LTQ. Seven out of eight participants ranked themselves as a four (agree) with the eighth participant ranking herself a five (strongly agree) on the LTQ trait of articulation.

The Ability to Listen

The ability to listen emerged as a common trait among participants. Listening skills formed around problem-solving and sharing information. As participant B reflected on what made her an effective leader she stated:

The listening piece, but also being a decision-maker and tried to look at the whole picture, and put myself in someone else’s position before I jumped to say something or make a recommendation or have answer. Sometimes people don’t want answers. They just want to be heard and that staff, children, parents, whomever it is...Always tried to make sure people knew they were being listened to and that their thoughts were valued.

Participant A also mentioned the importance of listening. The listening trait was evident with Participant H stating, “Being a good listener...letting everybody be heard” as his most important characteristic for being an effective administrator.

A letter of recommendation for Participant B in Document B (Appendix G) stated, “She always listens with a compassionate ear and is truly focused/present with the person.” A letter of recommendation for Participant A in Document A reflected on his involvement with students including listening:

Every day he is in the lunchroom and on the playground with his students. From the first-grader who has a song to sing to him, hoping her song is food enough for the next ‘American Idol’ assembly at the school to the troubled boy who must sit with him, Participant A is available for his students. (Appendix F)

The participants’ all felt listening was a necessary trait for being an effective principal within the communication is key theme when communicating with staff, students, and parents.

The researcher found participants’ ability to listen within the communication is key theme through interviews and the documentation made available. However, the LTQ did not have measurable trait for listening besides being articulate. The trait of being articulate on the LTQ was compared earlier with face-to-face communication where seven out of eight participants ranked themselves as a four (agree) with the eighth participant ranking herself a five (strongly agree).

The People Person

Within the communication theme, the trait of being a people person was mentioned in half of the interviews. The position of principal interacting with students,

staff, parents, and community members was a consistent piece in each of the award-winning elementary principals' interviews. When asked about her top traits as an effective leader, Participant E stated, "You know, this is a people job and I am a people person. I think I work well with others." Participant F shared his thoughts on what made him an effective leader, "I think my ability to work with people. You know I am a huge, firm believer that it's people before programs." These reflections, coupled with Participant H's thoughts on being reliable and consistent for his school because it is a "people business," allowed the researcher to view the people person trait within the communication theme.

Document B from Participant B relates the "people person" theme in a recommendation letter from a colleague:

Participant B is one of the most loyal people I know. Her loyalty benefits her students and their families, her teachers, fellow administrators, friends, and families...Participant B believes in the teachers and staff at her school. She works very hard to establish and encourage positive relationships with and among members of the Building B employees. Although her school is large, the staff presents the perception of a close-knit group, striving to reach common goals.

Participant B works hard to perpetuate this 'family' atmosphere at her school.

(Appendix G)

Data from Document B reflects the leader being a "people person" from the perception of a colleague.

The researcher found the subtheme of being a "people person" within the communication is key theme. The researcher compared the data from the interviews and

documents to how the participants ranked themselves on being friendly or a “people person” on the LTQ. Three of the participants ranked themselves as a four (agree), and the five of the participants ranked themselves as a five (strongly agree) on the trait of being friendly on the LTQ.

Positive Praise

Positive praise was a trait of effective leadership among the participants within the communication theme. When asked about reaching her goals and achieving them with all of the interferences on the job, Participant C reflected on getting into classrooms:

I try to get in and see what the kids are doing. And the teachers need that feedback, because they are working so hard to do a good job. And they need to know that someone notices what they’re doing and how hard they’ve worked. So I think part of just being in the classroom is giving them feedback and cheering them on.

Participant B stated, “I always tried to make sure praise was given in a sincere manner.”

Positive praise was evident in Participant E’s leadership as she reflected on her communication actions and processes:

Teachers work so hard in their classrooms and kids know that and I think their kids appreciate it, but there’s nothing better than having your supervisor or another adult walk into your room and say, ‘Oh my gosh, your room is amazing...how engaging! Your kids are so focused. The relationships you have with your kids and families...’ There’s nothing better than that. And if I can take five minutes and say it versus five seconds to send it in an email, then those five minutes were very much worth it.

The positive praise was mentioned as an empowering mechanism by Participant F as he discussed Marcus Buckingham's (2001) work, "Forget about the bad stuff, try to accentuate the positive as much as you can."

In Document A, a school leadership statement, Participant A reflects on praise of his students:

Daily, children listen to the announcements recognizing their classmates for 'doing the right thing, and treating people right.' I have observed that the students quickly build pride in themselves, their work, and their school-if they believe the adults in the school genuinely care about them and their welfare. (Appendix F)

Positive praise was evident in the participants' data and was used to empower students and staff members to do their personal best.

The positive praise subtheme was embedded within the communication is key theme. The researcher compared the data from the interviews and in documents and related the data to how the participants ranked themselves on being perceptive concerning giving positive praise on the LTQ. Five of the participants ranked themselves as a four (agree), and two the participants ranked themselves as a five (strongly agree), and one participant ranked himself as a three (neutral) on the trait of being perceptive on the LTQ. The researcher discovered the power of positive praise through the data collected in the research.

Belief Systems Building Culture

Belief systems were evident throughout the data collected in the form of interviews, documents, and the LTQ from participants. The belief systems of each participant built a culture for each school building where the participant served as an

award-winning elementary principal. Research gathered regarding participants' reasons for becoming a principal reflected belief systems. Participant B wanted to become building principal to "impact more on a larger level than within a classroom." Participant E "wanted to put my own fingerprint on a building." Participant G stated she "left a legacy for the new leader." Participant F "wanted to try to positively impact as many people as possible." Participant A stated, "Typically the schools that I walked into, were schools that kind of needed to be revitalized. And I really believe I left each school a better place for the kids and staff." These beliefs are evident as traits shared by the award-winning elementary principals as they filter throughout schools with the subthemes of values, passions, and interests, align with seeing the big picture through goals, visions, and missions, and create a positive learning environment.

Beliefs, Values, Passions, and Interests Filter throughout the Schools

The beliefs, values, passions, and interests of each participant filtered throughout each school. Data gathered reflected these traits within each participant. Participant A reflected on his beliefs:

I believe all kids deserve a quality education. And as the principal you had the opportunity to shape, mold not only the kids, but you really helped teachers grow professionally. And that should be one of the most important or most satisfying parts of the job of a principal is helping her teachers grow and become the best that they can be, which ultimately then impacts kids and their learning. I had some very strong values and beliefs of what schools should be...that schools are for the kids, and schools aren't for the teachers or for the parents. And that all decisions must be made in the best interest of the child or the student.

Participant A was also a firm believer in author, Stephen Covey's (1998) moral compass by stating, "Basically, it's your integrity and if you don't have some of those basic skills within yourself, you cannot be expected to successfully lead others." Participant A also shared his values of being a "life-long learner" and valuing "hard work" allowed him to be an effective leader within his schools.

Participant H shared that he "values teachers and what they bring to the profession." The sharing of values in the staff was also evident in participant C's reflection on her passions for "what we can accomplish for kids" and "sharing good practices among teachers." These passions were also reflected by Participant F's statement, "I have for a very long time been very passionate about this place, these people, and the job I do here."

Personal interests in the form of 'likes' and 'loves' were evident in the data gathered from participant's interviews. Participant D reflected on the reasons for becoming a principal because she "likes leadership...likes moving the pieces...serving people...likes making jobs easier." Personal interests of Participant E emerged through statements such as "love my job...it's a great place to work...every day is different...I love organizing...I love implementing things...I like the professional development piece..." Participant D later describes how she is "relaxed on things...even things I am passionate about." A school leadership statement by Participant A in Document A states his beliefs:

In assessing what I do to create a positive school climate, my beliefs have been significantly influenced by reading literature by John Maxwell, Steven Covey, and William Glasser. Each individual is an educator, a teacher sharing the

importance of moral character and integrity when developing personal relationships. In education, your relationships involve so many-staff members, students, and parents. (Appendix F)

This statement reflected the beliefs of this school leader and the determination to make those beliefs filter throughout the relationships between all constituents of the school.

Participant B reflected on school beliefs in Document B's position statement:

The visibility of the administrative team is critical. We strive to be in classrooms on a daily basis. Members of our school community know what we believe because it shows in all we do and say. I keep the following quote visible in my office-it reads: 'People may not believe what you say but they will always believe what you do.' (Appendix G)

Personal interests of the participants filter through the building because they are embedded within the leader. The researcher compared the data from the interviews and documents on beliefs within the belief systems building culture theme to how the participants ranked themselves on being determined on the LTQ. Six of the participants ranked themselves as a four (agree), and two of the participants ranked themselves as a five (strongly agree) on the trait being determined on the LTQ.

Seeing the Big Picture through Goals, Visions, and Missions

Participant A reflected on the schools he served as a principal. In each school he focused on Lezotte's (1991) seven correlates of an effective school. Participant A stated, "When I went into just about every elementary school that I assumed the principalship of, I looked at those seven correlates, and I picked out one or two to focus on." The goals formed by Participant A were made by:

Every school that I went into, I went into in a listening mode to get as much information about the school, the environment, the atmosphere that I could. Observations, and then deciding what needed to be addressed first that would ultimately help kids learn, teachers feel good about where they were at, and transform a bad place into a good place for kids.

Participant A felt like he and the staff shared in those goals and stated, “I really think I kind of strengthened my ability to organize and definitely be able to work with people to accomplish goals we set for ourselves.”

When Participant B reflected on goals she stated she “kept kids at the forefront...What’s best for kids?” and that her goals also were to “make kids feel safe.” Participant B also articulated how she initially built community in a school through goal-setting with 1275 students because she wanted to “break the misconception that a large school as being impersonal” by working together and creating a “sense of pride.” Participant B stated, “And we built a reputation with the parents and they talked about the community being...it may be a big school, but it feels like any other school when you walk as far as this, that, or the other.” Participant B also stayed “loyal to district goals” and strived to achieve a “sense of learning” for the entire school community.

Participant C considered one of her top traits, “I’m a visionary person , so I see the big picture.” She also stated that she was a “change agent and I see because of the vision.” When Participant C assumed a principalship in her district, she saw “an opportunity to be a leader in our organization and help everybody work towards goals and have a vision.” Her goals within her school were “what’s best for kids” and “I want

to make teachers jobs easier and I want to help them accomplish their goals in the classroom.”

Participant D stated throughout her interview, ‘the central mission of school is teaching and learning...and I knew about instruction...and our mission is to help students achieve academically.’ Participant D’s goals for her building were also centered around the low socio-economic status of students, “Our goal was that we put our kids on an even playing field with everybody else...so high expectations for low-achieving kids, that was our goal.”

Participant E reflected why she wanted to become a principal and stated, “I like the bigger picture and had great visions of what I wanted things to be.” Participant E’s building was at the bottom of the achievement scale for the district and she partnered with the police department to establish relationships between the school and the Section Eight housing development by the building. Participant E’s goals and visions for her building shifted when “we really made a shift of focus on growth, academic growth that the students made...and that shift was extremely empowering to the teachers and staff here.”

Participant F felt like he was “a very kind of visionary and disciplined person...I have the ability to stay disciplined and get everyone else to move forward with that and stay focused on with what kind of our plan is.” Participant F reflected on goals achieved by his building, “I think we always get further, and I feel good about goals that we set out for every year and us sticking to those goals.” When he reflected on the accountability associated with his goals, Participant F recalled a friend’s phrase:

‘Accountability is not a hammer, it’s a flashlight.’ So if you go hounding people about this and that they didn’t do, then they’re not going to respond to you very much. To help people see how to do things better, that helps a lot. You know as quick as a hammer can build something, it can also tear it down.

Participant G had a goal for “my kids to leave with some life skills that weren’t just dealing with achievement...and then for staff, that they were appreciated and that they did a good job...even if they weren’t where DESE said they needed to be. I knew that they were busting their tails to do the best job that they could do.” Concerning goals in his school, Participant H stated he “is patient and watched them unfold.”

Participant E’s Document E (Appendix I) reflected the teams she formed and their meeting agendas. One team, the Lighthouse Team, was also referred to as the Goal Champions. The document reflected the Lighthouse team’s responsibilities as the financial team, building school improvement plan, and the school data team. The goals of the building were attained through shared leadership as reflected in Document E.

Participant C shared building Goals through Document C (Appendix H) with educational goals:

As a result of their elementary and middle school coursework, the number of students passing Algebra I at the end of 8th grade will increase to 60%; Based on the Technology Inventory and student achievement results, resources will be in place that enhance student learning by 2017; By 2016, the staff will fully implement Common Core Standards in ELS, MA, and Sci.

Participant A reflected in a school leadership statement in Document A on how he set goals in a building he had assumed:

Within the staff, there appeared to be a lack of a clear and focused mission for the school, and there was a general feeling that the students could not and would not meet the established district and state standards. As school principal, you must assess the strengths and areas of concern within your school. In each of my principalships, I have relied on the Correlates of Effective Schools as a framework for this assessment... Working with our assigned team leader from Accelerated Schools, parents, and community members, we developed a clear sense of purpose which was articulated in both the vision and mission statements of the school. Our vision and mission statements served as a unifying commitment to the instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability we would adhere to as a staff. (Appendix F)

The participants planning and adherence to goals was evident in the interviews and the documents provided to the researcher.

The researcher compared the interview data and the documents concerning participant's goals within the belief systems building culture theme to how the participants ranked themselves on being persistent on the LTQ. Five out of the eight participants ranked themselves as a five (strongly agree) and the other three ranked themselves as a four (agree). The researcher discovered a trait of seeing the big picture through goals, visions, and missions as important to each participant with their leadership.

A Positive Learning Environment

A positive learning environment was a trait the researcher found through the data gathered through the interviews and documents provided to the researcher. Participant A

attributed to a “positive learning environment that is conducive to learning” through relationships with the staff and students. Participant B’s school created a positive learning environment by being “visible in the hallways...in the mornings teachers are expected to be in their doorways or hallways to greet kids...we would announce birthdays...I remember one morning we didn’t have anyone come up and I sang the national anthem myself.” Participant C discussed how she creates a positive learning environment, “I greet the students when they come down from the gym to classrooms. I think it’s important to let them know that I’m happy they’re there.” Participant E reflected on her building as “a great place to work. It’s positive, the climate and culture. There is just a high level of collective efficacy.”

Participant E’s Document E contained a continuous improvement page with photos pertaining to the positive learning environment (Appendix I). Pictures depict a class mission statement, superstar data bulletin boards, ground rules and expectations explained through student photographs, and we can statements throughout the building. Participant A’s school leadership statement in Document A asserted:

To foster a positive school climate, I value the employees of the school.

Depending on the situation, I serve as a teacher, facilitator, counselor, and cheerleader for my staff...To build a positive school climate, I have always built very close and caring relationships with all of the students and their parents.

(Appendix F)

The trait of creating and maintaining a positive learning environment was evident in each participant’s interviews and documents.

The researcher compared the interview data and the documents concerning participant's creating and maintaining positive learning environments within the belief systems building culture theme to how the participants ranked themselves on being conscientious on the LTQ. Five out of the eight participants ranked themselves as a five (strongly agree), two participants ranked themselves as a four (agree), and one participant ranked herself as a 3 (neutral). The researcher discovered creating and maintaining positive learning environments through each participant with their leadership.

Seeking the Right Traits in Teachers

The data gathered through the interviews, documents, and LTQ indicated that each participant mentioned one or more of these three traits concerning their leadership: finding teachers with similar traits, creating a sense of shared leadership, and collaborative learning. Responses indicating how the participants themselves became principals reflected the three traits on their staffing abilities. Participant A was encouraged by two other administrators who saw "skills or my relationships with kids and people." Participant B had a friend "suggest administration to get back in touch with kids." Participant C "didn't think about becoming a principal...and just naturally assumed leadership positions." Participant H was also encouraged by another leader to become an administrator. The sense of encouragement was reflected in the participants thoughts on their traits of hiring the right people, creating shared leadership teams, and collaborative learning.

Hiring the Right People

The data the researcher gathered included the leader seeking staff that fit their team at each building. Participant A felt he had "an ability to reach out and to select

people who have similar beliefs about education in schools.” At School A, Participant A was able to hire a new staff and described the interviewing process:

My goodness, we spent hours interviewing, and once we built the core nucleus, then we involved the staff hiring other staff. And then we knew what we were looking for. I go to the hours that my assistant principal and I spent interviewing and going through files. And I tell you now the process that they have now for selection of teachers her in this district is the result of all the shortcuts, doing things the way the assistant principal and I wanted to do them, into identifying the staff that we wanted.

Participant B elaborated that she hired people “who fit our building...and there was low transition of staff.” Participant F reflected on hiring his staff during his eight years at building F:

That’s why when it comes to hiring people, and I’ve probably hired 80% of our staff, you always look for things...You look for traits in people. Such as trust, are they a trustworthy person? Are they collaborative? Are they honest? Are they just a good person? Are they a good, fun person? That’s important, I mean, I always think traits and characteristic of people are much more different to change, then maybe a strategy that they are using in the classroom. So if you start with the right person, despite their experience, you can always teach them to be a good teacher I think.

Hiring the right people was also evident in Participant G’s building. Participant G asserted:

That's why you have the people that you hire. I have spent a lot of time interviewing. A lot of people would say, 'You know just get it done and get out of here.' But I felt that that was one of the critical things. You have to hire the right people instead of the right time and stand back and let them do their job and support them and what they needed. So I think that was one of the biggest keys, to have leaders around you. And we had a very strong, cohesive staff. Because I built them from the time I was there until the time I left.

Participant A relayed in Document A about his involvement in hiring an entire staff for School A:

I was able to interview and select the entire certified and support/classified staffs. Through many hours of interviewing, I believe we have selected a staff that will soon become the strongest instructional staff in the school district. All members of the staff scored high in empathy, and each individual genuinely believes we can make a positive difference in the lives of children who attend West Elementary giving them hope for a better tomorrow. (Appendix F)

Participant B described her search for the right staff in Document B in a position statement:

School District B is a school district in which many individuals seek to be employed. School B conducts team interviews when hiring new personnel. We select the most qualified individuals to be members of our learning community. The team strives to find the 'best fit' for School B. Staff members are utilized in the grade level or area which will have the most positive impact on student

learning. Authentic, purposeful, and meaningful learning experiences for children are the priority. (Appendix G)

Participants shared a common trait for hiring the right people within the seeking the right traits in teachers theme due to the cohesiveness they sought for their building.

Hiring the right people emerged as a part of the seeking the right traits in teachers theme because it was evident in the participants' interviews and documents. The researcher compared the data from the interviews and in documents and related the data to how the participants ranked themselves on being perceptive concerning hiring the right people on the LTQ. Five of the participants ranked themselves as a four (agree), and two the participants ranked themselves as a five (strongly agree), and one participant ranked himself as a three (neutral) on the trait of being perceptive on the LTQ. The researcher discovered how participants sought to hire the right people in the data collected in the research.

Shared Leadership Teams

Participants expressed shared leadership as a consistent part of seeking the right traits in teachers theme. Participant A created and facilitated a site counsel or advisory board consisting of certified, non-certified, parents, before-and-after program, and early childhood staff where, "monthly we met to discuss various initiatives to strengthen the parent involvement in the school, identifying community resources that were available to support struggling families, and analyze survey data and feedback gathered from the school's constituents" (Appendix F).

Four participants shared their traits on shared leadership by emphasizing the strengths of teachers. Participant C stated, "I like to help teachers see their efficacy, see

their capacity to help students achieve at high levels...every teacher is different.”

Participant E reflected on what made her an effective leader, “I think here it was recognizing that every staff member I’ve ever had in any building has a skill set. You just recognize and know what that skill set is and maximize it.” Participant G also felt her effective leadership was partially due to placing staff “in the spot where they were the strongest and helped each other.” Participant H reflected on the contributions he made to his school that made an impact because he was always “trying to help teachers find their niche so that they can also help to be leaders in the building.”

Document C from Participant C included committees for every focus area for her current building (Appendix H). Participant C had shared leadership through a facilities committee, a budget committee, and a technology committee. Participant B reflected in a position statement in Document B regarding shared leadership from her teachers through Professional Learning Communities, “We are currently beginning our journey becoming a professional learning community. We are ready to start interviewing staff members who qualify to be trained as PLC coaches” (Appendix G) Participant A articulated in a school leadership statement in Document A on shared leadership:

The principal should become a leader of leaders, rather than a leader of followers. In reviewing the complexities of the principalship, I support this concept. I believe for the growth of the individuals and the organization, leadership within the school must be dispersed, and teachers are empowered to provide input and feedback on decisions being made within the school. (Appendix F)

Participant A's belief in creating shared leadership was evident in his school leadership statement due to seeking the right traits in teachers to be leaders themselves.

The shared leadership maximizing on strengths was a common part of the seeking the right traits in teachers theme in data gathered in the interviews and the documents. The researcher compared the data from the interviews and in documents and related the data to how the participants ranked themselves on being perceptive concerning shared leadership on the LTQ. Five of the participants ranked themselves as a four (agree), and two the participants ranked themselves as a five (strongly agree), and one participant ranked himself as a three (neutral) on the trait of being perceptive on the LTQ. The researcher discovered how participants sought teachers willing to share leadership in the data collected in the research.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning among the teachers and administration was evident in every participants' data as part of the seeking the right traits in teachers theme. Participant B constantly "gathered input from teachers." Participant C reflected how she enjoyed "sharing good practice among teachers." Participant D stated, "We did a lot of team-building... We had PLC teams and I would constantly meet... That was protected time." Participant G reflected on how her staff worked as a collaborative team to improve student achievement:

We were always trying to do something better for ourselves. We were always analyzing the year we just finished. What did we do well? What can we do better? We would analyze our test scores and instead of just stopping there, we said,

‘Okay, this is where we are low. And we didn’t say, ‘go forth and fix it.’ We asked ourselves how are we going to do that? And as a team we decided how. Participant F also used the PLC model in his building. Participant F stated, “I think the biggest thing, just how we embedded power, the ideas and ideals of a professional learning community (PLC) in our school...just trying to build into the culture that we are going to focus on results, focus on student learning, and then focus on building a collaborative culture.” Collaborative learning is part of the seeking the right traits in teachers because it involves a high level of thinking and sharing among the staff where participants needed the right teachers to have success.

Document A reflects the use of PLCs in Participant A’s building for collaborative learning, “At Building A, as we moved into studying the literature on Professional Learning Communities, we involved parents and members of the community in a review of the existing school’s vision and mission statement” (Appendix F). Not only did collaborative learning include the staff at School A, but it included parents as well. Document B demonstrates use of the PLC model in School B as Participant B reflects on her building in a position statement:

Our school’s mission is to ensure the learning of each student. Our mission is brief but very powerful. School B is on the road to becoming a true Professional Learning Community. We understand we must be able to depend on one another and do whatever it takes to help our students be successful learners. All staff members have been immersed in a school wide book study about Professional Learning Communities. No matter what role a staff member may assigned, a

common knowledge base and understanding of PLCs exists within our school.

This knowledge unites us and maintains our journey. (Appendix G)

Professional Learning Communities were a common component of collaborative learning in many of the participants' buildings and pertained to the seeking the right traits in teachers theme due to the knowledge and trust each member brought to the meetings.

Collaborative learning was a common subtheme of the seeking the right traits in teachers theme in data gathered in the interviews and the documents. The researcher compared the data from the interviews and in documents and related the data to how the participants ranked themselves on being perceptive concerning collaborative learning on the LTQ. Five of the participants ranked themselves as a four (agree), and two the participants ranked themselves as a five (strongly agree), and one participant ranked himself as a three (neutral) on the trait of being perceptive on the LTQ. The researcher discovered how participants sought to find teachers to partake in collaborative learning in the data collected in the research.

The Structured Leader

The data gathered through interviews, documents and LTQ indicated that each participant was a structured leader through their organization, management, decisions, and problem-solving traits. Organization and management emerged as one subtheme of the structured leader theme. Decisions and problem-solving emerged as the other subtheme of the structured leader theme.

Organization and Management

Participants A, E, F, G, and H mentioned they were "organized" or "very

organized” in every interview. Participant A reflected on a typical day and staying organized:

The amount of paperwork, the phone calls, and a lot of the paperwork and phone calls I would do at night, after dinner, before I would go to bed. And I would stay up ‘til 10:30 to 11:00 at night, but still I didn’t get it all done, and it would be there the next day.

Participant E had a similar response, “My day job from 7:30 to 5:30 is kids and teachers...and then my night job is this, it us emails, it is phone calls, it is returning phone calls, it is talking to my colleagues.” Participant G mentioned how she completed “paperwork after hours” and “made a list of things to do the next day.” Participant D was the only participant who stated, “I never stayed organized. I’m just going to be honest with you. I had great intentions. I would have a list every night... There were never two days alike.”

Each participant reflected the organization trait with the structured leader theme. The researcher compared the interview responses of participants to how each participant ranked themselves on the trait of being conscientious on the LTQ. Four participants ranked themselves as a five (strongly agree), three participants ranked themselves as a four (agree), and one participant ranked herself as a three (neutral).

The management piece of the structured leader was evident in the data. Participant G reflected on when she became the principal she completed a “thorough rewrite of the handbook for consistency” and had to find a “balance between instructional leadership and management.” Participant G also stated, “If you don’t take time for that management piece first, you don’t have time to be an instructional leader because you are

putting out fires all of the time.” Participant A concerning management of a building stated, “You have to plan out to alleviate situations.” Participant D reflected on management:

A principalship is kind of like middle management, right? It is. So to put somebody in charge of a middle management position...to watch people produce the product, but don't know about teaching and learning and then we can't figure out why achievement doesn't go up...You can't get into that cycle of crisis and putting out fires all the time, because if you do that, that whole cycle never stops. You have to delegate and have processes in place or you get caught in that wheel of putting out fires.

Participant E constructed a document reflecting her management and organization of teams to help her share leadership in Building E (Appendix I). Her building consisted of a leadership team identified as the Lighthouse Team, an academic team, climate team, and employee team. This document outlines the meeting dates, times, and content to be discussed at each meeting throughout the entire school year. Participant E had each team supporting a Comprehensive School Improvement Plan goal with action steps listed to achieve or grow towards the goal. Each time these committees met and collaborated, they documented their action steps and data. This informed Participant E of the next steps each committee would take at the following meeting.

The organization and management piece of the structured leader piece was a common trait from the participants in the data gathered by the researcher. The management and organization component was a common part of the structured leader theme in the data gathered in the interviews and the documents. The researcher compared

the data from the interviews and in documents and related the data to how the participants ranked themselves on being dependable concerning shared leadership on the LTQ. All eight of the participants ranked themselves as a five (strongly agree) on the trait of being dependable on the LTQ. The researcher discovered how participants were structured leaders through organization and management in the data collected in the research.

Decisions and Problem Solving

When making decisions for a school building, each participant had a belief or process. Participant E described how she treated staff members when decisions were made on staff issues outside of school:

I have teachers that want to go to their kids' functions and 'So can I come in late because I want to take my child to their first day of Kindergarten?' I say yes to all of them on that, because I know if I say yes to that and they are able to balance that piece of their lives, they'll give more here. And I'll get much more than I give in some areas like that.

Participant A spoke of a similar approach when making decisions with staff and other constituents of his school:

Covey talks about the emotional bank account, how in relationships it's kind of give-and-take. And if I'm always taking from you while there's going to be times, maybe sometimes I need you to maybe help me a little bit. And if I've always taken from you, you may not be inclined to do that.

Concerning decisions made for the staff, Principal A also stated, "I would not ask a staff member to do something I wouldn't do myself." Principal E had a similar statement, "There is nothing that I haven't done that I would ask them to do and vice versa."

Participant F reflected on decisions, “Sometimes you have to give up a little bit, you have to meet them in the middle.” These statements reflect the give-and-take the participants used when making decisions.

Every participant stressed the importance of being consistent in decisions. Participant G asserted, “Staff, parents, kids knew my word was my word.” Participant B stated she “weighed each situation” and would listen to get the whole picture. Participant C relayed her confidence in decisions because she “thinks of implications.” Participant D felt “You have to follow through...expect something, then expect it from everybody” when decisions were made. Participant E stated “I am reliable and consistent on the decisions I make...want buy-in support...I can’t imagine having to micromanage everything...I want it to be a win-win for all of us...a win-win that everybody feels good about.” Participant E also felt it was important to “explain why rather than command” on the important decisions. Decision making was a trait within the structured leader theme because every participant had their way of deciding things.

Problem-solving was similar to decision making within the structured leader theme. Each participant had a belief or process guiding how they solved problems.

Principal A believed:

The more years that you are a principal, and the more experience that you have, problems are less difficult to take care of...you can fine tune and break down what needs to be done and resolve problems...I always tried to make decisions wearing three hats...I wore the hat of a parent, I wore the hat of a teacher, and then I wore the hat as a principal responsible for everything that went on in that school.

Participant C articulated how it was important to “look around before solving problems” and having an “awareness of what is working and what is not working.” Participants stressed the importance of remaining calm and to “think it through” as Participant H claimed. Participant E stated:

When problems arise...I don't get upset about the things I can't control...give and take with the simple things...I don't have to react...I have time...bubble in the middle...I can control how I respond to things...there is a space between a stimulus of something and my reaction.

Participant F felt he was “not always going to make everybody happy...sometimes you have to change dysfunctional teams.”

Some of the participants used their site counsel or leadership teams to help solve problems. Participant G reflected on her problem-solving team:

One of the things that we built and, this is another thing that I did, back as a DP, I had what I called the Cares and Concerns Committee, that is not a Gripe and Complaint Committee, it's Cares and Concerns Committee, and it was things that people felt were a problem and needed to be addressed. And things wouldn't fester and blowup. We had representatives from K through two, three through five, and then special programs. It was all anonymous, so they would turn their items in. Anybody in the building could turn their item into their rep, and then their rep would bring it to me, and we would discuss it. Because three or four heads are better than one. When there was a problem we would ask, ‘How can we solve it? How can we beat this?’ An example would be, we would ask how does this affect students? If this isn't just a teacher complaint, how does this affect

students? And if we had time and there were teacher complaint or issues we would deal with those. Normally it was more student-oriented. And we had a traffic problem in the afternoon where older students were running over younger students going to the buses and how can we address that? Teachers were with them and they were in the hall and walking in lines even but still was an issue. So during Cares and Concerns, one of our special program directors said ‘Why don’t we take the upstairs out the front door and the downstairs out the end doors?’ And if it’s bad weather, they will all be in the hallway otherwise we can divide the traffic pattern. And that worked great.

This description of Participant G’s leadership team captured the essence of how these principals solved problems using their teachers.

Document A describes how Participant A made decisions and solved problems as a team in Building A:

Through many hours of interviewing, I believe we have selected a staff that soon will become the strongest instructional staff in the school district. All members of the staff scored high in empathy, and each individual genuinely believes we can make a positive different in the lives of children who attend giving them hope for a better tomorrow. There have been many unforeseen challenges, however, through collaboration, working together as a team, sound judgment, and common sense we have overcome these small obstacles. The transformation that has occurred over the past seven months has been phenomenal. (Appendix F)

The history of Building A changing school districts had created some inevitable problems for Participant A to overcome, but utilizing his staff in the decisions and problem-solving made a difference in fixing those problems in one school year.

The decisions and problem-solving subtheme of the structured leader theme was evident in the data gathered from the participants' interviews and documents. The researcher compared the data from the interviews and documents on decisions and problem-solving to how the participants ranked themselves on being determined on the LTQ. Six of the participants ranked themselves as a four (agree), and two of the participants ranked themselves as a five (strongly agree) on the trait being determined on the LTQ.

Summary

Chapter 4 presented descriptions of the settings of each of the participants' schools when the year they were honored a Missouri Distinguished Principal, a history of the National Distinguished Principal Award, the relationship of the researcher to the research, and participants and their demographics. The researcher shared processes on interview setting selection, interview questions, document collection, the administration of the LTQ, and data analysis. The researcher then presented the themes that emerged from the research in the research findings: building relationships with all stakeholders, communication is key, belief systems building culture, seeking the right traits in teachers, and the structured leader.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this case study was to explore the leadership traits of award-winning principals and the traits they exhibited. The researcher sought to find common traits emerging from the data collected through interviews, documents, and the Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ). The findings could be of interest to school leaders and school district administration for selecting the best candidates for principal positions and for development of interview questions. The findings could also filter into selection of the best teacher candidates through careful principal selection. This chapter sought to relate the findings to the grand tour research question, present limitations of the study, discuss implications of research and practice, and generate conclusions.

Grand Tour Research Question

What leadership traits do award-winning elementary principals exhibit?

The participants of this study were comprised of different demographics of principals. Experience ranged from 15 to 20 years in education and employment in urban, suburban, and, rural school districts. Collectively, the data triangulated through interviews, documents, and the LTQ allowed the following themes to emerge: building relationships with all school stakeholders, communication is key, belief systems building culture, seeking the right traits in teachers, and the structured leader. The themes below (Figure 4) related to literature on building relationships, organizational leadership, and organizational learning.

Figure 5. Traits of award-winning elementary principals.

<h1 style="text-align: center;">Traits of Award-winning Elementary Principals</h1>				
Building Relationships with all School Stakeholders	Communication is Key	Belief Systems Building Culture	Seeking the Right Traits in Teachers	The Structured Leader
<hr/> Empathy Trait Emerges in Award-Winning Principals	<hr/> The Preference of Face-to-Face Communication	<hr/> Beliefs, Passion, and Interests Filter Throughout Schools	<hr/> Hiring the Right People	<hr/> Organization and Management
<hr/> Leadership Trait of Trustworthiness Lays a Solid Foundation for Relationships	<hr/> The Ability to Listen	<hr/> Seeing the Big Picture through Goals, Visions, and Missions	<hr/> Shared Leadership Teams	<hr/> Decisions and Problem-Solving
<hr/> Being Approachable through Friendliness and Outgoingness Builds Relationships	<hr/> The People Person	<hr/> A Positive Learning Environment	<hr/> Collaborative Learning	

Discussion of Findings

Building Relationships with all School Stakeholders

The participant's traits included the importance of building relationships with students, staff, and parents in all of the school settings. Relationships with school stakeholders allowed for the principals to maximize teaching and learning. The relationship theme included empathy towards school stakeholders, establishing trust among all school stakeholders, and being approachable through friendliness and

outgoingness. The importance of building relationships was evident in the development of integrity and following the “moral compass” that is within each leader (Covey, 1989).

Empathy Trait Emerges in Award-winning Principals for Building Relationships

Within the relationship theme, every participant had a sense of empathy for students, staff, and parents in the school. Being able to see another school stakeholder’s perspective was critical for the success of the school through every facet emergent within the data: management, problem-solving, staff collaboration, discipline, and communication. The trait of empathy emerged through the “social competence” of the participants which “consists of empathy and social skills such as communication and conflict management.”

Leadership Traits of Trustworthiness Lays a Solid Foundation for Relationships

Trustworthiness was another component to the relationship theme. The data indicated the foundation of trust as a necessary component to successful leadership of their building. Trust had to be established with all stakeholders of the building for effective leadership to exist. The difficulty to build trust as a new leader was indicated in the data, coupled with the easiness of breaking trust. Trust tied in with the “moral compass” (Covey, 1989) and that an “important indicator of integrity is the extent to which one is honest and truthful rather than deceptive...The trust of followers will be lost if they discover the leader exploited or manipulated them in pursuit of self-interest” (Yukl, 2006, p. 192-193).

Being Approachable through Friendliness and Outgoingness Builds Relationships

The approachability of the participants was evident in the data associated with building relationships. Being friendly and outgoing made these leaders more

approachable with students, staff, and parents. Data indicated the staff was likely to have higher efficacy if the leader was approachable and the relationship piece was involved. One's capacity to lead can be seen when "leaders who show sociability are friendly, outgoing, courteous, tactful, and diplomatic...Social leaders have good interpersonal skills and create cooperative relationships with their followers" (Northouse, 2010, p.21).

Communication is Key

The communication is key trait emerged from the data collected from the participants. Communication involved a preference for face-to-face talking, good listening, being a people person, and giving positive praise. Communication was evident in the data as a motivating force for the students, staff, and parents because people have a preference to "be heard" by the leader. Communication involved social competence with communication and conflict management (Northouse, 2014).

The Preference of Face-to-Face Communication

The component of face-to face communication emerged in the communication is key trait as participants mentioned it as their preference. These interactions were personalized and allowed the leaders to indicate their cares and concerns for all school stakeholders. Technological advances through emails were seen a diminishing force by participants although they had to use them. Helgesen (1995, in Bolman & Deal, 2003) found "lines of communication were multiplicatous, open, and diffuse" and where a "web of inclusion" describes communication as "more circular than hierarchical" (p. 81). Webs of inclusion correlates to the preferred communication of the participants because face-to-face communication builds a strong center, the leader, and it interconnects to the rest of the web, the school stakeholders (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

The Ability to Listen

The ability to listen is a component of the communication is key trait due to the data indicating the importance of “being a good listener” with students, staff, and parents. People “wanted to be heard” was evident in the data. Concerning interpersonal and group dynamics in school settings Bolman and Deal (2003) indicate people must develop “skills such as listening, communicating, managing conflict, and building consensus” (p.177) to have an effective team.

The People Person

A component of the communication is key theme is the ability to be a “people person.” The participants relayed in the data how they work as a liaison between central office and the school, were in constant contact with students, teachers, staff, and parents throughout the day, and other colleagues serving as principals in their district. Data indicated these contacts with others throughout the day indicated they must be a “people person” or have interpersonal dynamics and a high emotional intelligence (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Concerning emotional intelligence, Salovey and Mayer (1990, in Bolman & Deal, 2003) “found that individuals who scored relatively high in the ability to perceive accurately, understand, and appraise others’ emotions could respond more flexibly to changes in their social environments and were better able to build supportive social networks” (p.168).

Positive Praise

The component of positive praise emerged in the data from the participants as part of the communication is key theme. The participants felt praising students and staff was instrumental for success of the school with teaching and learning. The positive praise

component is necessary for a sense of empowerment for students and staff. The concept of transformational leadership where “leaders set out to empower followers and nurture them in change” and “created a culture in which employees felt empowered and encouraged to freely discuss and try new things” (Northouse, 2010, p. 185) was evident in the data gathered from participants giving students and staff praise.

Belief Systems Building Culture

Personal belief systems building a culture in the schools emerged as a theme in the data gathered from the participants. Data indicated that the belief systems filtered throughout the schools through goals, visions, and missions, and by creating and maintaining a positive learning environment. Northouse’s (2010) transformational leadership approach correlated to the findings within this theme. Northouse (2010) explained:

Transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. It includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings. Transformational leadership involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them. It is a process that often incorporates charismatic and visionary leadership. (p. 171)

The concept of transformational leadership emerged with the data gathered constructing the theme of belief systems building culture.

Beliefs, Passion, and Interests Filter throughout the Schools

The belief systems building culture was evident through the component of beliefs,

passion, and interests of the participants filtering throughout their schools. A commitment to teaching and learning emerged in the data from participants that resonated through the schools. Beliefs emerged in the data from participants centering around how building relationships with all school stakeholders was critical for the success of the school.

Bolman and Deal (2003) asserted that a commitment to core beliefs involved:

Leaders must be deeply reflective, actively thoughtful, and dramatically explicit about core values and beliefs. Many of the world's legendary corporate heroes articulated their philosophy and values in such a striking way that they are still visible in today's behavior and operations. In government, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Charles de Gaulle, Margaret Thatcher, and Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew were as controversial as they were durable, but each espoused a stable and coherent set of values and beliefs. These in turn served as a means of formulating a vision for the direction of their respective nations. (p. 432)

Every participant brought their set of beliefs to their school building which was evident in the data.

Seeing the Big Picture through Goals, Visions, and Missions

The belief systems building culture was evident in the participant's data by their ability to see the big picture, make goals, and having visions and missions for their buildings. The goals of academic growth, increasing student achievement, and building the character of students were common in the data gathered from participants.

Transformational leadership (Northouse, 2010) correlated to the seeing the big picture through goals, visions, and missions component of the belief systems building culture theme. "Authentic transformational leadership is socialized leadership, which is

concerned with a collective goal” (Northouse, 2010. P. 173). Each participant had a goal, vision, or mission for their school. The transformational leadership approach (Northouse, 2010) related to the participants’ commitment to striving and collectively working with all school stakeholders to achieve goals.

A Positive Learning Environment

Creating and maintaining a positive learning environment was a shared component with data gathered from the participants within the belief systems building culture theme. A common feeling from participants stressed the importance of having a positive learning environment for students. Some participants acknowledged that creation of a positive learning environment began with them and trickled down to the staff level. The charismatic leader within the transformational leadership approach (Northouse, 2010) aligned to the creation of a positive learning environment. Northouse (2010) asserted that charismatic leaders demonstrate the following behaviors:

First, they are strong role models for the beliefs and values they want their followers to adopt...Second, charismatic leaders appear competent to followers. Third, they articulate ideological goals that have moral overtones...Fourth, charismatic leaders communicate high expectations for followers, and they exhibit confidence in followers’ abilities to meet these expectations...Fifth, charismatic leaders arouse task-relevant motives in followers that may include affiliation, power, or esteem. (p. 174-175)

The confidence and esteem stemming from building a positive learning environment by charismatic leadership was evident in the data gathered from participants.

Seeking the Right Traits in Teachers

Seeking the right traits in teachers emerged as a theme from the data gathered from participants. Each participant related the importance of hiring the right people for their building so these teachers could participate in shared leadership teams and collaborative learning. Participants tended to hire people with similar traits to their own. Within Bolman and Deal's (2003) human resource frame it is suggested that leaders "align individual and organizational needs...by viewing the workforce as an investment rather than a cost" (129). This suggestion aligned with the participants' feelings about their teachers and staff.

Hiring the Right People

The component of hiring the right people emerged from the data gathered from participants constructing the seeking the right traits in teachers. Participants wanted teachers whose belief systems and traits were similar to their own, thus creating a cohesive work environment. Bolman and Deal (2003) articulate within the human resource frame the concept of hiring the right people:

Strong companies are clear about the kinds of people they want. They hire only those who fit the mold. Southwest Airlines became the most successful firm in its industry by hiring people with positive attitudes and interpersonal skills, particularly a good sense of humor. The word is out, enthusiastic applicants clamor for jobs at Southwest. The airline can be selective, with well over a hundred applicants for every job opening. (p. 137)

Similar to the Southwest Airlines hiring practices, the teaching industry can have similar numbers of applicants according to several participants and seeking the right people for

the job takes time and thoroughness to ensure the right traits and beliefs are found in applicants.

Shared Leadership Teams

Shared leadership emerged in the participant's data within the seeking the right traits in teachers theme. Several participants relayed they could not do the job through micromanagement because there was too much to do. Shared leadership was a necessary component to accomplish school goals and tasks as well as encouraging buy-in with all stakeholders in the school because they had a share in decisions. Spillane (2006, in Donaldson, 2008) asserted, "Leadership in schools is 'distributed'; it succeeds through the participation and relationships of many people and results from the 'leader-plus' not the leader flying solo" (p. 145). The distributed leadership in the participants' buildings was evident in the leadership committees, advisory committees, and vertical teams that emerged in the data, where the principal served as the facilitator. Donaldson (2006, in Donaldson, 2008) found teacher leaders "often have relational influence that can promote innovation and strong professional norms" (p.145). Teachers sharing the leadership with the participants was evident in the participants' data pertaining to seeking the right traits in teachers theme.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning was an instrumental component of the seeking the right traits in teachers theme. Participants emphasized the importance of collaboration to achieve building goals and adhere to the vision of their schools. Collaborative learning was often illustrated in participants' staff meetings or Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) (DuFour & Eaker, 1998) and facilitated by teachers sharing

knowledge, reviewing data, or collaboratively creating and scoring assessments. I and I (2004) found that “successful principals encouraged collaboration to enhance their teacher growth and development. This, in turn enhanced their performance, especially with regard to implementing innovative ideas and solving student learning problems” (p. 67). Participants made collaborative learning a must have trait for all teachers they hired or assumed through their principalship.

Formalized Professional Learning Communities were held in several of the participants’ districts, often allotting for time each week set aside for collaborative purposes. DuFour and Eaker (1998) defined the characteristics for a Professional Learning Community as having a “shared mission, vision, and values,” “collective inquiry,” “collaborative teams,” “action orientation and experimentation,” “continuous improvement,” and “results orientation” (25-29). Even the participants’ buildings that did not adopt a formal Professional Learning Community format, still had every characteristic of a PLC embedded within their building.

The Structured Leader

The structured leader theme emerged from data collected from participants through their organization and management and processes for decisions and problem solving. Morgan’s (2006) machine metaphor for organizations relayed some strengths “when there is a straightforward task to perform” and “when the environment is stable enough to ensure that the products produced will be appropriate ones” (p. 27). The scientific management (Morgan, 2006) of the participants emerged in the data because they had to have those pieces in place so they were not putting out fires all day.

Organization and Management

The organization and management component of the structured leader theme emerged from the data as participants relayed they were highly organized and had to have the management piece in place before they could be instructional leaders. Bolman and Deal's (2003) structural frame "champions a pattern of well-thought-out roles and relationships" (p. 45). Participants' data reflected they were highly organized and had structures in place to have an effective school day. Several participants mentioned they returned emails and phone calls after school hours due to the school hours being devoted to the students and teachers. "Organizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and a clear division of labor" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, p. 45).

Management of the participants' buildings also included a high division of labor (Morgan, 2006) and specialized roles to alleviate the workload of the participants. Some participants mentioned they could not do it all themselves if they did not delegate tasks and responsibilities among the staff.

Decisions and Problem Solving

Decisions and problem solving was a component of the structured leader theme due to each participant having a structured process for dealing with decisions and problems. Decisions were often made after time for thinking or with other stakeholders' assistance through collaboration. Participants' problems were solved after allowing time for thinking through solutions, viewing the problem from various perspectives, or sharing out solutions among the buildings' stakeholders through committee meetings. Bolman and Deal (2003) shared through the structural frame, "Problems and performance gaps

arise from structural deficiencies and can be remediated through analysis and restructuring” (p. 45).

Limitations of the Study

There were limitations present in the findings of the study. The research was limited to a sample of eight participants, despite various backgrounds and demographics. Several of the participants had changed employment and were no longer in the school setting where they were honored as a Missouri Distinguished Principal or National Distinguished Principal. Documentation was also limited by some of the participants and the researcher relied on public documents for data analysis.

The researcher also had been a subordinate of one of the participants and had to remove any bias through the data collection process. The researcher relied on the research procedures to eliminate bias by framing the research with an outside lens with the known participant and ensured validity through follow up questions and member-checking through email (Seidman, 1998).

Implications

Implications for research and practice emerged in the themes constructed on leadership traits of award-winning principals.

Research Implications

There was a lack of information pertaining to the leadership traits of effective principals. In this study, effective leadership was measured by principals honored with the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award or the National Distinguished Elementary Principal Award. Further research could be duplicated from the study with a larger sample size to gain insight into the traits of award-winning principals. Information

could also be gathered from the participants to collectively construct research-based publications on the methods and ideas these principals use in their buildings. Research gathered through the interviews at the Missouri Distinguished Principals' Banquet could also provide more insight into their traits. The research community could also develop practices and professional support for school leaders based upon the results of this study.

Implications for Practice

Implications for practice emerging from this study could be utilized by school leaders at the district level or by principals. Hiring practices through human resources could be shaped by this study due to the traits district administrators seek from applicants. School district leaders want to hire the right people for the position and the traits identified in the themes of the study could serve as a lens for identifying the right candidate. Interview questions for the hiring process could also be formulated around the results of this study. Selection criteria and electronic assessments could be designed in order to identify traits of effective principals for hiring purposes.

An implication from the research could also be used by school principals to revitalize their practice. Research could provide principals with insight on how to effectively lead their building and reflect upon their practice. School leadership teams or principal studies at the district level could also use the research to improve student achievement and allow all principals within the district to collaboratively reflect on their performance. School district leaders could also mentor principals through the research to increase performance. Indicators on the performance-based evaluation system for school administration could use the research findings to refine indicators to enhance administrator performance.

Another implication could be present in universities and colleges designing principal preparation programs implementing curriculum design around the traits emerging in the study. Course content and internships could be designed around the findings to identify candidates or help candidates see the traits of effective principals. The research could also inspire teachers to become administrators and enroll in a program to become a school administrator.

Conclusion

Finding common leadership traits of award-winning Missouri elementary principals was chosen for this case study due to the principalship becoming a complex modern role in schools. Traits of effective leadership were studied to add to the body of knowledge for current and future educational leaders and researchers to view common traits in award-winning principals. The Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award selecting and honoring 12 to 13 principals throughout Missouri was selected due to the rigorous application and interview process to become Missouri's representative for the National Distinguished Principal Award.

Through interviews, documents, and the Leadership Trait Questionnaire, the researcher was able to find the following themes: (a) building relationships with all school stakeholders through empathy, trustworthiness, and being approachable through friendliness and outgoingness, (b) communication is key through the preference of face-to-face communication, the ability to listen, being a people person, and giving positive praise, (c) belief systems building culture through beliefs, passion, values, and interests filtering through schools, seeing the big picture through goals, visions, and missions, and creating a positive learning environment, (d) seeking the right traits in teachers through

hiring the right people, creating shared leadership teams, and collaborative learning, and I the structured leader through organization, management, decisions, and problem-solving.

The researcher concluded the following areas in the findings regarding leadership traits of award-winning principals:

- Building relationships is the most important trait an effective principal exhibits because of the trust it builds. If there is no trust in a school building, then it tends to not be effective with the mission of student achievement through teaching and learning.
- The participants were all-around “people persons.” Each leader had their own personality, but the traits they shared resonated throughout their school communities through beliefs. The leaders’ beliefs become the culture of the school building.
- Finding the right people for a school building is also critical for success. The participants were “leaders of leaders.” They could not micromanage and have the same results within their schools.
- Participants had to balance their time effectively, because during school hours the teaching and learning was the priority. After-school hours were for management-related pieces.

There remains to be lack of information pertaining to the leadership traits of award-winning elementary principals. Their leadership traits could provide insight for current and future principals, educational leaders, researchers, and professional development communities. The findings of this study could provide insight to all stakeholders in the educational field including principals, superintendents, future leaders, and the research community.

References

- Barton, P.E. (2004). Why does the gap persist? *Educational Leadership*, 62(3), 8-13.
- Bitterman, A., Goldring, R., & Gray, L. (2013). *Characteristics of public and private elementary and secondary school principals in the United States: Results from the 2011-2012 schools and staffing survey*. National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved April 29, 2014, from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013313>
- I, J. & I J. (2004). *Handbook of instructional leadership: How successful principals promote teaching and learning* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Bogdan, R. & Taylor, S.J. (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: a guidebook and resource* (3rd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Publishers.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2003). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Booth, W., Colomb, G., & Williams, J. (2003). *The craft of research*. (2nd ed.). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Buckingham, M., & Clifton, D. (2001). *Now discover your strengths*. New York: NY: Free Press, Simon and Schuster.
- Brown, K.M. (2009). *Encyclopedia of the social and cultural foundations of education: History of principalship* (Vol. 2). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Chastain, J.D. (2007). A study of leadership styles of principals in academically deficient and high achieving public schools in Missouri (Doctoral dissertation, St. Louis University, 2007). Proquest, UMI Dissertations Publishing. (UMI No. 3280189)
- Covey, S.R. (1989). *The seven habits of highly effective people*. New York: NY: Free Press, Simon and Schuster.

- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.(2014). *Missouri comprehensive school data system*. Retrieved September 28, 2014, from <http://mcds.dese.mo.gov/quickfacts/SitePages/DistrictInfo.aspx>
- Donaldson, G.A., *How leaders learn: Cultivation capacities for school movement*. New York, NY: Teacher's College Press.
- DuFour, R. & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- English, F.W. (2006). *Encyclopedia of educational leadership and education: Nation at risk* (Vol. 2). Thousand Oaks, CA; Sage Publications, Inc.
- Ferree, S.A. (2013). A study of the perceived relationships between the leadership style of elementary administrators and school climate (Doctoral dissertation, Widener University, 2013). Proquest, UMI Dissertations Publishing. (UMI No. 3569862)
- Geocaris, C.M. (2004). The evolving role of the principalship: Critical insights for a new paradigm (Doctoral dissertation, North Illinois University, 2004). Proquest, UMI Dissertations Publishing. (UMI No. 3132422)
- Gray, W.S. (1918). The work of elementary school principals, *Elementary School Journal* (19), 24-35.
- Gregory, J.M. (2012). High quality professional development school: A case study of a leadership team's processes and actions (Doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri, 2012).

- Houchens, G.W. & Keedy, J.L. (2009). Theories of practice: Understanding the practice of educational leadership. *Journal of Thought*, 44(3/4), 49-61.
- Kafka, J. (2009). The principalship in historical perspective. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 84(3), 318-330.
- King, Keohane, & Verba. (1996). *Designing social inquiry*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kirkpatrick, S.A., & Locke, E.A. (1991). Leadership: Do traits matter? *The Executive*, 5, 48-60.
- Lattuca, P. (2012). The principalship in transition, *The Educational Forum*, 76 (2), 224-233.
- Lezzotte, L.W. (1991). Correlates of an effective schools: The first and second generation. Retrieved September 29, 2014, from www.effectiveschools.com
- Leithwood, K., Lewis, K.S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). How leadership influences student learning. The Wallace Foundation (2004). Retrieved August 3, 2014, from <http://wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/key-research/Documents/How-Leadership-Influence-Student-Learning.pdf>
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study application in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- McEwan, E.K. (2003). *Ten traits of highly effective principals: From good to great performance*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals. (2009). *Distinguished elementary principals recognition banquet program*.

- Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals. (2014). *2014 Constitutions and by-laws*. Retrieved May 10, 2014, from <http://www.maesp.com/vnews/display.v/SEC/About%20Us%7Cconstitution%20and%20By-Laws>
- Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals. (2014). *Guidelines for selection of distinguished principals*. Retrieved May 10, 2014 from <http://www.maesp.com/vnews/display.v/ART/529e3c922b718>
- Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals. (2014). *Long-range plans*. Retrieved May 10, 2014 from <http://www.maesp.com/vnews/display.v/SEC/About%20Us%7Clong-Range%20plans>
- Mitgang, L. (2012). The making of the principal: Five lessons in leadership training. The Wallace Foundation (2012, June). Retrieved April 30, 2014 from <http://wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/school-leadership/effective-principal-leadership/Pages/The-Making-of-the-Principal-Five-Lessons-in-Leadership-Training.aspx>
- Morgan, G. (2006). *Images of organization*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Murphy, J., & Hallinger, P. (1992). The principalship in an era of transformation, *Journal of Educational Administration*, 30 (3). Retrieved April 29, 2014, from <http://search.proquest.com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/docview/220458301>
- National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2014). *A brief history*. Retrieved May 10, 2014, from <http://www.NAESP.org/history-1>
- National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2014). *About, who we are, what we do, our vision*. Retrieved May 10, 2014, from <http://www.NAESP.org/about>

National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2014). *2014 Application packet*.

Retrieved May 10, 2014, from <http://www.naesp.org/state-executives>

National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2014). *National distinguished*

principals program. Retrieved May 10, 2014, from

<http://www.NAESP.org/national-distinguished-principals-program>

Northouse, P.G. (2010). *Leadership theory and practice* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA:

Sage Publications, Inc.

Ogawa, R.T., & Bossert, S.T. (2000). *Leadership as an organizational quality*. San

Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Peterson, E. A. (1997). African American women and the emergence of self-will: The use

of phenomenological research. In K. M. Vaz (Ed.), *Oral narrative research with*

Black women (pp. 156-174). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Reeves, D.B. (2004). *Accountability in action: A blueprint for learning organizations*.

Englewood, CO: Advanced Learning Press.

Reeves, D.B. (2006). *The learning leader: How to focus school improvement for better*

results. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum

Development.

Reeves, D.B. (2010). *Transforming professional development into student results*.

Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Rothstein, R., (2004). The achievement gap: A broader picture. *Educational Leadership*,

62(3). 40-43.

Rousmaniere, K. (2013). The principal: The most misunderstood person in all education,

The Atlantic. Retrieved May 10, 2014 from

<http://theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/11/the-principal-the-most-misunderstood-person-in-all-of-education/281223>

- Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and social sciences*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Stogdill, R.M. (1974). *Handbook of leadership: A survey of theory and research*. New York: Free Press.
- Trail, K. (2000). Taking the lead: The role of the principal in school reform, *CSRDC Connections, 1(4)*, Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Service. (2010). *State and Local Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, Vol. IX-Accountability Under NCLB: Final Report*. Washington, D.C.
- Weiss, R.S. (1992), The elementary principalship: An historical evolution (Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts, 1992) Proquest, UMI Dissertations Publishing. (UMI No. 9233175)
- Whitaker, T. (2003). *What great principals do differently: Fifteen things that matter most*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.
- Yukl, G. (2006). *Leadership in organizations* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Zaccaro, S.J., Kemp, C., & Bader, P. (2004). Leader traits and attributes. In J. Antonakis, A.T. Cianciolo, & R.J. Sternberg (Eds.), *The nature of leadership* (pp. 101-124). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Appendix A

Participant Cover Letter

Date:

Dear Participant,

Thank you for considering participation in the research study titled, A Case Study of Leadership Traits of Award-Winning Missouri Elementary Principals from 2002 to 2013. This study serves as dissertation research for a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia. It is the researcher's intention that information from the study will be useful for leaders of school districts to use for developing interview questions and selecting principals with the desired leadership traits for schools, as well as a tool for school leaders to reflect upon their leadership traits.

Researcher: Erica Stephenson-Abbiatti, University of Missouri-Columbia Doctoral Candidate,
Erica_Abbiatti@idschools.org, (573) 999.4101.

Advisor: Dr. Carole Edmonds, 800 University Drive, Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville, Missouri 64468-6001
CAKE@nwmissouri.edu, (660) 562.1231.

Procedures: For the purpose of this study, your leadership traits will be studied using qualitative methodology. Three methods will be used to collect data for the study, interviews, document analysis, and the Leadership Trait Questionnaire. Individual interviews will be conducted with principals earning the Missouri Distinguished Elementary Principal Award, as well as selection committee members from the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals. Interviews will be tape recorded and take approximately an hour. The researcher would appreciate the opportunity to collect documents reflecting the effective leadership of the award-winning principals. These documents will provide further insight into the leadership traits of award-winning principals.

Participation: Participation in the study is voluntary. Participants may choose to withdraw their participation at any time, without penalty. Participant's willingness or refusal to participate in the study will not affect employment in any way. Participants may decline to answer any question in which they feel a level of discomfort. The researcher will be available at all times to answer any questions or address any concerns about participation. In addition, participants may contact the dissertation advisor with any questions or concerns. Contact information for both parties is provided above.

Confidentiality: Information gathered from participants' involvement in the study will remain confidential. Data collected for the purpose of the study will be kept secure. Participant's identity and employment identity will be made anonymous in the reporting

of results. The researcher will not disclose any names of participants, or relative information, within the dissertation material or in any future publications of the study. Questions regarding participant's rights may be directed to the University of Missouri-Columbia Campus Instructional Review Board at (573) 882.9585, or visit [http://www. Research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm](http://www.Research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm).

Risks and Benefits: Participation risk is minimal. Research gathered through the course of the study should be assistive to school district leaders for hiring purposes and for school leaders to reflect on their practice through leadership traits. Participants concerned with level of risk or potential benefits may contact the University of Missouri-Columbia Campus Institutional Review Board at (573) 882.9585, or visit <http://www.research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm>.

If you should have any further questions about your involvement, please let me know. Thank you for your time and consideration for participation in the study, Leadership Traits of Award-Winning Missouri Elementary School Principals.

Sincerely,

Erica Stephenson
Doctoral Candidate

Adapted from J.M. Gregory, 2012.

Appendix B

Participant Signed Consent Form

I, _____, agree to participate in the research study titled, A Case Study of Leadership Traits of Award-Winning Missouri Elementary Principals from 2002-2013, being conducted by Erica Stephenson-Abbiatti. This study served as dissertation research for a doctoral degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri-Columbia.

The act of signing this consent form acknowledges that I am aware of and understand the following safeguards are in place to protect me:

Responses shared during the interview process will be tape recorded and used for dissertation research and potential future publications.

Participation in the interview process is voluntary, and I have the right to withdraw my participation at any time prior to the interview.

Identity will be protected in all aspects and reports of research.

Consent or refusal to participate in the study will not impact my employment in any way.

I have read the information above, and any questions that I have posed have been answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

*Please keep a copy of the consent letter and the signed consent form for your records.

Adapted from J.M. Gregory, 2012.

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Please share with me about yourself and your background?

Why did you want to become a principal and what is the story behind it?

What do you consider your top traits that help you as an effective leader?

You were honored as a Missouri Distinguished Principal, what were some of the things you contributed to your school and community that you feel made an impact?

What do you feel made you an effective leader?

How do you feel like you communicate with staff at your building? What were some of the actions and processes you used to communicate with staff?

How do you see yourself handling problems or situations as they arise?

Could you describe for me your confidence level when you have problems arise and the decisions you make? Do you ever doubt your decisions?

Could you describe your goals and whether or not you achieve most of them with all of the interferences that occur on the job?

Describe your feelings on trustworthiness between you and other staff members.

Describe your feelings on being consistent and reliable for you school.

Describe your relationship with your staff and school community.

Describe a typical day for you and how you stay organized and persistent on all of the demands that are outside of the student contact hours?

Could you tell me about your empathy or sensitivity to others?

What do you think is your most important characteristic that helps you be an effective administrator?

Appendix D

Leadership Trait Questionnaire (LTQ)

Instructions: The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure personal characteristics of leadership.

The questionnaire should be completed by the leader and five people who are familiar with the leader. Make five copies of this questionnaire. This questionnaire should be completed by you and five people you know (e.g., roommates, coworkers, relative, friends).

Using the following scale, have each individual indicate the degree to which he or she agrees or disagrees with each of the 14 statements below. Do not forget to complete one for yourself.

_____ (leader's name) is

Key:	1 = Strongly disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Neutral	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly agree
------	-----------------------	--------------	-------------	-----------	--------------------

1.	Articulate: Communicates effectively with others	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Perceptive: Is discerning and insightful	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Self-confident: Believes in himself/herself and his/her ability	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Self-assured: Is secure with self, free of doubts	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Persistent: Stays fixed on the goals, despite interference	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Determined: Takes a firm stand, acts with certainty	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Trustworthy: Is authentic and inspires confidence	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Dependable: Is consistent and reliable	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Friendly: Shows kindness and warmth	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Outgoing: Talks freely, gets along well with others	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Conscientious: Is thorough, organized, and controlled	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Diligent: Is persistent, hardworking	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Sensitive: Shows tolerance, is tactful and sympathetic	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Empathic: Understands others, identifies with others.	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring

1. Enter the responses for Raters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 in the appropriate columns as shown in Example 2.1. The example provides hypothetical ratings to help explain how the questionnaire can be used.

2. For each of the 14 items, compute the average for the five raters and place that number in the “average rating” column.
3. Place your own scores in the “self-rating” column.

Example 2.1 Leadership Traits Questionnaire Ratings

		Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5	Average rating	Self-rating
1.	Articulate	4	4	3	2	4	3.4	4
2.	Perceptive	2	5	3	4	4	3.6	5
3.	Self-confident	4	4	5	5	4	4.4	4
4.	Self-assured	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
5.	Persistent	4	4	3	3	3	3.4	3
6.	Determined	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
7.	Trustworthy	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
8.	Dependable	4	5	4	5	4	4.4	4
9.	Friendly	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
10.	Outgoing	5	4	5	4	5	4.6	4
11.	Conscientious	2	3	2	3	3	2.6	4
12.	Diligent	3	3	3	3	3	3	4
13.	Sensitive	4	4	5	5	5	4.6	3
14.	Empathic	5	5	4	5	4	4.6	3

Scoring Interpretation

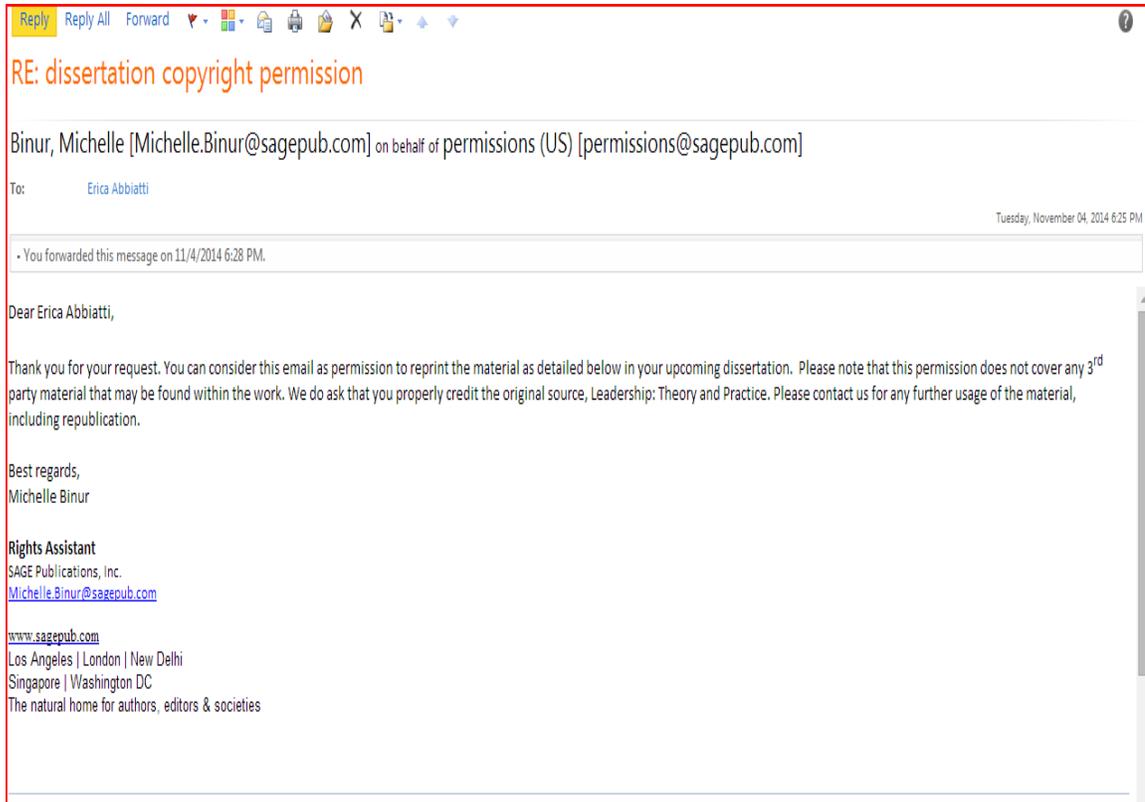
The scores you received on the LTQ provide information about how you see yourself and how others see you as leader. The chart allows you to see where your perceptions are the same as those of others and where they differ.

The example ratings show how the leader self-rated higher than the observers did on the characteristic articulate. On the second characteristic, perceptive, the leader self-rated substantially higher than others. On the self-confident characteristic, the leader self-rated quite close to others' ratings but lower. There are no best ratings on this questionnaire. The purpose of the instrument is to give you a way to assess our strengths and weaknesses and to evaluate areas where your perceptions are congruent with those of others and where there are discrepancies.

From *Leadership Theory and Practice*, Fifth Edition, Peter Northouse

Appendix E

Permission to Use the LTQ



Appendix F

Document A from Participant A



NATIONAL DISTINGUISHED PRINCIPALS PROGRAM

The National Association of Elementary School Principals
in cooperation with the United States Department of Education and
in corporate partnership with AIG Retirement

Nominee's Application Form

Name Prefix First Middle Initial Last Suffix

~ Contact Information - Home ~

Home Address Street City State Zip Country

Home Phone (Include Area Code) Home E-Mail

~ Contact Information - School ~

School Name MO USA

School Address Street City State Zip Country

School Phone (Include Area Code) NDP's School E-Mail

~ Professional Information ~

Professional Experience (List by most recent, excluding current position/school)

Position	Name and Location of School	Dates
Elementary Principal		2003 to Present
Elementary Principal		2001 - 2003
Elementary Principal		1995 - 2001
Elementary Principal		1992 - 1995
Elementary Principal		1988 - 1992
Assistant Professor of Military Science		1985 - 1988
American History Teacher		1983 - 1985
Life / Earth Science Teach.		1977 - 1983

Total Number of Years as a Principal: **21** Total Number of Years in Current Position/School: **6 years**
National Distinguished Principals Program

PTA	Member of PTA Executive Boards	2003 to Present
Christian Fellowship	Member	2008 to Present
American Legion, MO Chapter	Member of the Executive Board	2001 - 2003

~ THREE MOST SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS A PRINCIPAL ~

- 1) From 2003 through 2008, I served as the instructional leader/principal for _____ School in the _____ School District. During this period of time, the school had the highest percentage of students receiving free/reduced meal assistance, approximately 86%, and a student mobility or turnover rate over 50% during a school year. Also, student results on state assessments were the lowest in the school district with only 25% of the students scoring Proficient or Advanced. Through many hours of staff collaboration, decisions began being based on analyzing assessment and survey data. Professional development for the staff targeted improving instructional techniques and delivery and the integration of technology into classroom instruction. Each year, student test scores significantly improved and each year the benchmarks established by *No Child Left Behind* were met by the students at _____. The spring state assessments results for 2008 reflected nearly 60% of the students either Proficient or Advanced. Yes, children from low income families can learn and reach the high expectations set by their classroom teachers! We were making a positive difference in the lives of these children.

- 2) In the spring of 2008 (my last year at _____), I volunteered to become the principal for one of the elementary schools in _____. I was selected to become the principal at _____ Elementary School, a school formerly in the _____ Missouri School District. My decision to volunteer for one of the new schools was based on a sincere belief that I could help bring needed changes in the quality of education for these children. I believed the district would need an experienced administrator to provide leadership and direction for the new school. This move to _____ has proven to be a wonderful opportunity and growing and learning experience for myself and the staff. I was able to interview and select the entire certified and support/classified staffs. Through many hours of interviewing, I believe we have selected a staff that soon will become the strongest instructional staff in the school district. All members of the staff scored high in empathy, and each individual genuinely believes we can make a positive difference in the lives of the children who attend giving them hope for a better tomorrow. There have been many unforeseen challenges, however, through collaboration, working together as a team, sound judgment, and common sense, we have overcome these small obstacles. The transformation that has occurred over the past seven months has been phenomenal. Sharing with the staff the research of Larry Lezotte and Ron Edmonds on the Correlates of Effective Schools, we are using the correlates as a blueprint, a road map to creating a great school for children.

- 3) During my first years at _____ Elementary School in the _____ School District, I introduced to the staff Susan Kovalik's literature on integrated thematic instruction (ITI) and creating classroom and school environments that were conducive to learning. Also, I shared through book studies, the literature from Gardner, Armstrong, and Hart on multiple intelligences and the research on the brain and what is occurring in the brain as a child is learning. The teachers became excited, and the excitement carried over to the parents and the community. As the staff received professional development on the above topics, we also provided evening sessions where we shared this information with the parents. Working with two other district administrators, we co-authored a grant proposal that was submitted to the Disney Learning Partnership. The grant proposal was to provide funds for staff professional development in the areas of ITI, multiple intelligences, and creating criterion referenced assessments to measure student growth related to district and state GLE's or objectives. We received a 3-year grant totaling \$450,000. In addition to the high quality professional development, the teachers from four elementary schools in the district, for next three summers, received additional stipends for writing integrated thematic lessons. These lessons were added to the Disney website and they became available to any educator with the Internet. This process of watching teachers

being excited about growing professionally and sharing their new knowledge with others was very rewarding. I grew professionally as my knowledge of best practices and current research increased. I also became very knowledgeable in the district's curriculum and the alignment with the state's GLE's or objectives. Finally, I felt as though I had made a huge difference in the lives of the elementary teachers in four of the district's schools, and ultimately significantly impacting the student learning at _____

~ SCHOOL LEADERSHIP STATEMENTS ~

Question 1: How do you balance leadership and management duties to best support student achievement?

In reviewing the literature of Marzano's Professional Learning Communities, LeZotte's Correlates of Effective Schools, and the NAESP's principles for effective school leadership, at the foundation of each is the principal serving as the instructional leader and ensuring students are learning. At

Elementary, in 2003, student achievement based on the state assessments in Communication Arts and Mathematics was the lowest within the district. In 2003, approximately 25% of our students were either Proficient or Advanced, and in reviewing previous year's student performance, the results were "flat." Within the staff, there appeared to be a lack of a clear and focused mission for the school, and there was a general feeling that the students could not and would not meet the established district and state standards. As a school principal, you must assess the strengths and areas of concern within your school. In each of my principalships, I have relied on the Correlates of Effective Schools as a framework for this assessment. Early on, I surmised that it was going to be a challenge. The school was in need of a leader, not a manager; a leader who would lead by example, and be able to "walk the talk."

As the leader, working with the staff, we analyzed the existing cultural norms within the school, and we reached a consensus selecting two areas needing immediate emphasis: 1) collegiality and 2) honest, open communication. To assist with the transformation, I submitted a proposal to DESE applying for a Comprehensive School Reform Grant. The 3-year grant was approved and we became a member of the Accelerated Schools Consortium in the _____ area. Working with our assigned team leader from Accelerated Schools, parents, and community members, we developed a clear sense of purpose which was articulated in both the vision and mission statements of the school. Our vision and mission statements served as a unifying commitment to the instructional goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability we would adhere to as staff.

Working in grade level and cross grade level teams, the staff used the "backwards" design model of Jay McTighe to plan instructional lessons and activities to reach the district and state GLE's. Realizing the importance of being able to monitor student learning, the teachers within grade levels at _____ created criterion referenced common assessments for both Communication Arts and Mathematics. These assessments were created prior to the district developing common assessments in these two subject areas. The results of the assessments were used to plan for future instruction. As the instructional leader of the school, I became very knowledgeable in the district's curriculum, and to insure the curriculum was being taught and appropriately assessed, classroom observations occurred on a frequent basis. Also, on a weekly basis, I required the teachers to submit assessment results from the teacher made common assessments and end of unit assessments. Daily, we would engage in discussions on what could be done to help struggling learners. Thus, we were implementing our own Pyramid of Interventions to insure student success.

To support the teachers, I insured that when preparing the specials schedule with the staff, grade levels had common planning time. During the collaboration, to assist teachers, a planning sheet which served as a guide or agenda, was created. Also to assist the growth of the teachers, working with feedback from the staff and the school's professional development committee, we focused or targeted our PD on instructional best practices, such as 6 + 1 Writing, 4-Square Writing, responding to constructed response questions, integration of technology into instruction, and book studies reviewing the literature of Stephanie Harvey's *Reading Strategies that Work*, Debbie Miller's *Reading with Meaning*, and Ellin Keene's *Mosaic of Thought*. As the principal, I attended and became an active participant for all the staff's professional development. I also encouraged and provided release time for teachers to observe of colleagues and to collaborate in teams. I can attest that through collegiality, open honest communication, establishing and communicating high standards for staff and students, monitoring student progress, and insuring decisions were based on data -- transformed from the lowest performing school to a school where student scores on state assessments became some of the highest in the school district. The climate of the school became conducive to learning. Teachers believed they could make a difference in the lives of their children and that their students could and would reach higher standards. It is the responsibility of the school's principal to create this vision for others to enthusiastically follow.

Nominee's Name: _____

~ SCHOOL LEADERSHIP STATEMENTS ~

Question 2: How have you involved parents and community members in supporting student achievement?

At both _____ and _____ for an elementary school, we have had the highest free/reduced meal participation percentage in comparison to the other elementary schools in the district. For many of the students who attend these schools, they enter school with limited vocabularies and minimal learning experiences prior to kindergarten. In support of the adage, "It does take a village to raise a child," as a staff, we worked to involve families and the community in the education of the school's children. Positive involvement of parents and the community is both a Correlate of Effective Schools (Lezotte) and one of NAESP's effective school leadership principles. At _____ as we moved into studying the literature on Professional Learning Communities, we involved parents and members of the community in a review of the existing school's vision and mission statements. As a staff, our goal was to insure that parents understood and supported the basic mission of the school and that they were given the opportunity to play an important role in the school to achieve this mission.

To insure the parents fully understood the priorities of our school, effective communication and parent involvement were keys to our success. An Advisory Board or a Site Council was created with representation from the Before- and After-School program, early childhood, certified and classified staff members, parents, and community members. Monthly, we met to discuss various initiatives to strengthen the parent involvement in the school, identifying community resources that were available to support struggling families, and analyzing survey data and feedback gathered from the school's constituents. The Advisory Board was in addition to the school's Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and PTA Executive Board. As a member of the PTA and the Executive Board, we organized Back to School Open Houses, Reading and Mathematics Curriculum Nights, MAP (state assessment) Celebrations - celebrating student successes, 5th grade graduations, end of the year cookouts to celebrate an Ethnicity or Culture within our school, and identifying and scheduling educational and entertaining student assemblies and programs.

In the summer of 2008, with the assumption of schools from the _____ School District, each of the new schools were involved in a major community volunteer effort called the Extreme School Makeover. As the principal at _____, I was responsible for working with a planning team including: members of the ministerial alliance in _____ retired construction site managers, and our district Facilities department in identifying projects that would be completed during a two-day makeover of the school and the grounds. With the support of over 250 community volunteers, the Extreme Makeover at _____ was a huge success. The entire school (a two-story school) was cleaned and repainted. The school grounds were improved by the removal of dead trees and bushes which were replaced by donated flowers, bushes, and new trees. As the school's principal, I worked side-by-side the volunteers providing encouragement and words of gratitude and appreciation.

In both schools, we received monetary donations and volunteer support from the Optimist and Lions Clubs of _____ Members from both community organizations provided volunteers to support the 5th grade outdoor education experience and the annual Aquatics Day. Annually, the Optimist Club sponsored a Bicycle Rodeo where student's bicycles were repaired at no expense to families, and each student who attended the rodeo received a bicycle helmet. Each year, funds from local churches were donated to the school and these funds were placed into a "benevolent fund" to assist families in need of clothing, food items, or medical treatment or medications. Each Friday, members of a neighborhood church worked with the school's social worker, to distribute bags of food items to be taken home by students and eaten over the weekends.

Also, in both schools, we had a very active Youth Friends program where adult volunteers weekly would have special lunch time or tutor with their assigned students. In addition to the district's Youth Friends, at _____ Elementary, employees from Costco volunteered on a weekly basis to work with students to strengthen communication arts skills. Annually, Costco also provided over 300 backpacks for our students. For our students to be successful, it did "take a village to raise a child!"

National Distinguished Principals Program

~ SCHOOL LEADERSHIP STATEMENTS ~

Question 3: How do you support learners who are struggling, challenge learners who are excelling, and maintain high standards for all?

Insuring all children learn and meet appropriate expected standards is at the center of NAESP's first two principles of effective school leadership. At the heart of all learning is the motivation of the learner. When considering a student's motivation to learn, I reflect on the quote from Mike McNight, "People (children) don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Whether a child is a struggling learner or working above grade level, the relationship of the teacher and the child is crucial. If the child is going to reach their academic potential, a mutual and genuine feeling of caring and respect must exist.

In addition to the relationship between the classroom teacher and their children, as a principal, I am very visible and involved with the education of the students. Daily, I attempt to allocate at least two hours to be with students in the classrooms, breakfast and lunches, arrival and dismissals, and recesses. Again daily, I visit classrooms, not only to observe the skills of the teacher, but to assess the academic skills of the students. Working with students in reading, written expression, and mathematics, I am able to identify the struggling learners and the children working at- and above-grade level. To gain greater knowledge of my students, I assist with administering the district's assessments. These assessments include: AIMSweb curriculum based measurements in reading fluency and comprehension, written expression, and mathematics; *Pathways*, an assessment for primary-aged children measuring skills in phonics, segmenting, blending, writing, and spelling; and the district's common assessments. Through grade level collaboration and vertical teaming, I attend and participate in grading the assessments and reviewing individual student results. Through this process, I am demonstrating to the students, I do care about their academic success in school; and for teaching staff, as the instructional leader, I am increasing my knowledge of the students, curriculum, instruction, and the results of the student assessments.

At _____, through the integration of technology into instruction, classroom teachers were able to meet the academic needs of all their students. Even with the highest percentage of students receiving meal assistance (86%), through the use of the interactive writing pads and the Internet, the teachers were able to make instruction relevant to the students and connections were made to the "real world." The instruction was exciting, challenging, and interactive. Through the use of the district curriculum and the integration of technology, the classroom instruction was differentiated to meet the needs of all learners. Based on student data collected prior to and after the integration of technology, student engagement or the on-task percentage for all students significantly increased. Student assessment scores as measured by the state assessments went from the lowest scores in the district to some of the highest scores in both Communication Arts and Mathematics.

In each of my schools, a Student Assistance Team (SAT) existed to provide help to teachers with students not working to their academic potential. The SAT was comprised of regular education, special education, specials (art, music, physical education) teachers, the school's social worker and the nurse. Weekly the SAT would meet. Using a Pyramid of Interventions based on the Response to Intervention (RTI) model, members of the SAT would listen to the concerns of their colleagues in relation to student performance, review student data, and provide alternatives or interventions that could be used by the teachers. Interventions were divided into three levels, which included: Title I support, success and behavior plans, tutoring, Youth Friends, gifted, and special education.

Also, as an intervention and an exciting challenge, all students had the opportunity to work with the school's Librarian/Media Specialist. The students would research a topic and become resident experts. The students created PowerPoint presentations about their subjects and they became "teachers" sharing this information to other classes within the school.

Finally, the district's _____ (gifted) teachers frequently collaborated with the school's classroom teachers providing differentiated enrichment activities which could be incorporated into the regular education instruction.

~ SCHOOL LEADERSHIP STATEMENTS ~

Question 4: How do you cultivate, monitor, and advance a positive climate in your building?

In assessing what I do to create a positive school climate, my beliefs have been significantly influenced by reading professional literature written by John Maxwell, Stephen Covey, and William Glasser. Each individual is an educator, a teacher sharing the importance of moral character and integrity when developing personal relationships. In education, your relationships involve so many – staff members, students, and parents. As a moral compass, the following quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson is essential when creating a positive school climate, "What lies behind us, and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us."

I believe I lead by example, valuing the worth of all, and appreciating and celebrating the individual differences found within a school community. Norman Vincent Peale has written, "Throw your heart over the fence and the rest will follow." I genuinely believe my actions many times speak louder than my words. In each of my principalships (5 elementary schools), I have always placed the interests of children first. Schools are for children, not for the adults, and all decisions made within the school must be made in the best interests of these children. I cannot and will not compromise this professional belief. In each school, the staff members have quickly observed my passion for children and providing for them a quality educational experience. I do "walk my talk."

As you begin to build a culture or climate for the school, the selection of staff is critical for the success of your vision. At _____ I had the very unique opportunity to select the entire staff, an opportunity that is very rare for a school principal. Through careful screening, I selected only the best candidates for the school; candidates who had a similar philosophical belief with me on what a quality school is, what it feels and looks like. Through open, honest communications, I shared my personal vision and the expectations for all staff members within the school. I do believe the establishment of a school's vision and mission must be collaborative process involving representation from all stakeholders; however, I believe there should exist a set of common essential beliefs or shared values that we have related to teaching, learning, and working with children. During the screening process, I did look for these candidates. A _____ with the identification of the teachers who would be serving as grade and/or department chairs, these individuals became members of the interview teams, thus giving them a valued voice, a sense of ownership, or a vested interest in the selection of the staff.

To foster a positive school climate, I value the employees of the school. Depending on the situation, I serve as a teacher, facilitator, counselor, and cheerleader for my staff. My position is to support the staff and provide them the resources so that they can grow professionally improving their skills whether it is a teacher in the classroom, a secretary, or a paraprofessional. In the literature on the Correlates of Effective Schools, Lantieri Lezotte contends that the responsibilities of the principal has grown so much, that even though the principal serves as the instructional leader, the principal should become a leader of leaders, rather than a leader of followers. In reviewing the complexities of the principalship, I support this concept. I believe for the growth of the individuals and the organization, leadership within the school must be dispersed, and teachers are empowered to provide input and feedback on decisions being made within the school. It is my responsibility to build this sense of synergy, a feeling of being a part of a team that values and appreciates all members of the school.

To build a positive school climate, I have always built very close and caring relationships with all the students and their parents. I want them to know that I genuinely care about each student, the staff, and the school as a whole. Each day, I greet the students as they arrive in the morning, and at dismissal as the students begin boarding the busses, I am reminding them to practice their math facts and before going to sleep find time to read. Daily, I visit classrooms to monitor student learning and assist students who appear to be struggling with a concept. To assist in promoting a positive school climate, the children observe my efforts to insure the school and grounds are attractive and clean. Daily, children listen to the announcements recognizing their classmates for "doing the right thing, and treating people right." I have observed that the students quickly build pride in themselves, their work, and the school – if they believe the adults in the school genuinely care about them and their welfare.

Greetings:

It is my honor to add my recommendation to _____ for the award of Distinguished Principal for the State of Missouri. I have known _____ for approximately nine months. In that time we have had many wonderful experiences that center around the school he leads,

The first project that _____ and I participated in was the Extreme School Makeover of the six schools that transferred to the _____ District from _____. Approximately 250 of our church members participated in a 14-hour complete makeover of the school building and property. During that time, _____ and his staff worked alongside of more than 400 volunteers, putting two coats of paint on every wall, landscaping the entire property and cleaning a large portion of the building.

What I noticed from _____ during the Extreme School makeover was extraordinary relational and leadership skills. He often spoke words of encouragement to all of his staff and the volunteers. He personally painted the office area, while carrying on an exemplary leadership role in the project.

When school started in the fall, _____ asked if we could provide 15-20 senior adults to help new students find their classes. Among the retirees who helped was a former principal of a high school, an administrator from a school district, an executive of a financial institution and a construction superintendent from our city's largest construction company. It was a beautiful sight to see the 70 year old former school administrator hold the hand of a Latino first-grader, as she took her to her class on the first day of school.

_____ and his staff gave over 500 children and their families a warm welcome in this process. He provided the community an opportunity to invest in our local school. It is no surprise that nearly all of the people who helped children on the first two days of school are Youth Friends today.

I was asked to be part of the CHARACTERplus leadership team at _____. I joined _____ and four of his staff for two days of training. During this training, it was easy to see that _____ staff truly represents what he values. It amazed me to see how quickly they had "caught" his leadership style and value system. During the meetings they made clear plans to further implement character education as a component to the entire educational process. I have noticed that significant strides have already been taken to implement the plans that were determined this fall. What impresses me about _____ ability to follow through with planning is that these plans have been implemented in the midst of the first year of operation of the new school and an entirely new teaching staff.

It is as a Youth Friend that I have had the best opportunity to observe _____. Once a week, I play with children during their lunch hour, as my Youth Friends assignment. In this role I have many mental "snap-shots" of why _____ such an extraordinary educator. We all say, "It's all about the children." _____ lives that commitment. As an Army Colonel, he has no problem instilling discipline in children. Our church serves the same children, as does _____. I have been constantly in awe to see the discipline that is present in the school. I am certain that _____ has brought a culture of discipline to his staff and to children who are in need of such structure.

_____ does not lead from the confines of his office. Every day he is in the lunchroom and on the playground with his students. From the first-grader who has a song to sing him, hoping her song is good enough for the next "American Idol" assembly at the school to the troubled boy who must sit with him, _____ is available for his students. There are times that he races children to get in their class lines. There are many times that he plays soccer with the third-graders and other times that he plays kickball with grades four and five.

If we lead and educate best by our lifestyle and through relationships, then _____ is one of the finest examples that I know. In the context of true relationship, he disciplines children and directs his staff toward excellence.

The citizens of western Independence worked very hard to obtain a school boundary transfer. Having someone like _____ and his fine staff work with our children is the payoff of that labor. We believe that the best is yet to come because of people like him.

Thank you for your consideration of this recommendation.

Sincerely yours,

[Redacted signature box]

Appendix G

Document B from Participant B

TO BE COMPLETED BY NOMINEE

Nominee's Name: _____

PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION
(List by most recent degree)

Degree (No abbreviations)	Institution and Location	Dates
Education Specialist Degree in Elementary Administration	University of Central Missouri	August 1994
Master of Science Degree in Special Education	University of Central Missouri	August 1984
Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education	University of Central Missouri	August 1978

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
(Begin with present position)

Position	Name and Location of School/School District Office	Dates
Elementary Principal (K - 6)	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%;"></div>	1999 - current
Elementary Principal (K - 5)		1996 - 1999
Elementary Assistant Principal (K - 6)		1993 - 1996

Total number of years as a principal: 12

Total number of years in present school: 9

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Please review this application form and briefly list—in one or two sentences each—the **three areas** that you consider the most significant accomplishments of your career as a principal. Be certain to identify indicators of effective leadership in your comments.

One significant accomplishment as principal is consistently striving to ensure the learning of each student. Knowing each child is a must. I expect teachers to get to know their students as individuals. Academic strengths and weaknesses are evidenced through daily work, teacher developed and standardized assessments, and overall participation in class. Confidence in learning is built upon the overall relationships established in and outside of the classroom. I believe if students trust us they work harder, ask for help, and take greater pride in their learning.

I know many students by name. Over the years I have discovered how truly powerful this is. _____ two assistant principals and I continuously loop with two grade levels. Our goal is to get to know all of the students. Positive reinforcement through the Top _____ recognition, good news phone calls to parents, treasure card distribution, and consistently showing our genuine interest in knowing the children creates a friendly, respectful, and safe learning environment. I visit classrooms on a daily basis. I believe we do whatever it takes for our students to be successful learners. I take great pride in the staff and students I have the opportunity to work with on a daily basis. We are a professional learning community – we are a family of learners.

_____ community is culturally diverse. Our ELL program currently has 57 students from a variety of countries. This year we are piloting an all day ELL kindergarten program. The kindergarten teachers have noted a positive learning experiences for the children involved in this program. Our goal is to assist our ELL students in becoming strong and successful learners.

_____ also has opportunity to work with fragile health and disabled students. Our Lifeskills students learn authentic daily tasks and are very involved in our total school community. All of our students benefit from knowing and understanding one another's life situations.

Another important accomplishment is guiding staff members to know and trust one another. Time is provided to collaborate regarding student progress and lesson planning, ensuring staff members are recognized positively for their accomplishments, and encouraging all to get educational assistance when needed. Teachers have shared plan time on a daily basis. They are also provided six half day collaborations plus six early release days throughout the school year. Professional development is on-going, current, purposeful, and possesses common sense. Authentic and meaningful learning is expected and evidenced on a daily basis.

I listen to staff members. Our ideas, concerns, successes, and failures help us figure out what's best for students. I strongly value shared decision making. Collectively we are smarter and resourceful. I believe we are interdependent.

The establishment of trust with students, staff, parents, and patrons is another accomplishment. I am honest, up-front, student focused, and available to meet. I encourage face to face conversations, when possible, because they yield the best communication. I let everyone know what's important to me by what I do and say on a daily basis. I always attempt to first understand then be understood. I walk the walk and talk the talk. I respect everyone's role associated with our school and district. I send a consistent message that all are valued, important, and critical to our school's well being.

We are reaching out to our families in need by providing a weekend food backpack program. We are just getting this situation started and are eager to see how it is received by our community. I am currently leading a team to develop a welcome program for our new families. Discussions include having a face to face meeting with new families, providing a guided tour of our school, and asking for their help in providing consistent school focus time at night to complete math facts, read a short story, or have a discussion of their day. The message that we are a team for their child(ren) is the goal.

I believe members of our school community know me well. They know my family, hobbies, and pets. Most know I collect cows, like fish, and fear snakes. I love to laugh and celebrate good news. I've also cried and shared sad news. A quote found in the quad area at Truman State University sums up how I feel about my life as an educator, it reads: "I have not given my life to teaching – Teaching has given me my life."

TO BE COMPLETED BY NOMINEE

Nominee's Name: _____

POSITION STATEMENTS

Using the following six categories as identified in *Leading Learning Communities*, please identify the professional practices and accomplishments which qualify you to represent your **state or organization** as its National Distinguished Principal.

Please limit your responses to the spaces provided. Font must be no smaller than 10 pt.

I. BALANCES MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP ROLES

Distinguished Principals articulate and instill in others a strong sense of purpose. Their vigorous pursuit of sound educational values and goals elevates the status of their schools and moves others closer to fulfilling their schools' mission.

Elementary has approximately 975 students and over 150 staff members. The focus of our school is on student learning. No matter the job and/or responsibility, each staff member believes learning is what we are all about. Each staff member respects and supports one another. I believe this is fostered through what they see me, and other administrative team members, do on a daily basis. Our purpose is to make certain children have what they need to be successful learners. Everyone values making our school a safe and confident place to learn. Staff members step up for one another when needs arise. Everyone has the responsibility of supervising our students. Staff members are friendly and respectful toward everyone. They hold high expectations for learning and for appropriate behavior as well. Staff members know their job responsibilities and understand how to be efficient, effective, and essential in our learning community.

Our school's mission is to ensure the learning of each student. Our mission is brief but very powerful. _____ is on the road to becoming a true Professional Learning Community. We understand we must be able to depend on one another and do whatever it takes to help our students be successful learners. All staff members have been immersed in a school wide book study about Professional Learning Communities. No matter what role a staff member may assigned, a common knowledge base and understanding of PLCs exists within our school. This knowledge unites us and maintains our journey.

The visibility of the administrative team is critical. We strive to be in classrooms on a daily basis. Members of our school community know what we believe in because it shows in all we do and say. I keep the following quote visible in my office – it reads: "People may not believe what you say but they will always believe what you do."

II. SETS HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND STANDARDS

Distinguished Principals place highest priority on exemplary instructional practices. They are active in developing the school's curriculum and in carrying it out, working closely with teachers in determining effective instructional practices that are based on a thorough knowledge of research findings.

Teachers and administrators are expected to keep current and be knowledgeable of district curriculum. Collectively we serve as resources for colleagues and are able to articulate a clear and relevant understanding of what is to be taught. As school principal I am responsible for ensuring the curriculum is taught and that best practices are utilized. Shared plan/collaboration time is a priority at _____. This time allows teachers to share ideas, collaborate regarding student progress, and develop assessments.

The _____ district promotes and expects principal and teacher involvement on curriculum development teams. A collaborative approach is used to create rigorous and relevant curriculum which aligns with state standards. _____ is represented on every curriculum team.

_____ teachers meet frequently with the building administrators to discuss student progress. Teaching and learning ideas are shared through the discussions with principals and through student assistance teams. Teaching and learning strategies to ensure individual student progress are developed during collaboration sessions, teacher support team meetings, and student advocacy team meetings.

A high level of professional trust exists between the administration and teaching staff. The teachers know what is expected and they also understand their accountability. It is imperative for the principals and teachers to understand the essentials of the curriculum and teach it in an effective, efficient manner.

POSITION STATEMENTS, continued

Please limit your responses to the spaces provided. Font must be no smaller than 10 pt.

III. DEMANDS CONTENT AND INSTRUCTION THAT ENSURES STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Distinguished Principals creatively organize the human and material resources necessary to provide an outstanding school program and inspire in students a lasting interest in learning. Student achievement is positively impacted as evidenced by increased or consistently high levels of student achievement as demonstrated on the state-wide assessment instrument.

_____ is a school district in which many individuals seek to be employed. _____ conducts team interviews when hiring new personnel. We select the most qualified individuals to be members of our learning community. The team strives to find the "best fit" for _____. Staff members are utilized in the grade level or area which will have the most positive impact on student learning. Authentic, purposeful, and meaningful learning experiences for children are the priority.

The materials purchased for our school are appropriately matched to curriculum, reinforce and support differentiated instruction, as well as, promote high level thinking skills for both students and teachers. Teachers determine, with administrative approval, what is needed to develop and maintain rigorous, relevant learning.

_____ currently provides a "push-in" tutoring program two days per week. Six educationally qualified individuals work with academically struggling students in grades three through six. Teachers provide the lesson plans for the tutors. The tutors may also be utilized to work with the majority of students in a classroom while the regular teacher works with the children needing additional assistance in learning. The feedback from teachers has been positive regarding student progress.

The staff at _____ holds high expectations for learning. Students are encouraged to stretch themselves and take time to think. We want students to understand that making mistakes is ok. We learn from all experiences. We expect ourselves and our students to be risk-takers, think outside the box, and believe everyone can be successful. Student progress is monitored daily and feedback is provided to students, parents, and administration on a frequent basis. Survey results from previous students indicate the majority felt safe, successful, smart and cared about at our school. Our school motto: _____ Students - "Hungry to Learn" was created and voted on by students.

IV. CREATES A CULTURE OF ADULT LEARNING

Distinguished Principals demonstrate exceptional knowledge of adult professional development. They communicate this knowledge in an effective and open manner.

Professional development is the key to student learning. Staff members must consider themselves as life-long learners. Keeping current in best practices, learning strategies, analysis of data, and creating assessments are critical skills all educators need to possess. _____ professional development team, with administrative support, assists in determining adult learning needs. Our school improvement plan guides our efforts.

Adult learning must be meaningful, purposeful, useable, and understood. _____ teachers are provided approximately six early release days devoted to professional development. Teachers also have common plan time plus six half days of collaboration scheduled for certified staff members during the school year. I believe it's extremely important for teachers to have input into the professional development. If ownership is not present it is difficult to have meaningful buy-in.

Most recently our focuses have been on differentiated instruction and becoming a professional learning community. For the past several years all professional development at the school level has been related. A team of teachers and principals attended national conferences on differentiated instruction. A train the trainer model was utilized upon their return. We are currently beginning our journey in becoming a professional learning community. We are ready to start interviewing staff members who qualify to be trained as PLC coaches.

Having a strong knowledge of current and meaningful professional development is required as an effective leader. Other critical attributes include showing my genuine and sincere excitement, as well as my commitment to professional development activities. Professional development leads to creating successful learning for our students.

POSITION STATEMENTS, continued

Please limit your responses to the spaces provided. Font must be no smaller than 10 pt.

V. USES MULTIPLE SOURCES OF DATA AS DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS

Distinguished Principals use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools to assess, identify and apply instructional improvement. This information is used to positively impact student achievement as evidenced by increased or consistently high levels of student achievement as demonstrated on the state-wide assessment instrument.

utilizes a number of diagnostic tools to assess student progress and achievement. We have a MAP team comprised of grade level and department staff, counselors, and principals. also has a Literacy Cadre made up of primary, intermediate, remedial reading teachers and administrators. These teams analyze data then determine what information is most meaningful to share with teachers. Knowledge of student strengths and areas of concern on the MAP plus other assessments help guide lessons in promoting successful learning. Other instruments used to guide student learning include; Stanford 10 Achievement Test, Otis-Lennon School Ability Test, Diagnostic Reading Assessment 2, Scholastic Reading Inventory, Fast Math, common math assessments, observed and recorded daily class progress, daily work, and collaborative discussions regarding each student. An assessment wall format is used to display K - 6 individual student progress in reading. We are currently working to include math and writing.

I believe it involves a wide variety of information about a student to truly determine learning needs. Teachers are expected to analyze daily work, assessments, and projects to determine levels of student understanding. This understanding guides the next steps of teaching and learning which takes place in the classroom.

Teachers are expected to use student data to self reflect on their teaching strategies. Scrutinizing student data allows teachers to modify lessons, know when to re-teach, understand patterns in learning, plus reveals how they are doing as an educator. This feedback and reflection are critical in making necessary adjustments to meet each child's learning needs.

Through our journey in becoming a Professional Learning Community the four questions we consistently ask ourselves are: What do we want students to learn? How will we know when they have learned it? What are we going to do if they do not learn it? What are going to do when they already know it? The responses to these questions guide us in how to proceed.

VI. ACTIVELY ENGAGES THE COMMUNITY

Distinguished Principals actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success.

is fortunate to have a highly involved and supportive PTA. Our PTA organization encourages and makes available a wide variety of parent involvement activities. We also have a large volunteer program at our school. Over 135 parents, grandparents, and other significant adults were trained this school year to assist in classrooms. It is important for students to experience a united effort being made to assist them in being successful. The presence of volunteers sends a powerful message to students that their learning is a priority - to many people.

We also have high involvement in our school from our Partners in Education. Our current partners include: Community College; United Missouri Bank; and Farmers Insurance. Volunteers from these organizations spend time with students reading books, eating lunch, sharing career based information, and providing authentic learning experiences. A member of the team from United Missouri Bank teaches our third graders about loans, interest rates, schedules of payments, and responsibility. This information revolves around an economics unit in which students manufacture and sell "Snowman Mix" during lunch shifts. The monies collected from this experience goes to help our financially struggling families at holiday time.

administrators from our leadership center frequently visit schools. School board members visit our schools as well. This sends a message to students, staff, and parents that learning is a priority in

has been the recipient of many Eagle Scout projects over the years. Our school has had various landscape projects completed along with playground activity areas painted. These projects generally involve former students and their troops, as well as parents. The involvement of the Boy Scout projects has been readily accepted and encouraged at our school. Various scout troops, boys and girls, hold weekly meetings after school at and other schools.

November 30, 2007

To Whom It May Concern,

It is my honor to endorse [redacted] for the distinguished principal award. In my time working with [redacted], she has demonstrated a willingness to do whatever it takes to first prepare our students, provide the staff with the necessary resources to best do their jobs, and make this a safe place for everyone. [redacted] is very approachable and is a great listener for both students and staff. She has set a tone in our building that we are all in this together, so working as a team to meet our students needs is priority number one. Her most powerful attribute is her positive outlook of life as well as education. This outlook carries over into how she builds supportive relationships with the students, staff, and patrons of our community.

Elementary is a very large school, which serves students from many backgrounds and from all walks of life. [redacted] is genuine in her encouragement of our students, staff, and patrons. This is evident in the various conversations, meetings, and various functions that I have been privileged to witness. At the end of the day [redacted] and I often monitor the same hallway. It is there that I have noticed the trust and relationships she builds with the students. New students to the school get a wave, a greeting, or a hug as well as a word of encouragement. Many students initiate dialogue with [redacted], which is always received with the upmost attention and care. She looks at disciplining students as a way to get them back on track and to provide support. Former students often come back and are excited when they see her. Working along side her is rewarding because she allows teachers to be themselves.

I have served on various committees with [redacted] and she reassures teachers that they have what it takes to meet all challenges, while offering input that saves time and effort. She believes that teaching is foremost; therefore raising test scores should be a product of meeting individual student needs. She works diligently to provide teachers with more plan time, and or providing additional resources to ensure each student can be successful.

[redacted] work ethic and professionalism comes from having a strong desire to make life better for her students. Her love of her family, friends, and school is what makes her such a strong leader.

Sincerely,

[Redacted signature box]

Office of the Superintendent

November 29, 2007

Dear Members of the National Distinguished Principals Selection Committee:

It is with great enthusiasm that I recommend [redacted], principal of [redacted] Elementary School, for the honor of National Distinguished Principal. During my two years as superintendent of the [redacted] School District I have been impressed with the leadership quality exhibited by [redacted]. [redacted] Elementary is unique in that it houses almost 1,000 students in grades K - 6, by far surpassing the district's other 16 elementary schools. [redacted]' leadership has established a structure and culture that meets this challenge, seizing on the opportunities that exist with a larger staff and more students and families.

As superintendent, I have introduced the district to the concepts of a Professional Learning Community. In just a few short months, [redacted] has led her school miles in the right direction; truly incorporating the philosophical belief that we are responsible for meeting the needs of each child. Her staff is participating in book studies and collaborating about the important aspect of teaching and learning. At [redacted] Elementary the Professional Learning Community journey is for everyone, including the large group of classified employees that work in the school. They are an integral part of the discussion about how every individual must internalize this responsibility to learning.

[redacted] consistently seeks new knowledge that will make her a successful leader, while also encouraging leadership development among others. As our district's demographics change, becoming more diverse; she has sought training opportunities to ensure that she understands the variety of cultural backgrounds and how to communicate effectively with all families served by her school. This is just one of many examples of her consistent goal of self-improvement.

The National Distinguished Principal Award Selection Committee can be extremely proud that there are such leaders as [redacted] leading schools across our nation. She would make a great representative of her peers in elementary leadership and surely reflect the values of your organization.

Sincerely,

[redacted]
Superintendent

--	--

Dear Sir or Madame:

My name is _____, I am a sixth grader at _____ Elementary where _____ is our Principal. In the past seven years that I have known _____, she has always proven to be a fair and trustworthy principal. She has helped me through the years to succeed by helping me find my true potential. _____ seems to always try to find the good in every student. She is very approachable and easy to talk to when you have a problem. At dismissal _____ will always stand at her place in the hall to greet the students with a smile and give an encouraging word. At assembly's she motivates us to be good citizens and to have a sense of school pride.

_____ makes wise decisions for our school and is always looking out for the students and teachers. This year she has been very supportive and active with the Student Council. As the president of the Student Council, I have experienced this first hand.

I believe _____ is a great example of what a principal should be and has been an awesome role model. Thank you for the opportunity to share this with you.

Your Friend _____

--

Office of Elementary Instruction

To: MAESP Selection Committee
From:
Date: January 14, 2008
Re:

The dictionary defines **Principal** as "A person who is in a leading position; the chief executive officer of an educational institution." The definition of **Distinguished** means "marked by eminence, distinction, or excellence: befitting an eminent person". Everyone who knows would readily describe her as a principal who serves in a very important leading position with distinction and excellence. She exemplifies the critical attributes of Missouri's Distinguished Principal of the Year.

has been a professional educator for 30 years. She has earned a BSE, MSE, EdSp - all from UCM. She has been an administrator for 15 years, serving as an assistant principal for 3 years and principal for 12 years. She is currently principal of an elementary school that serves approximately 1,000 students, and provides services for EMH, ELL, and Hearing and Visually Impaired students. also served as a SPED coordinator for 3 years, taught SPED and third grade for 12 years.

As a school leader, has focused on student achievement, developing relationships with staff, students, parents and peers. She collaborates with staff to infuse PLC concepts and strategies while concentrating on using data effectively and efficiently within the classroom to measure progress and create learning plans for individual students. has provided the leadership to motivate staff to provide learning for life experiences outside of the classroom for students such as Conflict Mediation team, choirs, Student Council, Boys and SHE clubs, etc. She has worked with staff to create and implement an all-day kindergarten program for English Language Learners, organize the "Top 100" program which is a monthly recognition of positive behavior, invite high school art students to create a mural in the front hallway, organize an alumni hall of fame, obtain band instruments for economically challenged students and has been instrumental in launching the scholarship. understands that students must have basic needs met before effective learning can take place.

In addition, _____ always conducts herself in a professional and collegial manner with fellow administrators. _____ is well respected by all of her colleagues. They seek her advice when facing difficult situations. She serves as a mentor to the 2 assistant principals assigned to _____ by providing a variety of leadership experiences as possible. _____ has distinguished herself as an excellent principal, caring administrator, instructional leader, valued colleague and community member. The following quotes from building administrators provide their perception of her strengths:

- “_____ exemplifies professionalism. She is supportive of students and peers. When one has a question, they can always contact _____ and know that they will receive an honest, well-thought out response that is based on her experiences and knowledge of the topic. She always listens with a compassionate ear and is truly focused/present with the person.”
- “_____ embodies 'grace under fire'. Her ability to handle conflict so that all feel they are in a win-win situation is stellar!”
- “_____ has a real talent for listening to a concern or problem and talking through many possible solutions rather than just giving you an answer or her specific opinion.”
- “_____ has demonstrated integrity, exercises confidentiality, demonstrates mutual respect, offers wisdom to those entering the profession, and we consider it a privilege to work with _____.”
- “_____ always positive, smiling and upbeat. _____ is calm, focused and sound in her approach to decision making, conflict resolution. She is a really strong team player, but allows others to flourish and play their role in the overall success of her school.”
- “_____ has a heart for supporting at-risk students as evidenced by her work with EMH, and ESL students. She has worked to organize and implement a pilot all-day kindergarten program for ESL students.”
- “Child centered focus when decision making.”
- “_____ understands the importance of being involved and promoting participation in professional organizations to help support growth as an instructional leader.”
- “It is apparent that kids are her daily motivation as she works to educate and improve their way of life while a student in her school.”
- “_____ demonstrates a true passion for the education of youth. Everyone in her building trusts that she makes decisions in the best interest of students.”
- “She reflects on her own goals, decision making and ways about doing her professional responsibilities.”

- " is extremely loyal and dedicated to the mission of her school, the needs of her students, her entire school community and her professional colleagues."
- "Profound! When she shares her thought she speaks volumes."
- "A Friend!"
- " has a wonderful sense of humor. With her administrative team at she welcomes her staff back in the fall with some in-house entertainment."
- "When you meet , you immediately realize that she is a genuine, warm person that really cares about students and their total well-being."

She currently maintains memberships in MAESP, NAESP, ASCD, Phi Delta Kappa, Delta Kappa Gamma, KCSEPA, IRA, and KC Network for Women in School Administration. She has served in officer positions in KCSEPA (Treasurer, Vice-President, and President) 1997 – 2002, President of KC Network in 1998-1999, and received Greater KC Counselor Advocate of the Year award in 1994.

When you meet it should be apparent that she has distinguished herself as Principal of Elementary, one of the largest elementary schools in the state of Missouri. Her peers have described her as trusted, confidential, motivated, problem solver, profound, involved, genuine, caring, and entertaining. The assistant principals of summarized as student focused, seeks understanding, relationships builder, a strategic thinker, team player, and a person who seeks opportunities to help others grow professionally. demonstrates these characteristics consistently and with a smile on her face.

I highly recommend for Missouri Distinguished Principal.

Office of the Principal

January 7, 2008

Dear National Distinguished Principals Selection Committee:

I am writing to recommend _____ for the National Distinguished Principal Award. A lengthy, special professional relationship began for _____ and me when she was the special education process coordinator at _____ Elementary School, where I am the principal. Later, _____ became an excellent assistant principal at our school before moving to other administrative opportunities. _____ and I continued to work as close colleagues as she assumed other administrative positions in neighboring schools.

Through the years that I have known _____ she has steadfastly maintained her commitment to the needs of children, especially those who may have needs that exceed the typical. _____ was the heart of a special education teacher, but her extraordinary efforts on behalf of students with special needs is not limited to those who qualify for special programs. _____ pulls for the underdog—the girl who forgot her lunch money, the little guy who gets teased, the student who's struggling with a tough concept, the one who's clothes don't look like everybody else's. _____ always finds time to help those confronting misfortune—even when the issue may seem small to most of us.

_____ is one of the most loyal people I know. Her loyalty benefits her students and their families, her teachers, fellow administrators, friends, and family. I can always count on this knowledgeable administrator to provide insight and help when I dial her number. I can count on her to give me a call when she knows I'm dealing with difficult issues. Principals that have worked with _____ know they can count on her in any kind of circumstance.

_____ believes in the teachers and staff at her school. She works very hard to establish and encourage positive relationships with and among the members of the _____ employees. Although her school is large, the staff presents the perception of a close-knit group, striving to reach common goals. _____ works hard to perpetuate this "family" atmosphere at her school.

I am proud to have had the opportunity to work professionally with _____ and to recommend such a highly-qualified candidate for the National Distinguished Principal Award.

Sincerely,

ol

Appendix H

Document C from Participant C

Lesson Plans: At least 2 days in advance. Think of skills students are learning (objectives) and write them. Turn in lesson plans for the next week. Place in basket on my desk

Schedule to me as soon as possible

Classroom Visits

*Make positive phone calls and send notes often. Build those relationships with parents and students. When you have problems with a student, let me know and make a phone call in a timely manner so parents can partner with you in the solution.

Professional Development Plans

Grants: Endowment Grant (technology \$2000)

Marketing Grant (\$500)

HEAL Grant (\$3600)

TB test every 2 years You have until the end of Sept. Health Center offers them on Tuesday. Bring back your receipt and you'll be reimbursed.



Title I (around \$9000)

Title II (\$1166)

Accreditation: October 20,21

Please turn your classroom fans (ceiling and floor) off when you leave each evening. Turn off lights when you leave the room. Thanks

Alternative Rooms with AC

K-4 Preschool building

5/6 Cafeteria

FOCUS AREA Education

Rationale Math scores show a need for improvement and the need for more students passing Algebra I End of Course Exam

Improvement Goal As a result of their elementary and middle school coursework, the number of students passing Algebra I at the end of 8th grade will increase to 60% of the graduating 8th graders by 2015

TIMELINE				
Activities/Strategies	Responsible Party	Start	Measured	Evidence of Implementation
1. Staff will evaluate Math ITBS and EOC to identify low areas and patterns.	Staff, Administrator	2014	Fall 2015, ongoing	Staff meeting minutes, documentation, math scores
2. Teachers will have inservices in Math Common Core and on research-based instructional strategies	Administrator	2014	May 2015	Staff meeting notes
4. Share resources to better teach low math areas and articulate between grade levels to build program	Teachers, administrator, MS math teacher	2014	2015	Documentation, Curriculum Maps
5. Evaluate Math program and resulting test scores for needed revisions and added technology	Administrator staff	2015	May 2016	Staff meeting minutes, math scores over time at all grade levels, technology plan
6. Evaluate curriculum alignment to Diocesan Curriculum	Administrator staff	2017	2018	Analysis document of curriculum alignment and changes

How will you assess that you have achieved the Improvement Goal?

Data for the passing rate of 8th grade students on the End-of-the-Year (EOC) Algebra I test will increase yearly until it shows 60% and math scores on standardized test for each grade level will show a strong math program

FOCUS AREA Education

Rationale During the Technology Needs Assessment, it was noted that technology was only used marginally in instruction, so there is a need to increase teachers' effective and efficient use of technology to enhance instruction.

Improvement Goal Based on the Technology Inventory and student achievement results, resources will be in place that enhance student learning by 2017

TIMELINE				
Activities/Strategies	Responsible Party	Start	Measured	Evidence of Implementation
1. Create a technology committee and prioritize needs	Administrator	2014	2014	Committee minutes
2. Provide training for teachers in "Technology-Enhanced Instruction"	Administrator	2015	2016	Professional development logs, staff meeting minutes
3. Seek new technology applications and site licenses for teachers to use in their instruction and share with colleagues	Teachers, committee	2015	2016	Administrator observations, staff meeting minutes—collaboration
4. Monitor technology application in instruction and its impact	Administrator	2016	2017	Evaluations

How will you assess that you have achieved the Improvement Goal?

Observation of more student engagement and motivation using technology, Technology Inventory, improved student scores on ITBS and improved instruction on teacher evaluations

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

RESOURCES—To support Level I Deployment of the CI Classroom, a variety of quality tools and templates have been added to the Continuous Improvement Resource course in Bright Space (D2L). Additional tools and templates will be added through-out the school year. If you have a tool/template you would like to be included, please email the information to [redacted] and she will upload it to the course.

D2L (same as) Bright Space – Continuous Improvement Resource – Content – Quality Tools and Templates tab.

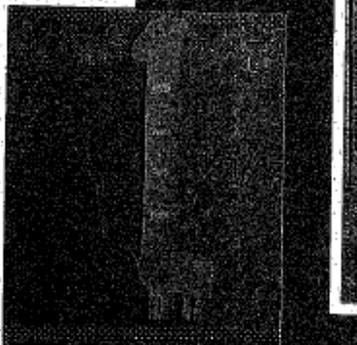
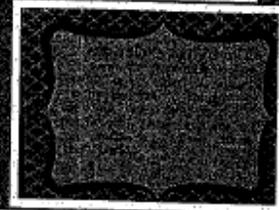
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CORNER



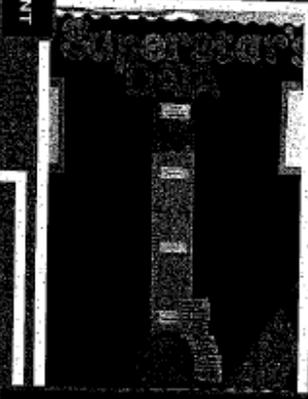
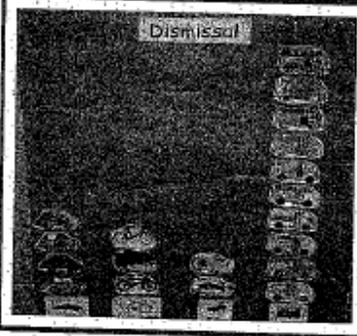
MONITOR SMART GOALS



MISSION STATEMENT



QUALITY TOOL: SURVEY | CHART



GROUND RULES | EXPECTATIONS

CORNER

Appendix J

MAESP Brochures for Participants A, B, E, F, G, and H

Appendix A

Missouri National Guard. In 1986, he graduated from the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Two of his assignments which helped in refining leadership skills as an elementary principal included serving as the Commandant for the Kansas Military Academy for 3½ years directing the career professional development soldiers in a five state area; and Battalion Commander for an armor battalion. At retirement in 1996, he had attained the rank of Colonel.

In addition to the successes achieved as principal at

was also recognized as 2006 Educator of the Year by Arts Partners for the integration of the arts into instruction. While serving as the principal of Elementary School in the School District, the school's literacy program was recognized by the State of Missouri. In 2000, he received the Exemplary Reading Award, an annual award presented to one elementary school each year within the state by the International Reading Association.

Over the years, he has served on many district committees. While an administrator in the School District, he was a member of the Principal's Association. Currently, he is a member of the Suburban Principal's Association, MAESP, NAESP, ASCD, IRA, and the Missouri Political Action Committee. For three years, he was a member of the Operations Council for the University of Missouri - Columbia Partnership for Educational Renewal. He serves on the Advisory Board for the Kansas City Arts Partners program, and serves as an adjunct professor for the University of Missouri - Columbia Fellows Graduate Program.

Simply stated, he genuinely believes all decisions must be made in the best interests of children. Over the years, he has always placed the needs of children first. He welcomes into the school parents and community volunteers which help to form an invaluable partnership that benefits all children. He believes an effective principal must set a positive example, working to motivate, support, and inspire the staff to meet the expected standards for a quality school.

His family consists of five children. He is employed by the School District as family services liaison. Amy is a paraprofessional in the School District. He is pursuing a career as a nurse through Graceland University. He is completing her elementary education degree through Marquette University. Finally, he is a junior at William Jewell College completing a degree in business.

19

He is completing his sixth year as a principal in the

During his first five years, provided leadership for

is a school with 87% of the families receiving meal support, high student turnover, and consistently poor district and state assessment results. During his five-year tenure there, even though neighborhood demographics did not change, Adequate Yearly Progress benchmarks were achieved and student assessment percentages continued to improve. Student percentages on the MAP increased from 24% to nearly 60% of the students scoring Proficient or Advanced. This current school year, assumed responsibilities as principal at Elementary School, a school formerly in the School District.

attended Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas where he earned his Bachelor Degree. As a teacher, he taught Life/Earth Sciences, American History, and elementary and middle school Physical Education and Health. While teaching, he completed a Master Degree in Secondary Administration and an Educational Specialist Degree in Elementary Administration from the University of Missouri - Kansas City. In May 2006, completed his Doctorate Degree in Education Administration from Saint Louis University.

In addition to serving as a principal in the School District, he has 15 years of experience as an elementary school principal in the school districts of and the School District. In each of the assignments, he worked to improve the quality of education provided to the district's children.

For twenty-five years, he also served as a member of the armed forces as a citizen soldier both on active duty and in the Kansas and

18

Participant B

In a school of 971 students she strives to know each child by name. She knows most, but not all.

believes all learning impacts life skills through purpose and meaning. She is guiding on the journey to becoming a Professional Learning Community. Through this effort she is proud to observe the large staff of becoming more united in its efforts to focus on each child's successful learning.

A member of MAESP and NAESP since 1993, she has served on various committees. She has held all offices of the Elementary Principals Association. She also served as president of the Network for Women in School Administration. She is a member of ASCD, Phi Delta Kappa, Delta Kappa Gamma, IRA and the Missouri School Alliance Political Action Committee.

and her husband, an Industrial Technology teacher at High School, have been married 22 years. They have a daughter, a music education major at Truman State University. She and her family spend their leisure time at the Lake of the Ozarks completing their lake home and spending time with friends.

is the principal of Elementary School in the School District. Prior to the nine years in this position, she was principal at Elementary in and an assistant principal at Elementary in

Upon graduating from Raytown South High School, attended college at Longview Community College and the University of Central Missouri. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education. She began her career in education as a third grade and special education teacher in MO. was hired by the district as an ED/BD and LD teacher at School. She also served as a Special Education Coordinator. She received her Master's Degree in Special Education and a Specialist Degree in Educational Administration, all from the University of Central Missouri.

leadership style as principal is best described as someone who walks the walk and talks the talk. Her strength as a leader is found in her listening, understanding, caring, building relationships, and the strong belief that each child can be a successful learner. She believes in providing purposeful and current professional development for staff so they are equipped with necessary tools and concepts to provide differentiated learning for students. is visible and involved in every aspect of

Participant E

In 2004, [redacted] transitioned from a middle school assistant principal to principal at [redacted] Elementary in the [redacted] School District. After four years at [redacted] was selected for her current principalship at [redacted] Elementary in [redacted] Her suburban kindergarten through fifth grade school serves an enrollment of 461 students and has also included Title I and Head Start preschool programs. [redacted] welcomes students from twenty countries and facilitates a school-wide Title I program. Shortly into her first year at [redacted] developed partnerships with a variety of community organizations including the [redacted] Police Department - Multi Housing Unit, [redacted] Neighborhoods, Inc. and [redacted] Community Church. [redacted] continues to partner with numerous community organizations and agencies to foster an environment that supports students and families outside of school, while also maximizing students' potential in school.

While expanding the effective community partnerships, fostering positive changes in the school culture and maintaining a strong focus on academic achievement, [redacted] efforts to improve academic achievement in their fourteen subgroups has paid off with tremendous academic gains. In 2011, [redacted] reported their highest MAP scores to date. The culture established at [redacted] has created a mindset in teachers where they view themselves as agents of change, capable of teaching all children. Thus, the emphasis placed on a sustainable positive culture increased the individual and collective efficacy of [redacted] teachers.

Throughout her twenty-two years in education, [redacted] has mastered the art of balancing family and work. Her weekly schedule reflects her commitment to [redacted] and her commitment to her family. [redacted] two children, [redacted] 12 and [redacted] 10, along with her husband [redacted] help keep her priorities in place. [redacted] family plays a major role in the person she has become. The goals she set for herself and those she has accomplished are very much dependent on the support of her family.

From a [redacted] to a [redacted] a [redacted] for over [redacted] and [redacted] has served the [redacted] School District as a teacher, middle school assistant principal and elementary principal.

[redacted] desire to become an educator [redacted] grew up in a [redacted] family of educators and spent many weeks each August assisting her mother in preparing her third grade classroom at [redacted] graduated [redacted]

from Kansas State University, earning a Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education. As [redacted] was graduating from Kansas State in 1989, her husband was graduating from the University of Kansas and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Army. [redacted] husband began his first military assignment at Fort Benning, Georgia and [redacted] began her teaching career in the [redacted] School District as a third grade teacher.

While teaching third grade, [redacted] also had the opportunity to gain valuable administrative experience while supervising the Elementary Summer School program. She continued her education earning a Master of Arts Degree in Educational Administration and an Educational Specialist Degree in Administration from the University of Missouri - Kansas City. After teaching for eight years, [redacted] transitioned into the position of an assistant principal at the middle level. [redacted] elementary teaching experience combined with her middle school administrative experience laid the foundation for the [redacted] years ahead as an elementary principal.

Participant F

where they think he is the best dad in the world. This provides much needed perspective in life.

completed his Master Degree in School Leadership from Drake University in 2006 and knew it was time to leave the classroom and seek an administration job. made the big jump to head principal of Elementary in Missouri in 2007. This is now's sixth year as head principal at and he is proud of all they have accomplished during that time. The school has transformed into a high-functioning professional learning community by collaboratively working together to focus on student learning and results. Teams work hard each day on the right work that most greatly has a positive impact on student growth and achievement. The PLC term is used easily, but focus on action and not just words sets it apart from others. Everyone at shares in the leadership of the building and plays a pivotal role to the success of the students. Math scores have risen by over 20% during the past 5 years and ELA scores have continued on a positive trend during this time as well. A consistent model of response to intervention has been implemented, as well as a standards-based report card, reader's workshop model for reading instruction, vertical teams, new mission and vision statements, core values and commitment statements to guide their actions each day. is most proud of the outstanding and student-centered staff that is in place. This is truly what makes and something special to be a part of. enjoys working with the wonderful students and families each day. Every day is "a great day to be a

has held other leadership positions in as well. In addition to serving as an elementary principal, has been a member of the standards-based grading and reporting initiative, district strategic plan committee, district RTI team, standards-based report card pilot, value-added assessment team, elementary cohort leader and PE/Health coordinator. is expected to finish and defend his dissertation this winter and receive his doctorate from Baker University.

grew up in the small rural town of Iowa. Helping to run the family farm is where learned his values of hard work, commitment, teamwork and having fun. Since being elected student body president his junior and senior years in high school and serving as captain of the football and baseball teams, has loved leading and working with others.

first experience of working with students was during his senior year in high school. He noticed the junior head basketball coach having a hard time working with so many kids, so he quickly offered his services. loved this experience and knew what must come next; a career in education. enrolled in the University of Northern Iowa that fall while continuing to coach. After completing his student teaching and graduating in the fall of 1999, was hired as a fourth grade teacher in the School District in Iowa. taught at Elementary in for seven years while also serving as head baseball coach in Schools and football, baseball and basketball coach in.

met his future bride, in the spring of 2000 after being set-up by his sister-in-law. They were married the following August, 2001. The couple has three beautiful children; 9, 6 and 3. is also in education, so for good or bad, many household conversations revolve around teaching and learning. firmly believes that family comes first and counts his blessings each and every day for the wonderful and loving family he has. Whenever he has a hard day, he knows that he can walk into his home

Participant G

strives to promote the idea that learning is "fun" for staff as well as students.

obtained her bachelor's degree from Southwest Baptist University in 1983. She continued her education at Southwest Missouri State University (now Missouri State University). She received her Master's Degree in Educational Administration in 1986 and her Specialist Degree in Administration in 1989. In 1999 she decided to pursue her Doctorate Degree through the University of Missouri Co-hort program. She graduated with her Ed.D. in December of 2002.

has been at for 22 years, the past 20 of which she has been the elementary principal. When she began, she had a K-6 building with 285 students. Currently, the configuration includes Pre-K through 5th grade housing 375 students. Free and reduced lunch count has grown from 47% four years ago to 70% this year. Due to this increase and belief in addressing the total child, several programs have been implemented the past three years, including a before- and after-school program, "Kids Cafe", and a "Food for Thought" program which sends backpacks of healthy food home with students anonymously on weekends.

teaches administration courses on an adjunct basis for Southwest Baptist University and Missouri State University. She also serves as adjunct faculty for the University of Missouri, sitting on several dissertation committees annually. She has presented her own research in the area of Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Effectiveness at the National Council for Professors of Educational Administration, the American Educational Research Association, and University Council for Education Administration. also serves on DESE's certification advisement committee (MACCE), NAESP's committee for rewriting the after school childcare book, and is a Southwest District representative on the MAESP executive committee.

Outside of school, enjoys spending time with her family. She and her husband of 22 years are avid fans of their sons and 11 who play soccer, basketball, and baseball. They also support the boys as they compete in INT Amateur Wakeboarding tournaments--both qualified for National Competition this past year. The family enjoys hiking, geocaching and spending time at the lake. an avid reader, enjoys cross-stitching, walking and playing the piano.

At EVERY student makes a trip to the principal's office. Are they in trouble, you ask? No. It is a regular part of day, and one of her favorite. Each year, a school-wide theme is chosen and programming works around that theme--this year it is "Red Hot Readers, Writers, and

Every student comes in during the principal's reading hour and reads, one-on-one, with This gives her the opportunity to get to know all 375 of her students on an individual basis, as well as ascertain some of their

strengths and weaknesses with regard to reading, a strong focus in her building. "Red Hot" writers are recognized during "Fiesta Friday" announcements by posting well-written papers outside the office. And for rambling, each class also comes and "rambles" weekly to promote continual health and fitness. Students were issued pedometers at the beginning of the year, and thus far, have logged hundreds of miles, exercising through walking. These three programs are a part of the foundation for the strong culture in building.

If you asked students what was important to you would probably hear not only about the above programs but also about the reading week challenges. challenges all students to read an average of 90 minutes per day for that week. If students meet the challenge, they get to "decorate" the principal with honors! This year, in conjunction with the theme, they made her into a "red hot principal" using Karo syrup and sprinkling her with red dots. She has been painted "green" as the Statue of Liberty, slimed with pudding, kissed a frog and a pig and made into a human pizza! At

Participant H

influenced to further his love of history, baseball, coaching, and simply being part of a team. graduated in four years from Rockhurst with a degree in Secondary Education and History.

The School District hired in 1997 to teach seventh grade social studies at Middle School, under the leadership of Principal. This was an outstanding tenure for working alongside some of the very best teachers in the profession. During this time, completed a Master Degree in Secondary Administration from Central Missouri State University. While at was honored when selected as the 2004 School District Teacher of the Year, a very humbling experience and reflection of everyone's support along the way.

taught at for seven years before his assignment as an Education Center in the School District. Under the leadership of Principal worked with special education teachers, paraprofessionals and students aged 3-21 with special needs. This powerful experience left an impression that largely shaped as an educational leader. During his two years at Education Center, earned an Educational Specialist Degree in Elementary Administration from UCM. He then moved to Elementary in the School District where he served as principal for six years. During his tenure at Elementary, the Harvesters BackSnack Program began, assisting students and families with food each weekend during the school year. In 2012, became principal at Elementary in the School District, again very fortunate to work alongside a wonderfully supportive staff, students and their families.

is blessed with a supportive family and extended family that helps him in every way imaginable. His fantastic wife, and children, remind him daily what is most important: family.

has belonged to Blue Springs School District since entering kindergarten in the fall of 1980. Ever since then, has received encouragement and inspiration to serve others. He comes from a family of educators: his mother, a retired first grade teacher in the School District; his father, an instructor at the Business & Technology Campus of Metropolitan Community College; his wife, a middle level art teacher in the District; and his sister, a speech language pathologist in the School District. The timelessly influential Jackie Robinson once said, "A life is not important except in the impact it has on other lives." The family has been committed to a life of serving children and their families for many years.

Throughout his educational life, was shaped by teachers, coaches and church youth leaders. During elementary school, and his dad coached a Special Olympics basketball team, *The Kings*, which led to a burning desire to work with children with special needs. He also developed a love of history from teachers like , who made history come alive in her classroom. In addition, admired his mom's ability to positively reach first grade students and their families. When she saw them in the community, they always greeted her with a big hug. These experiences guided decision to become an educator.

After graduating from High School, attended Rockhurst University in Kansas City, Missouri, through an academic and athletic (baseball) scholarship. Under the guidance of the varsity baseball team enjoyed success during four years at Rockhurst. and the entire Rockhurst experience

Vita

The author of this study, Erica Stephenson, has been an educator for twelve years. She spent a great deal of her childhood growing up around the Kansas City Suburban area and in Peachtree City, Georgia. Erica lived in the Columbia, Missouri area for about ten years before returning to the Kansas City Area to teach. She first earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English from the University of Missouri in 2000. Erica went on to earn her teacher certification from Columbia College, her Masters in Educational Administration from William Woods, and is currently completing her Doctorate from the University of Missouri Columbia.